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## Post-Modernism and Nigerian Culture

**Chukwunenye Iheanacho Okereke**

Professor, Department of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

*Most industrialized societies, with economic development (characterized by improved standards of living, provision of basic infrastructure, reduction in the levels of poverty, and unemployment) shall evolve into post-modernism with improved technology as the driving force. Post-modernism is pessimistically expected to revert humanity to anthropological primitivism as it could erode civilization that earlier enabled man effectively adapts to his environment. The Evolutionary Theory of social change, from simple to complex is the ideological basis of this thesis together with the sociological explanation of change that focuses on society and culture. Even through colonization, planned change and acculturation, the culture of most Nigeria Societies is resilient to Western Civilization. Economic development is nominal and technology has not been effectively transferred and utilized in Nigeria, such that post-modernism is a far dream for Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Post-modernism, culture, societies, civilization, primitivism, technology, economic development

### **1. Introduction**

Intellectual discussions in Nigerian culture draw attention to the romance between Nigeria societies and colonialism. Major areas of interest are on the utilities and limitation of disruptive influences of colonialism on the, otherwise, relatively stable and ordered Nigerian societies that were hitherto simple and free from the superfluities and luxuries of western civilization. Nigerian societies had culture claimed to be an epitome of the golden age, where individuals were happy and innocent with their goodness derived not from practiced virtue, but from innocence of ignorance.

Family life, socialization, economy, political organizations were rooted in values predicated by belief on supernatural forces that had powers to mete out punishment and destruction to offenders. Incidentally, the elegance of the culture of Nigerian societies is impressionistic that objectivity is doubtful. There is absence of empirically synthesized works on post – modernism and culture of Nigerian societies that this study is forerunner. 'Modern' refers to contemporary behavior and attitudes (Coser, 1956); anything that has more or less recently replaced something earlier accepted as a way of doing things (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Explicitly, modernization connotes a process by which things are updated, made most recent, latest and contemporary, such as in ways of life, fashion and style of activities with no moral implication (as to goodness and balance). It does not necessarily mean westernization nor industrialization (use of machinery in production activities), though industrialization is an element of modernity.

Since 1970s, some social scientists engaged in 'Futurological Enterprise', to discern features of future industrial societies, variously called 'Post-Industrial Society' (by Daniel Bell, 1973); 'Post-Modern Era' (by Etzioni, 1968); 'Post Civilization' (by Kenneth Boulding, 1962) and 'Post – Service Society' (by Ralph Dahrendorf, 1968). The significance of this study is that the transition of Nigerian societies to post-modernism is contingent on their culture. When the culture varies, the prospect for transition also varies. This study provides useful insight into the dynamics of Nigerian societies, in respect of how the cultures have changed over time.

### **2. Cosmology and Culture of Nigeria Societies**

Kinship had a very great importance (Wilson and Wilson, 1968) and finds intimate expression in the joint and extended family system that provide social security against sudden death, crop failure, natural disasters and group feuds and incursions, as well as serves as a useful instrument of socialization (Hoselitz and Moore, 1966; Kalu, 1978). The oldest member of the family serves as the head of the extended family and the subordinate members provide loyalty, obedience, free labor and support in the community (Cohen and Middleton, 1970). In some instances, land ownership and inheritance, occupational differentiations and communal labor are organized under the fabric of the extended family (Kalu, 1978), with membership strictly limited to persons who have blood relations. According to Peil (1977), conflicts within closely – knit groups as kin group are less easy to tolerate, and are therefore suppressed, but when it breaks out it is very intense as it is based on accumulated grievances and hostility ignited by the last straw.

Traditionally, members of the kin group were encouraged to have large family size, instead of having few children (Echeruo and Obiechina, 1971; Olusanya, 1971) and the anthropological works of Basden (1938), Uchendu (1966), Talbot (1967), Echeruo and Obiechina (1971) and Ellis (1974) indicated that women married at ages little above puberty.

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the traditional economy of Nigerian societies was essentially of rustic simplicity (Nkemdirin, 1975), of subsistence agriculture, subsistence pastoralism or a mixture of both, with the addition of a few simple crafts (Wilson and Wilson, 1968; Kalu, 1978). The technology was based on simple tools as machet, hoe and plough. Each village or settlement, according to Wilson and Wilson (1968) produced almost everything it needed, except trading in ivory and slaves that linked some of the tribes to the overseas.

The African cosmology was predominantly religious and offers intellectual or rational explanations of human lives, based on myths, taboos, customs and proverbs (Kalu, 1971). Well being and failure were attributed to the inscrutable will of gods, such that moral uprightness, harmony with the gods and fellow human beings were perceived to ultimately lead to success in farming, hunting and trading and were, therefore, rewarded with titles.

Reincarnation is crucial in the understanding of the traditional Nigeria. Life flows in a cycle from birth, naming ceremony, puberty rites, marriage, initiations, adult roles and death. They believed in the 'Hereafter', which is said to be a mirror of the human world, with same topography and similar social organizations that a wealthy man on earth was believed to retain same status in the spirit world (Kalu, 1978). This is the logic behind the historic burial of wealthy persons in Nigeria, with a slave or an inferior person, to serve him in the 'Hereafter'.

### 3. Nigerian Culture and Social Change – a Theoretical Orientation

With social dynamism, some aspects of culture of Nigeria societies have been modified, presumably through the evolutionary process. The evolutionary process of Saint Simon, Comte, Spencer, Tocqueville, Marx, Weber and Durkheim impressed that a terrible beauty was born and that a new society was in the making, fraught equally with hope and despair, frightened or perhaps overwhelmed by the process of industrialization, democratization and rationalization. This provided a denominator for the polar distinction (theories) of the traditional (primitive) societies and modern societies, variously described in the 'Status-Contract' of Sir Henry Maine (1969); 'Folk – Secular' of Robert Redfield (1947); 'Gemeinschaft – Gesellschaft' of Ferdinand Toennies (1988) among others.

Evolutionary Theories had methodological weaknesses, especially as more data on a variety of societies became available (Peil, 1977) and was attacked by Diffusion Theories for their inability to explain differences among 'primitive societies' (Kalu, 1978). Diffusion theory emphasized that each culture be studied and evaluated in its merit and for this the theory is sometimes criticized.

Sociological, theories of social change focus on society and culture, emphasizing that the type and nature of the society determines its cultural traits. Within sociological theories are; Cyclical Theories, Factor Theories, Cultural-Interaction Theory and Structural Differentiation Theory.

Cyclical Theories explain that change occurs due to struggle for power in society between groups (Coser, 1956; Smelser, 1968). Factor theories examine the strengths and weaknesses of particular factors that direct social change such as technology, economy, conflict, mal-integration, adaptation and ideational. Cultural-interaction theory explains change by interaction of two cultures and the elimination of the weaker culture by the stronger. Structural – Differentiation theory stresses that as societies develop there is an increasing separation and specialization of institutions, which must be reintegrated into a new whole (Smelser, 1968; Worsley et al., 1970; Peil, 1977).

There is consensus among the foregoing theories on the topical issues that run through most accounts of social change in Africa – colonization, acculturation and planned change.

#### 3.1. Colonization and Development of Nigeria

Basic reasons given for colonialism are humanitarian, economic and strategic and political. Abolition of slave trade, introduction of civilization, Christianity and communication are primarily humanitarian. It is difficult to sustain a fully humanitarian explanation for European imperialism as many of the European countries had their own problem. The economic reasons are weighty: the demand of European industries for raw materials and market to their manufactured goods. Political and diplomatic conflicts between Britain, France and Portugal made them scramble for the possession of empires to amplify their political strength.

Missionaries often accompanied the colonial adventure, not only to Christianize but to bring civilization that eroded cultural values especially those on marriage, rituals, worship and burial ceremonies, title-taking, membership of secret societies and festivals. Incidentally, the Churches established formal education institutions that affected socialization, rate of urbanization, level of occupational differentiation and ultimately gaining of political independence (Kalu, 1978). Ethno-tribal groupings (Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, Igala, Tiv, Efik/Ibibio, Ijaw etc) were meshed together to form Nigeria nation.

Colonialism initiated the process of political modernization in Nigeria as it led to the emergence of a new political system and culture in Nigeria. It also brought Nigeria into the world market through the introduction of new economic institutions and practices; uniform and portable currencies; commercial and credit facilities; transportation (by land, sea and air) that facilitated communication and trade. Also, giant strides were made in medical practice. Nevertheless, it has been observed that the economic interest of Nigeria was subordinated to that of the metropolitan country. Little attention was made by the British Colonialists to industrialize Nigeria as they were apprehensive it would compete with the British industries.

#### 3.2. Acculturation

Most of the current changes in Nigeria originated overseas through conquest (Gingsberg, 1958), though Cohen and Middleton (1970) had argued the degree of cultural exchange varies from one culture to another as the rate of

acceptance or rejection differs. Explicitly, the difference is contingent on a 'tripod factor' - the transaction flow, functional interdependency and congruency of values.

Transaction flow is the level and intensity of communication and cooperation between two or more cultures. Functional interdependence is the degree of functional cooperation that exists between two or more cultures in terms of mutual benefit or by force or threat of it. Congruency of values involves two or more cultures trading off some cultural values and norms when a sense of common purpose develops between them.

It has been observed some of the strategies adjudged successful in Western European countries are either unworkable or unsuccessful in Nigeria, such that strategies indigenous to Nigerian nation have been suggested.

Formal Education widely noted to open vistas for attainment of the American Dream, has been questionable in raising living standards of its contemporary recipients in Nigeria. Statistics revealed unemployment rates in Nigeria increased to 23.10 percent in the third quarter of 2018 from 22.70 percent in the second quarter of 2018<sup>1</sup> and from 18.8 percent in the third quarter of 2017<sup>2</sup>.

Several college and university graduates in Nigeria have emigrated overseas, even as illegal aliens, in quest of jobs, some engage in crimes that include ritual killings, Cyber crime and of recently (since 2016) the 'Yahoo - Plus'. Yahoo - Plus has been observed to yield stupendous and unexplainable wealth to the young men and is largely associated with the 'Malay Boys' – who are unscrupulous young men residing in Malaysia. They are noted for merchandising human body parts – liver, kidney, lungs and genitals. They are accused of using voodoo, with assistance of Native Doctors to dupe persons, especially Europeans, of enormous material assets.

S/No	Report	Sources
1.	A teenager has been arrested for allegedly stealing a pair of female underwear for ritual purpose in Odoakpu, Onitsha, Anambra State – Nigeria. The suspect, Chinonye Okorie, 19 of Mbaitoli in Imo State – Nigeria was apprehended with the underwear by the Police	The Nation, Friday January 18, 2019
2.	Elozino Joshua Ogege, a 300 Level potential First Class undergraduate of Delta State University (DELSU), Abraka was murdered in the most vicious manner by a four-man gang for money rituals during her search for accommodation. She was taken to a bush after being made unconscious, her eyes and heart removed while she was still alive	Daily Sun, Thursday December 13, 2018
3.	... the gang of kidnappers had sneaked into Lagos State, Nigeria and were planning to kidnap some notable persons in Iba area of Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. Sunday, (also known as Dreaded Dagboru) was gunned down by the Police, while the two other kidnappers with Sunday, Ebi and Ajele of Arogbo, Ose – Odu, Ondo State were apprehended.	Daily Sun, Wednesday December 12, 2018
4.	Two brothers, Ayodeji and Saheed Obadimeji, 18 and 19 years respectively, killed ten-year old Joseph Makinde in Lagos after they were promised N200,000 if they brought a human head. They were apprehended by the Police with the head of Joseph on November 27, 2018 along the Ajah – Lekki Expressway.	Daily Sun, Thursday December 13, 2018.
5.	A Lecturer with the Rufus Giwa Polytechnics, Owo (RUGIPO), Ondo State – Nigeria, Taiwo Akinyemi, abducted by suspected kidnappers last Tuesday has been reportedly killed by the gunmen	The Nation, Tuesday December 11, 2018
6.	In 2017, no fewer than 55 suspects were arrested for possessing human parts in States such as Kebbi, Oyo, Kwara, Osun, Lagos, Ogun, Kogi and Nasarawa. There was the discovery of ritualists' den in Soka Village, Ibadan where about 20 corpses were found. Majority of the victims had been earlier declared missing by their relations	Daily Sun, Tuesday December 13, 2018.
7.	Yakubu Hamidu, 39, leader of a notorious ten-man gang that specialized in selling human parts was arrested in September, 2018 by the Inspector General of Police Special Tactical Squad. His arrest followed complaints by local of Ankpa in Kogi State, after many incidents of abductions, ritual killings, harvests of human parts, deadly activities and gruesome murder	Daily Sun, Thursday December 13, 2018.
8.	In two separate incidents, 300 level students of Benue State University, Grace Onauvi and a 400 Level Student of the Osun State University, Rofiat Damilola, went missing and their mutilated bodies later found with vital parts missing. Though killer of Grace has remained elusive, two suspects arrested for killing Rofiat confessed to kidnapping and selling her to a herbalist for N10, 000.	Daily Sun, Thursday December 13, 2018

*Table 1: Media Reports on Selected Crimes in Nigeria*

Acculturation is selective, as only some parts of European culture are bestowed and only some parts received by Nigerians as the authority of the donor and the authority of the individual cultures in Nigeria both act as screening devices (Foster, 1960; King, 1976). Similarly, the institutions, intentions and interests of the incoming culture may well be transformed by their contact with the institutions of the 'native' culture (Malinowski, 1945). According to Ponsioen

<sup>1</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>

(1968), the present acculturation process in Africa is guided by government to achieve political and social benefits, such as international prestige and nation-building, provision of job opportunities and the balance of payments.

### 3.3. Planned Change

In an effort to achieve self-determination, Nigerian governments through deliberate acts of planning and policy direction, particularly through National development plans and Vision Plans (e.g. Vision 2015; Vision 2025) determine not only directions of change, but also the rate and mechanism of change.

## 4. Contemporary Nigerian Societies

The indigenous power structure is weakened through its loss of control over economic sanctions (Goldschmidt, 1952) and the patterns of defense and authority within the small community have no force outside it (Hoselitz and Moore, 1966). The political systems have progressed with the appearance of pressure groups, parties and parliamentary systems (Apter, 1956; Hodgkins, 1957; Almond and Coleman, 1960). There is federal system of administration, the regularization of tax (under the aegis of the Board of Internal Revenue), establishment of modern Court procedures and the introduction of limited types of representation in government.

In spite of the foregoing, residues of culture exist in the form of tribalism and hinders effective political development. Often times, the political parties have tribal cleavage and the electorate largely vote for the political candidates based on tribal sentiments/sympathy not necessarily on party manifestos, notwithstanding the lack of competence of the candidates.

There is a change to a market economy (Etzioni and Etzioni, 1964) and into a world economic system that forms an important area of international trade. Raw materials that include cocoa, groundnuts, cashew nuts, hides and skins are exported from Nigeria to overseas and Nigeria in turn provides market for the oversea manufactured products. With the foreign trade, domestic trade between the newly grown towns and the villages accelerated. The town workers buy goods from the peasants and the later buy foreign goods in turn from them; specialization sprung up and agriculture ceases to be everyone's business (Wilson and Wilson, 1968).

The family is no longer a productive and economic security unit as economic security is now obtained through governmental and other insurance schemes (Hoselitz and Moore, 1966). The traditional importance of many relations of kinship is decreasing (Wilson and Wilson, 1968) and government often promote small monogamous, institutionalized nuclear families as they are led to believe these would make the country more 'modern' (Peil, 1977). Various law enforcement agencies (Police, Civil Defence, Vigilante) handle the disturbances in the society hitherto handled by the family. Nevertheless, through parents are still blamed for their children's deviant behavior as the family is still regarded as the agent of primary socialization.

Classes, in the Marxist sense of propertied and non-propertied groups is absent in Nigeria. Although, there is relative class consciousness, Banton (1965) and Lloyd (1966) argued that it was inhibited by tribal loyalties. This has not changed remarkably in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria. An admixture of traditional and modern ranking criteria is used in Nigeria and these ultimately blur rather than define and encourage class categories (Forde, 1956; Southall, 1956). In support, social class segregation has not occurred in such critical areas as residence, marriage and life styles (Banton, 1965) or there is consensus on traditional ideals of status and etiquette (Little, 1959). This is still valid in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigerian societies.

Africans are said to be incurably religious, notwithstanding their traditional religious beliefs have been vigorously attacked by modernity (Inkeles and Smith, 1974), especially Christianity which is widespread in the region. Tradition is associated with leisure, festivities and ceremonies that waste scarce investible resources (Ikenga-Metuh and Ugoade, 1990). Nevertheless, the emergence of Pentecostal Christian sects in the late 1970s and their rapid growth and multiplicity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is worrisome. The poor pedigree of the headship of some of the sects; their low level of education, gullibility, mania for money and absolute lack of theological training reduces credibility of their activities. The simultaneity in the reduction of shrine for traditional religious worship vis-à-vis increase in Pentecostal Christian sects in Nigeria, *prima facie* suggests an 'Old Wine in a New Wine Skin'. The re-birth of Traditional Religious practices under the guise of Pentecostal Christian Sects. As shrines are not fashionable in the Contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria, it could be some of the shrines now masquerade as Pentecostal Christian Sects, headed by Shrine Priests and engaged in 'wonder working'(miracles) to attract membership.

Generally, growth of societies through territorial expansion, population size and density have wide ranging implications. According to Hopkins and Wallerstein (1967), these include increased urbanization; interdependence and centralization of economic and political power, replacement of extended families and ethnic subgroups by national interest groups; replacement of status by class as a means of stratification; replacement of local sources of information and culture by the mass media. The foregoing, Peil (1979) pointed have been observed as prerequisites for modernization as experienced in certain highly industrialized societies. Incidentally, they have not been satisfactorily noticed in Nigeria and there exists nothing, at present to show they might become defining features of Nigeria societies in the foreseeable future.

Civilization requires individuals to keep to fixed schedules, observe abstract rules, make judgments on the basis of objective evidence; follow authorities legitimated by technical competence not by tradition or religious sanctions (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria, bureaucratic principles are stultified by traditional and parochial criteria as age, sex and regional/ethnic considerations (popularly called Federal Character or Quota System).

## 5. Leaps towards Post-Modernism in Nigeria

Post-modernism is a historic period that destroys Civilization (Kostelanetz, 1969) and poses a future shock as it has potentials to revert humanity to anthropological primitivism (Toffler, 1970). The perceived consequences of post-modernism are as surmised by Kostelanetz (1969):

Agriculture diminishes until it is a small proportion of the society; the city and domestic currency disintegrates, war and national defense breaks down on a World scale; poverty and inequality reduce to an insignificant level, the expectations of life arises relative to death rate; thereby making birth control imperative. Economic development is bringing closer the evil day.

It has been observed that technological advancement is the driving force of post-modernism. It is speedily transforming societies by replacing material progress that served humanity well with new ethos as social responsibility, aesthetic achievement, hedonistic individualism among others. Information Technology (IT) is not yet advanced in Nigeria. Efforts at technological transfer has not been quite successful in Nigeria, partly due to high poverty level (33.1%)<sup>3,4</sup> and partly to low priority given to it by Nigerian government, including corruption and mismanagement of public funds.

## 6. Conclusion

Nigeria has limited access to technology, to exploit her resources for effective economic development and also, a considerable low proportion of Nigerians are competent on Information Technology (IT). Economic development, nay, civilization has not been commendable. With the impossibility for a societal transition into 20<sup>th</sup> Century Civilization when her people still live in an earlier era (Inkeles and Smith, 1974); economic development bringing closer the evil day - post-modernism (Kostelanetz, 1969) and culture of societies in Nigeria superseded in certain aspects by Western culture, but not obliterated, it could therefore be confidently concluded that Nigerian societies are relatively spared from the nightmare of post-modernism.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/poverty>

<sup>4</sup> [www.proshareng.com](http://www.proshareng.com). The African Development Bank has reported that about 152 million Nigerians are living on less than \$2 a day, representing a poverty population of about 80%.

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