

# **NIGERIAN HISTORY: AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE**

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## **Introduction**

The importance of historical studies to human and national development cannot be overemphasized. This is consequent upon the reality that, the superpowers in the world (as they are mostly referred to) such as the United States of America (USA), Britain, Russia, China and France have a deep sense of their collective history respectively. This had enabled these developed countries to look back upon their past in order to revive former glories, to discover their origins, to relate their historical knowledge of the development of the political, social, economic and other systems necessary for their continuous advancement (Vansina, Mauny & Thomas, 1964:59).

From the above-stated functions of History as an academic discipline, it can be deduced that this “father” discipline plays various roles towards the development and advancement of society as it has

- i. Evaluative duties (to determine whether we have the right goals and how far we have gone to achieve them)
- ii. Investigative duties (to enable man know about his origin, how he is, where he is and help determine his next step).
- iii. Informative and educative (to unveil necessary information needed to ensure the development of the various sectors of society such as political, social, economic and other systems).

The functions mentioned are few relevant points to note about the benefits of History as an academic discipline that aims to deepen societal understanding of man, his actions and impact his existence through time and space (Ikime, 1979). For the purpose of this piece, our use of history would be mainly investigative in nature but would no doubt, provide useful insights into the lives and times of ancient societies of the various Nigerian peoples. Before moving to discuss the origins of the various peoples that now make up the Nigeria territory, it is pertinent to have an idea of the various ethnic groups we intend to study as well as a description of the Nigerian boundary.

## **The Environment and Peoples of Nigeria**

History appreciates the part that geographical factors of location, climate and distribution of resources play in the study of human actions in the society. This had helped to make clearer why and how the political, economic and socio-cultural sectors of various societies formed, functioned and sustained. Thus, the environment determines what occupation the peoples of the area engaged in for

a living, system of governance, socio-cultural relations and so on (Alagoa, 1978).

Nigeria lies between latitudes 4<sup>0</sup>N and 14<sup>0</sup>W. it is bounded in the North by the Sahara Desert and in the South by the Gulf of Guinea, an arm of the Atlantic Ocean. The history of the country has featured many waves of human movements across the Sahara for economic, socio-cultural and other purposes (Udo, 1980:6). People move from place to place in search of favourable conditions for existence. In other words, migration had been a routine activity of man who sometimes, attempts to avoid the forces of nature in one place for another.

Environmental and climatic conditions ensure that the southern part of Nigeria is under the influence of rain-bearing south-west monsoon winds for most of the year, leaving a long rainy season of not less than seven months in a year. The north which is under the influence of the dry north-east winds of the Sahara Desert, is hot and dry for most of the year and supports an open Savanna Vegetation.

It is therefore, a function of environmental factors that, peoples of the north cultivates grains such as millet, guinea corn and *acha*, while the forest peoples cultivate root crops such as yams, cassava and cocoa-yams. The Middle Belt area which is a stop-gap between the climatic conditions of the north and south, is an area of mixed cultural heritage in which the food crops from both areas are grown side by side (Udo, 1980).

As a man migrates to avoid the unpleasant part of the forces of nature, there might arise conflict over access to available natural resources in an area. In other words, environmental factors might indirectly, kick-start the process towards the nurturing of conflict. Especially during the long dry season when water and grazing for cattle is scarce, it made cattlemen adopt the nomadic mode of existence, moving to farmlands of those on the Middle Belt in search of grasses. The end product is manifested in “Farmers-Herdsmen” clashes.

There are over 200 ethnic groups in Nigeria. These ethnic groups have their peculiar culture but sometimes, they share a history of cooperation on several fronts. It is important to note that, the essential ingredient of their societal configuration was kinship oriented with the various components of the groups laying claim to a common origin.

Thus, Alagoa (1972) has pointed out that, the use of terms such as “tribes and “clans” in classifying the various peoples unsuitable and therefore, should be avoided. According to him, “they carry pre-conceived meanings in the minds of many people” (Alagoa, 1972: 14). In similar stances, words like “tribes” and “clans” have prejudice and discriminatory meanings especially in its usage in

describing African peoples. Ethnic groups are appropriate for the classification of the various Nigerian peoples.

Some of the ethnic groups in pre-colonial Nigeria (before the formation of Nigeria) are the Bini, Hausa, Fulani, Urhobo, Efik, Idoma, Ijaw, Igbira, Yoruba, Tiv, Ibibio, Annang, Igbo, Wupe, Kauri, Chamba, Jukun, Kyato, Eggon, Shuwa, Manga, Koro, Burumawa and a host of others.

These ethnic groups as mentioned earlier, had distance culture and contiguous territories in the space called Nigeria today. Likewise, there were “ethnic nations” with separate identities who co-existed or lived side by side with each other. The influence of this in the twenty-first century Nigeria is that, there are various kingdoms with traditional rulers in the states of the federation responsible for the protection and preservation of their cultural heritages.

Due to the introductory nature of this course and the periods this piece intends to cover, we shall proceed to investigate the past of these peoples in three phases which are; pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial using selected themes and issues such as traditions of origin, societal configuration etc. as focal points.

### **Pre-Colonial History of Nigeria (To 1895)**

The pre-colonial history of Africa refers to the period of the origin, evolution and development of African societies as well as intergroup relations. The need to really ascertain the history of the various peoples had thrown up lots of conflicting views. In an investigation that attempts to go as far back to the foundations of human life, History has to collaborate with other disciplines to find answers to the never ending questions on human origin and existence. This section would consider issues such as the origin of the various Nigerian peoples, various nature and structure of societies as well as intergroup relations up to 1895.

The date, 1895 is chosen as the terminal point in this historical discourse because by this time, the British authorities had consolidated their position as “overlords” on the various peoples that make up the Nigerian Federation.

### **The Origin of Nigerian Peoples**

There are three schools of thought on the origin of man in the world in general and amongst the various ethnic groups in Nigeria on their origin. These schools of thought are;

- i. The creation school of thought.

- ii. The evolution school of thought.
- iii. The migration school of thought.

**The Creation School of Thought:** The main view expressed by those that hold this position is that man's existence was orchestrated by a supreme being in the remote past. This view holds that the Supreme Being created man and everything on earth. The most popular text on the creation episode is the Christian Holy Bible which stipulated in the Book of Genesis, how God created the heavens and the earth as well as man.

Most ethnic groups in Nigeria also have their perception of the creation of man. They believe that their existence is a product of a "manufacture" process by a higher and spiritual being. For example, amongst the Yoruba is the Oduduwa Creation narrative, which advocates that they are the forerunners of the human race. Ile-Ife is seen as the site where Oduduwa and the Sixteen Oye (Immortals) landed after Obatala (variously called Orisa Nla, or Orisa Alase), who was hitherto the leader of the delegation, sent by God to create the earth, was made drunk with palm wine hereby allowing Oduduwa to take charge of the assignment (Akinjogbin & Ayandele, 1980; Oduyeye, 1983).

The Bini people also tie their existence to a supernatural being. This is replicated in their worldview that, the land they occupy was given to them by Osanobua (God) and her first Ogiso dynasty was also referred to as 'Kings of the Sky' (Ryder, 1980). In the Akan worldview is also the idea of creation. It is pertinent at this point to address the issue of origin controversy between the Yorubas and Bini. A critical analysis of their origin which is domiciled in their traditions of origin clearly hangs on the establishment of the ruling house or monarchy than the origin of Yoruba group from the Benin and vice versa. They both claim that the prince that founded the monarchy in Ife and Benin belong to them. Thus, while we would agree that there had been intergroup relations between the various groups, idea of origin from one group or another is sometimes frivolous and must be assessed through specialized investigations such as linguistics, archeology, medicine, cultural comparative studies, among others.

In sum, the creation school of thought about origin by any ethnic group in Nigeria has not gotten support from these specialized areas especially archaeology. However, the origin of man is now, settled as archaeological findings have posited that man originated in Africa. This is consequent upon the findings by archaeologists at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania of ancient remains dating millions of years than others from other continents (Thurstan, 1980).

**The Evolution School of Thought:** The evolution school of thought sees man's origin as a consequence of natural and chemical actions. This view which is science oriented, rejects the imposition of the idea of a supreme being on man

as his creator. They believe that the forces of nature had by its own evolution, kickstarted the process of “making” man.

The evolution idea can be traced to the renaissance period in Europe where scholars started the rethinking or rebirth process that placed man and nature at the centre of the society. Thus, man became responsible for his actions as this school of thought rejects any supernatural influence on the activities and decisions of man. Notable proponents of this view include Charles Darwin, whose position still influence inter-racial and group relations. Others are War Robert Hooke, Thomas Fowler, Herbert Spencer and other humanists.

A basic flaw of this perspective is that, it cannot explain how the processes towards the creation of man started. Thus, we might ask, who or what started the process that led to the creation of man? Who or what created the process of man? History believes that “nothing causes nothing”. In other words, something must have started something. There is no auto-pilot explanation for the creation of man that would be acceptable to history.

The difference between the creation and evolution schools of thoughts is that, while the former attributed the creation of man to supernatural forces, the latter left this to nature. The similarity is that both cannot satisfy our quest for information about how man was created.

**The Migration School of Thought:** The above school of thought is primarily concerned about the movement of people from one place to another. This is consequent upon the fact that, many of them cannot actually trace their origin accurately.

The basic idea and form of record keeping in Africa especially south of the Sahara where Nigeria is domiciled is known as Oral Historiography. This includes oral traditions and oral history which cannot really tell of the origin of these people. For example, Alagoa has identified that, the Ijaw traditions of origin cannot tell us the ‘origin’ of the Ijaw people. It could only provide sketchy information on the extremities of the Niger Delta (Alagoa, 1972).

However, linguistic evidence has shown that the Ijaw language is calculated to be at least, 5,000 years old than Ibo, Yoruba and Edo, a long period which cannot be accommodated in oral traditions (Alagoa, 1972). Thus, versions of Ijaw migration from *Ile Ife* according to S.K. Owonaro and the *Mein* migration to *Ogobiri* amongst others, is not to mean that Ijaw emanated from any of the ethnic groups within the Nigerian context. What can and had been established is that, there had been long records of intergroup relations between Ijaw and her neighbours including marriages, commercial and religious relations that had made to settle within her territories and vice versa.

## **Nature and Structure of Pre-Colonial Societies**

The various Nigerian peoples had well organized systems that suited their need devoid of external influence from Africa. The colonial adventure in Africa was advanced on the “Hamitic Hypothesis” which postulates that, no meaningful development could have taken place in Africa without external or west assistance or influence. This hypothesis had been proven wrong, faulty and discriminatory as studies on the pre-colonial Nigerian societies showed.

The pre-colonial Nigerian people evolved kinship oriented societies. This means that the society is based on filial or family relations. Most people in the society trace their origins through their families to a common ancestry or marriage alliances. This helped to ensure peaceful coexistence and in times of conflict, amongst people. On the political front, the various societies are basically structured as centralized and non-centralized states.

The centralized states refer to systems developed by the Kanuri, Benin, Ife, Hausa, Nupe and other ethnic groups which had kings as centralized authority and trappings of modern nation-states. On the other hand, the non-centralized states have leadership that is not centralized on a single person but dispersed responsibilities to various officials of the society. The Ijaw, Urhobo, Isoko and Igbo societies are examples of the non-centralized political system.

A critical assessment of both political systems show that a centralized is not superior to a non-centralized political system. Put differently, it is not whether a political system is organized or not that makes it more stable and organized. What really distinguishes centralized from non-centralized political systems is the fact that all segments in the non-centralized system are politically equivalent and recognized, no higher authority than their political association. This helped to act as checks on any seeming despotic and authoritative tendencies amongst leaders of the society.

A history of the various Nigerian peoples in ancient times had shown economic cooperation between them. No Nigerian community was self-sufficient in its economy. The peoples in the Savanna region needed coastal products such as salt, fish and other sea foods, while those in the coastal areas needed shea-butter, hides and skins and other products from the former.

There were well organized economic systems that had well developed currencies and media of exchange for transactions to ensure that goods and services were equal to the payments made. Markets were well organized where they met and traded in variety of goods. While trade served to bring most of the Nigerian peoples together, it also linked them with the other parts of Africa and the world.

There were control mechanisms to protect their various markets from competition and only accredited or licensed traders known as “the middlemen” were allowed to export and import goods to the market. Levies, taxes and other rates were collected for the development of their societies and regulation of economic activities. This also ensured that cultural ties were strengthened as intergroup; marriages followed trading activities amongst Nigerian peoples in the pre-colonial era.

These societies also had their own forms of religion and worship which served the aim for which they were established. Nigerian ethnic groups thus, had the concept of God, life after death, spirits, reincarnation among other issues related to metaphysics and existentialism. On the religious plain also, was recorded the coming of Islam, a religion established in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by the prophet Mohammed in Arabia (Balogun, 1980).

The introduction of Islam changed the socio-political and economic contours of the areas that either accepted it voluntarily or conquered through the “Jihad” or Holy War. Islam was said to have penetrated through the trans-Saharan trade as Muslim merchants dominated the trade routes. The earliest evidence of Islam was noticed in the Kanem-Bornu in about 666 A.D.

The influence of Islam on the lives of the various Nigerian peoples cannot be overemphasized. It introduced the Sharia law which is an encyclopedia for the everyday living of a Muslim. Everything a Muslim does must be predicated on the Sharia law. Also, it introduced Arabic Historiography to northern Nigeria. This ensured that most societies could be able to document their activities in a written form. The only pitfall of this was that, it promoted any society that had Islam as their state religion and relegated societies that stuck to their earlier religious forms of worship. The arrival of Islam also occasioned the introduction of Arabic Education which used Arabian designed media of instruction and curricula to educate people. While Islam was dominant in the northern part of Nigeria, it also spread significantly to Yorubaland in the nineteenth century as well as *Afenmai* among others.

Another notable landmark which formed part of the economic history of pre-colonial Nigeria, was the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade which had an adverse effect on the Nigerian state in particular and the African continent in general. The trans-Atlantic Slave Trade ensured the transplant of African peoples and culture to the Americas between the fifteenth and nineteenth century which became known as the African Diaspora. The trade ushered in the idea of racism, black condemnation and discrimination as slavery became hereditary by black people and their descendants in the Americas.

Christianity also landed in Nigeria with the arrival of the first batch of Christian Missionaries in 1842 (Gbadamosi & Ade Ajayi, 1980). Like Islam, the aim of

the first missionaries was to ensure the spread of Christianity through evangelism while meaningfully engaging adherents through agriculture, trade and other useful ventures. It is imperative to emphasize that, European or Arabic religious influence did not come to the Nigerian environment singlehandedly. In fact, the main motive for their coming to Nigeria was first economic in nature. Dike (1956) asserts that, 'It was trading first and foremost that propelled European voyage to West Africa'. The overriding economic purpose of their various explorations was to circumvent Arab traders who controlled the trade between West Africa and Europe through the trans-Saharan trade.

The pre-colonial era came to an end in 1895 when most of the various ethnic groups were subdued and their societal structures collapsed to make way for the British administration whose main aim was to exploit the peoples for their economic self interest. This economic thought is referred to as Mercantilism.

### **Colonial History of Nigeria**

The colonial period of Nigerian history refers to the British welding of the various hitherto independent ethnic groups to form the current Nigerian Federation. It started as a process from about 1837 when Anna Pepple (Alali), who was regent of Bonny was deposed from the throne. From this point, British interference in local politics and administration became consistent as king Kosoko of Lagos in 1851, Pepple of Bonny in 1854, Jaja of Opobo (formerly Bonny), Oba Ovavanwen in 1897, King Frederick Wilhiem Koko of Nembe and others were routinely forced out of office. Thus, it became the norm for the colonial government to remove and install traditional rulers that suited their fancy. This was however, handed down to successive Nigerian administrations and has continued to the present day.

The British employed the "Indirect Rule" system to administer her colonies. This was to save economic costs as the home country required huge returns from the colonies annually for development purposes. The colonial authorities therefore, amalgamated the northern and southern protectorate in 1914 with the crown colony at Lagos. In 1939, the authorities divided the southern province to the western and eastern provinces with headquarters in Ibadan and Enugu respectively while the north remained a province with Kaduna as headquarters.

The result of the above on intergroup relations in Nigeria was that, it promoted unhealthy rivalry as those who were now forced to be under the leadership of a different ethnic group. For example, the Ijaw communities were Balkanized into the eastern and western provinces respectively and had to go to Enugu or Ibadan to carry out certain duties to the colonial government which was not the case in



the pre-colonial era where they related on equal status. Thus, colonialism created an arbitrary hierarchy of ethnic groups which was discriminatory and oppressive. Also, the minorities of northern Nigeria were also made to be under the now acclaimed “Hausa-Fulani” hegemony.

This resulted to minority agitations from ethnic groups for state creation, resource control and self-determination even into the post-colonial period. These minority agitations spurred the British authorities to set up a commission to look into the fears of the minorities and ways of allaying them also known as the Willink Commission in 1957.

The economy of the country was controlled by the British whose laws, system of government and court-styled administration of justice, became the mainstream ideas for operations in the society while the traditional ways of lives of the peoples was relegated to the background.

The first and second World Wars as well as western education, provided the ideological foundations and consciousness for Nigerian demand from colonial rule. Hence, self-government was granted to the various regions in 1951 and independence in 1960. History was used as a tool by the nationalists such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ernest Ikoli, Kwame Nkrumah, Sedar Senghor and others, to debunk the hypothesis that black people were not capable of a worthwhile civilization as studies on pre-colonial Africa shows that the various peoples that make up the Nigerian state have well structured and coordinated societies that suited them.

### **Post-Colonial Phase of Nigerian History (1960-)**

This period refers to the period of Nigerian independence from the British authorities. Nigeria gained “political Independence” on October 1, 1960 with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) as president and Alhaji Tafawa Balewa of the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) as the prime minister. It has been observed that while Nigeria and indeed Africa in general achieved political or flag independence, they were still tied to the strings of their former colonial masters economically.

The first ten years (1960-1970) of the independent Nigerian state was very turbulent. The minority agitations were carried over from the colonial era. The country still had three and later four regions which did not really fulfill the reasons for the sources of these discontent. Thus, there remained the Eastern, Western, Northern and later Mid-Western regions respectively. The creation of regions and states has been a very serious issue. However, the creation of states and the mid-western region, had been analysed as a political tool to weaken the opposition against the power of the Central government. Thus, the creation of

states in 1967 was seen as a calculated attempt to demoralize the Biafran agitation while the Mid-Western region was created to split the Action Group (AG) led Western region in 1963.

The minority agitations were very strong during the first six years of Nigerian independence. A notable example was the Isaac Jasper Boro's twelfth day revolution in 1966 which was an attempt to create the Niger Delta Republic out of the Nigerian state. This revolution preceded the Nigerian Civil War and is now a reference point in interrogating the idea of violence and open confrontation in the Niger Delta question.

The Nigerian Civil War which occurred from 1967 to 1970 is also an important milestone in Nigerian history. It was as a result of unhealthy rivalry between the various political parties such as NPC, NCNC and AG which had ethnic colouration in their activities.

The first coup of January 1966 and counter-coup of July 1966 were the immediate causes of the war. The remote causes include, religious intolerance, Western regional Crisis, 1963 census affected the corporate existence of the country.

The period 1970 – 1976 was a period of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation (3Rs) after the Nigerian Civil War. The post-civil war programme seem not to have met the ideological intentions it had as the peoples of the former Eastern region especially the Igbos over the years complained of marginalization and oppression by the Nigerian state. The 1970s also witnessed the "Oil Boom". From this time, Oil became the mainstay of the Nigerian federation.

The Murtala/Obasanjo era came in 1976 after General Gowon was overthrown by a bloodless *coup d' etat*. Murtala Mohammed was assassinated in 1976 and Olusegun Obasanjo continued the leadership of the regime until 1979 when elections were conducted which produced Shehu Shagari as President and Alex Ekwueme as Vice-President.

By late 1983, there was another coup which produced Mohammadu Buhari. His regime experienced a military patterned "war against indiscipline" as well as fight against corruption which did not follow due legal processes. It was because the military rule was by decrees and not constitutional provisions. In other words, the constitution was not operational in a military regime.

This was same with the Babangida regime (1985-1993), Ernest Shonekan (1993), Sani Abacha (1993-1998), and Adbulsalam Abubakar (1998-1999). The military era witnessed human rights suppression and abuse, widespread corruption and nepotism. Some landmark events during this era are; the June 12, 1993 election saga, state creation in 1991 and 1996, the Ogoni uprising (1990-

1995) and Ijaw Youth Council formation at the Kaiama Declaration of 1998, amongst others.

The Abdulsalam regime returned power to a civilian regime after the election of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. Obasanjo led the country between 1999 and 2007 before handing over to Yar'Adua/ Goodluck in 2007. With the coming of Yar'Adua, there was need to settle the enormous problems the country faced especially the Ijaw agitations for resource control and self-determination in the Nigeria state. The Ijaws believe that they had being severely marginalized by the Nigerian state who do not care about their wellbeing despite the huge revenue that crude oil, found in their domain, contributes to the Nigerian economy and development. They faced severe environmental and health challenges due to oil exploitation and exploration coupled with the bad terrain the people had to contend with.

Yar'Adua thereafter, declared amnesty for those young people in the Niger Delta who had taken up arms against the Nigerian state in their quest for resource control in 2009. Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was succeeded by Goodluck Jonathan in 2010 after the former passed on. Jonathan contested elections in 2011 and 2015. While he won the 2011 presidential elections, he lost to Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. The presidential and governorship elections are conducted every four years and the body responsible for the conduct of election at the federal and state levels is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

## **Conclusion**

The Nigerian state had being faced with the challenges of evolving the "Nigerian" identity which ensures ultimate loyalty and commitment to the country. The process of attempting to unite the various peoples to achieve a common identity is referred to as "Nation-Building", a project described by Tekena Tamuno as "a plant slow growth".

The various ethnic groups who were hitherto, independent of one another politically, now find themselves struggling for the leadership of the Nigerian state as well as the allocation of economic resources and cultural values which involves the use of or threat of force and violence to have their way. The Nigerian civil war is an example of this scenario.

Thus, ethnic groups in Nigeria, had been involved in a "Zero sum" game where the "winner takes all" and the loser, oppressed and intimidated. The Nigerian state would continually force people to be antagonist against her should the relevant stakeholders not consciously carry out plans and programmes for the peoples with their inputs for the growth and development of the country.

## Revision questions

1. Itemize and discuss the role geographical factors play in the study of human actions in the society.
2. Exhaustively discuss the creation school of thought as recorded in this study, showing its relevance in the tradition of origin of any Nigerian ethnic group.
3. Why did the British employed “indirect rule” to administer colonial Nigeria?
4. Why was the period 1970-1976 Christened reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconstruction (3Rs) in Nigeria?
5. Explain the term resource control and link it to the agitation of the Ijaw people of the Niger Delta.

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# **THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE**

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## **Introduction**

Any academic work on culture is likely to be faced with a wide variety of opinions most of which are ideologically framed or even disciplinary contrived as to be highly intuitive. So, every scholar of culture in most cases is expected to balance several arguments ranging from issues as simple as a definition to more complex ones such as historicising culture. These challenges notwithstanding, one is always able through rigorous albeit careful content analysis to filter key arguments and narratives that represent useful information especially for younger or emerging scholars.

As a result, this chapter provides readers with a simplified knowledge of the concept of culture while ensuring that the key ingredients that underpin the long list of scholarly materials on the subject matter are not unduly undermined. To this end, anyone who ventures to read this work is expected to enjoy a full dose of knowledge on issues such as:

- Meaning of culture
- Origin of Culture
- Components of Culture
- Characteristics of culture
- Basic Elements and Concepts the study of culture
- Significance or importance of Culture

## **Meaning of Culture**

The term culture is one concept in the social sciences specifically sociology and anthropology that has witnessed an unprecedented riot of meanings. This is why for instance, the term has been described as a notoriously difficult concept to define. Perhaps, this is what informed the review of the concept and definition of culture by Alfred Kroeber and Kluckhohn both of which are American anthropologists. This review led them to complete a list of 164 different definitions and or conceptualizations of the concept of culture. From this, it becomes easy to see that, providing an acceptable definition of culture in any academic work (of which this work is not spared) already presents a big problem simply because the theory and practice of culture exposes a mix-bag of perspectives on the subject matter. Hence, we appreciate Apte's (1994) corroboration of the problem of defining culture when, in his contribution to the tenth volume of the Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics, he argued that; despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early

1990s no agreement among sociologists and anthropologists regarding its meaning and nature.

Still, a careful review of the literature on the subject matter of culture, reveals clearly that a significant part of the difficulty associated with providing a definition for the concept of culture stems from the different usage of the concept as it was increasingly employed in the nineteenth century. In the non-academic context, the term culture may have some emotive connotation whereby people are described as cultured or uncultured. Such descriptions generally refer to whether or not an individual is socially integrated or is a misfit or a cultural deviant within a given social setting or social organization. In this sense, a person who does the right things in the right (perfect) way is referred to as a “cultured man”. Conversely, somebody whose behaviour is deemed to be at a level of crudity is regarded as unrefined, “uncultured”.

The meaning of culture in this sense is however very narrow and inappropriate. Culture cannot be defined in terms of one person possessing it and another lacking it. It is, in fact, inconceivable to have a human being who lacks culture. This is to say that such a human being does not have a way of life since, in the social sciences, culture is usually referred to as a totality of people’s way of life. In other words, culture refers to the gamut of the knowledge, beliefs, customs, traditions and skills that are available to the members of a society. This goes a long way to show that culture is embodied in the social life of a people and is derived socially and not biologically. It is therefore, social designs, prescriptions and responses, which are deliberately fashioned to guide all aspects of a people’s life.

From a broad perspective, culture is used in three ways. It is first applied to exemplify special intellectual or artistic endeavours or products that define lifestyles, what today we might call cultured behaviours tagged as; high, popular or even low or bad cultures. This categorization was clearly reflected in the work of Matthew Arnold titled ‘Culture and Anarchy’. By this definition, only a portion and typically a small one of any social group ‘has’ culture. This sense of culture is more closely related to aesthetics than to sociological or anthropological convictions.

Partly in reaction to the limited character of the first usage, the second perspective emerged as pioneered by Edward B. Tylor in his book titled ‘Primitive Culture’ which was first written in 1871. Tylor referred to culture as a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on a development (evolutionary) continuum akin to Lewis Henry Morgan’s Scheme that sees cultural movements from “Savagery” through “barbarism” to “Civilization”. It is worth quoting Tylor’s definition in its entirety because it became a directional cum foundational definition for scholars

in sociology and anthropology and also explains why Kroeber and Kluckhohn found definitional fecundity by the early 1950s. That said, Tylor defined culture to mean “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1920).

It is clear that Tylor’s definition of culture is without being prejudiced, seemingly encompassing and broad as to represent the fact that all humans have some degree of culture. In this sense and in contrast to Arnold’s view, Tylor holds the opinion that all folks maintain some level of culture, which they acquire by virtue of membership in some social group or society. What is more, his definition revealed that culture is a dovetail of knowledge, habits and capabilities making it easy to see the scientific basis of culture.

Another usage of culture, developed in anthropology in the twentieth century work of Franz Boas and his students though with roots in the eighteenth century writings of Johann Von Herders, as Tylor reacted against Arnold to establish a scientific (rather than aesthetic) basis for culture, so also, Boas reacted against Tylor and other social evolutionists. Hence, while Tylor and others within the evolutionist tradition stressed the universal character of a single culture, with different societies arrayed in a linear social trajectory that moves from savage to civilized stages, Boas emphasized the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. For Boas, one should never differentiate high from low culture, and one also ought not to create a cultural differential scenario that undermines other people’s way of life, while projecting others as a universal model.

From the above, it becomes clear that culture cannot be a single aspect of human existence but a collection of the entire activities of man in society. This means that culture is an embodiment of the totality of human existence. From the several definitions albeit perspectives highlighted above and the explanations so far, culture could be reduced to three interrelated sets of phenomena. These are:-

- a. *Tools and Techniques:* Culture enables to create and recreate themselves and their means of production. In this sense, tools and techniques as a cultural phenomenon are reflective of how a people invent such instruments in relation to their peculiar environment. For instance, it is easy to identify some specific kinds of tools and techniques with a particular set of people. These tools and techniques can be observed in terms of; artefacts including physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity and other phenomena, to the more permanent archival

manifestations such as company records, products, statements of philosophy, and annual reports (Schein, 1990).

- b. *Patterns of Behaviour*: Culture defines to a large extent a people's pattern of behaviour. In fact, culture gives direction to behaviours. This is because culture specifies standards of behaviour as discussed under norms and values below. While this is almost a tricky issue, it is easily identified that a group of people sharing similar culture may be identified by a distinctive behavioural pattern. In this sense, we can describe "how" a group constructs its environment and "what" behaviour patterns are discernible among the members, but we can often understand the underlying logic "why" a group behaves the way it does.
- c. *Shared Values*: These are beliefs, values, rules and norms that people create and recreate to define their relationships with one another and to the environment around them. Furthermore, to analyse why members behave the way they do, we often look for the values that govern behaviour, but as values are hard to observe directly, it is often necessary to infer them by interviewing key members of the organization or to content analyse artifacts such as documents and charters. However, in identifying such values, we usually note that they represent accurately only the manifest or espoused value of a culture (Qatey, 2002).

### **Origin of Culture**

As we have implied above, culture is as old as mankind and creation. It is therefore difficult to imagine any period in time man lived without a culture. It is probably culture that differentiates man from other animals. But if man has lived with culture, since time immemorial, how did culture originate? Two main sources are suggested and discussed below:

*The individual perspective*: There is the notion that culture may have originated through an individual even though culture in its present sense cannot be individualized. This is because culture is what members of a group generally share in common. For instance, it is likely that one man probably started the practice of animal husbandry and over time it was accepted by a majority of people. Other members of the society must have found these practices useful and therefore imitated the originator.

*The Group perspective (Sui Generis)*: The group perspective is a direct opposite of the individual perspective. This school of thought rests on the understanding that, the origin of culture cannot be credited to any individual. For instance, the idea of carrying placards to protest against authorities or individuals cannot be traced to anybody. Similarly, the idea of mourning the dead cannot be credited to anybody starting it. Culture can originate as a result of a group of people sharing the same feeling at a given period, and therefore acting in a similar



manner. It could be a spontaneous action. Culture may be said to have originated Sui generis (Ifeanacho, 1998).

## **Components of Culture**

Culture is divided into two parts. These are material and non-material culture.

*Material Culture:* the physical objects such as houses, canoe, roads, artworks, clothing, weapons, among others constitute the material culture. These are the tools made to make life more comfortable for man.

*Nonmaterial culture:* On the other hand, the abstract aspects such as knowledge, values, folkways, music, social institutions, ideas, norms and so on, constitute the nonmaterial component of culture. It is important to stress that the nonmaterial aspect of culture is what gives direction to the material components of culture since ideas and knowledge provide enabling conditions for the physical aspects to manifest.

## **Characteristics of culture**

1. *Culture is learned:* Culture is learned from the people you interact with as you are socialized. Watching how adults react and talk to new babies is an excellent way to see the actual symbolic transmission of culture among people. Two babies born at exactly the same time in two parts of the globe may be thought to respond to physical and social stimuli in every different way. For example, some babies are taught to smile at strangers, whereas others are taught to smile only in very specific circumstances.
2. *Culture is shared:* Culture must be shared by a large number of people in order for it to be considered as such. In other words, a belief or practice must be shared amongst a significant portion of any society in question.
3. *Culture is interrelated:* Cultures are coherent and logical systems, the parts of which to a degree are interrelated. When we say that culture is integrated we are saying that its components are more than a random assortment of customs.
4. *Culture is dynamic:* What this simply means is that culture is subject to gradual or even radical change. This could be as a result of cultural traits or an entire cultural practice changing over time due to progress in that society or as a result of contact with a superior culture.
5. *Culture is Particularistic:* In this sense, culture represents a unique activity to people. Even though we can see the universalistic character of culture, it nevertheless can also be particular in nature. It is an agreed fact that greetings, marriage, dancing, rituals, social status, inheritance, etc.

are practiced all over human society, yet some aspects are specific to certain people. This means that culture is particularistic.

6. *Culture is Ideal*: Culture is an ideal in the sense that the ideas and values expressed by members may not be eventually transmitted into normal behaviour in its entirety. Some aspects may be retained, while others lost or amended.
7. *Culture is Abstract*: Culture is a mental construct, and never a real or neat object. It is not seen but believed to exist by members of a society.
8. *Culture is Adaptive*: Culture is created by man and subject to his manipulation. Culture provides a new means of adapting to the condition of their environment. It is for this reason that Clyde Kluckhohn sees culture as a design for living held by members of a particular society.
9. *Culture is Universal*: By this we mean not just a specific practice, but the fact that it represents a universal principle of human social existence. There is no human society that does not have a way of life otherwise its cultural practices.

### **Basic Elements of Culture**

Every culture has some elements which can be translated as ingredients that collectively frame the cultural system of any society. The basic elements of culture are discussed below:

*Norms*: -Cultures differ widely in their norms, or standards and expectations for behaving. Norms simply are the standards that govern how people behave in any society. This is often divided into two types, formal norms and informal norms. Formal norms also called mores and laws, refers to the standards of behaviour considered the most important in any society. For example, formal norms in Nigeria include; traffic laws, criminal codes and a college contend, student behaviour code addressing such things as cheating and hate speech.

On the other hand, informal norms also called folkways and customs, refer to standards of behaviour that are considered less important but still influence how we behave. They are norms that in most cases are unspoken. Table manners are a common example of informal norms.

Many norms differ dramatically from one culture to the next. Some of the best evidence for cultural variation in norms comes from the study of sexual behaviour (Edgerton, 1976). Deviance across cultural perspective. Among the Pokot of East Africa, women are expected to enjoy sex while among the Gusii people of Western Kenya, a few hundred miles away, women who enjoy sex are considered deviants.

*Values*: Another important element of culture involves judgments of what is good and bad, desirable or undesirable. A culture's values shape its norms. In

Japan, for example, a central value is group harmony. The Japanese place great emphasis on harmonious social relationships and dislikes interpersonal conflict. Individuals are fairly unassertive by American standards, lest they are perceived as trying to force their will upon others (Schneider Silverman, 2010). In this sense, values represent what society terms as worthwhile and worth striving for in the daily activities of members of that society.

*Language:* Language is a key symbol of any culture. Humans have a capacity for language that no other animal species have, and children learn the language of their society just as they learn other aspects of their culture. An individual needs to learn his/her language to become a full member of his/her society or group. Language is a primary element of culture. Sapir (1921) and Whorf (1956) unite in pointing out that Language is central in determining social thought. In other words, language determines what people think and perceive because language influence people to perceive the world and also express their perception in certain terms.

*Symbols:* Every culture is filled with symbols or things that stand for something else and that often evokes various reactions and emotions. Some symbols are actually types of nonverbal communication, while other symbols are in fact material objects.

*Law:* These are a set of guidelines that define right and wrong behaviour/actions in society. These are formally codified norms everyone in the society is expected to be aware of and obey. Examples are the criminal code where it may have been stated that no individual should kidnap, kill or steal another's property. Violation of laws carries specific punishment. The seriousness of a sanction depends on how strictly the norms held (Anderson & Taylor, 2002).

*Rites of Passage:* A rite of passage symbolizes that a man or people have achieved some status in life. Okaba (2005 & 2006) explained rites of passage as the embodiment of ritual that accompany every change in place, time, social position and age. In another chapter of this textbook, the author on Rites of Passage provides an elaborate narrative on this and made it clear that rites of passage is intricately woven into the culture of a people.

## **Key Concepts in Culture**

1. *Culture trait:* This refers to the smallest units of culture. In this sense, every unit which involves both material and nonmaterial aspects of culture can be referred to as culture trait. For instance, a simple act of using cutleries is a unit of the western culture of eating food. So culture traits refer mostly to smaller bits of behaviours within the larger culture of a people. A culture trait can therefore be an object, a technique, a

belief or an attitude in so far as it is a part of the larger way of life of a people (culture).

2. *Culture complex*: This can be seen as a collection of the network of culture traits described above. In other words, a dovetail of culture traits form what we refer to here as culture complex. For instance, while the act of students going on a rag day can be defined as a culture trait in education, the entire system of learning can be viewed as culture complex.
3. *Culture Relativism*: The concept of culture relativism originated from the work of Franz Boas in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and it focuses on the notion of culture in the eyes of the practitioners. In other words, it rests on the principle of regarding the culture of a people from the perspectives or the opinion of the people who are direct owners of the culture in question. It simply implies the diversity of cultural systems and the need to respect other people's culture. Cultural relativism emphasizes the need for tolerance of other people's culture.
4. *Cultural Assimilation*: This is the process whereby the culture of a group of people assumes the character of another mostly through some kind of contact. This can happen through migration, colonial contact or any other form of association between cultures. In the case of colonial contact, the Britain and Nigeria is a good example. The same is true of migrants who gradually accept the language, belief and behavioural patterns of their hosts.
5. *Cultural Imperialism*: The term cultural imperialism is a more stronger variant of cultural assimilation. In this regard, the point is made where stronger cultures come to dominate others in a repressive or a forceful manner leading to the entrenchment of unequal cultural relationships. For instance, America has been indicted for cultural imperialistic behaviours which today seemingly accounts for the clash of civilizations according to Samuel Huntington.
6. *Visual Culture*: This is basically cultural dimensions that are overly visual in their character. In any case, it represents those aspects of culture that presents visual evidence of a group of people's way of life for instance; arts, media, housing among others. This could ideally reflect the notion of material culture discussed above.
7. *Culture Lag*: This represents the theoretical notion that a lazy relationship exists between culture and technology or other cultural areas where the former tend to be slow in catching up with the progress of the latter. Culture lag is associated with the theory espoused by William F. Ogburn, who defined the concept as follows: A cultural Lag occurs when one of two parts of culture which are correlated changes before or in greater degree than the other part does thereby causing less adjustment between

the two parts that existed previously. The concept is used where there are failures in adapting culture to technological change.

8. *Cultural Change*: This simply refers to the dynamism of culture. Hence, it is believed that culture is constantly undergoing some level of modification or discontinuation that alters the original state in which they were handed over to us by people of the past. This is actually associated with the nature of man who is consistently yearning for change in his way of life. In other words, culture is never static.
9. *Culture Shock*: This simply refers to the display of surprise or disorientation expressed by someone or a people from another culture when they are confronted by other people's cultural practices. It can further be defined as "the psychological and social stress experienced" when confronted with a radical different cultural environment. Culture shock is known to be a major forerunner of cultural ethnocentrism.
10. *Ethnocentrism*: Cultural ethnocentrism or simply ethnocentrism represents a situation where someone or a group of people from another cultural background judge the cultural practices of others from their own perspective and usually negatively. It is looking at other people's culture from the lens of our own culture and believing that ours is better than those of others. Cultural ethnocentrism is usually expressed in phrases such chosen people; progressive; superior race; true believes; infidels; backward people, underdeveloped, and so on.
11. *Xenocentrism*: The act of xenocentrism stands as direct opposite of ethnocentrism discussed above. It simply refers to a situation where someone or a group of people show preference for foreign cultures more than their own culture. This is particularly typical of most African people who consistently see western cultures especially those of America and Britain as more preferable than theirs.

### **Significance of Culture**

Like every other system of behaviour in human society, culture performs some distinctive functions that underpin its relevance or significance in that society. So it is easy to pose the question; what does culture do for people in society? Below, an attempt to answer this question is made by aggregating the significance of culture under some useful sub-themes.

*Communication*: Because of the character of language, culture enables members of society to communicate with others. This further provides enabling conditions for people to learn and share knowledge around culturally held beliefs and practices.

*Standards*. Through the values and norms which are integral to culture, human beings come to acquire standards of behaviour. In this regard, culture

performs the function of ensuring that standards are established to guide behaviour in society. This helps us in distinguishing between what is considered right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, reasonable and unreasonable, tragic and harmonious, safe and dangerous.

*Socialization:* Culture is a significant rallying point for the socialization of young ones. In this sense, culture provides the required frame of reference for training young ones to behave in ways, generally considered appropriate in society.

*Identity:* Culture performs the function of defining the identity of a people. Through culture, a distinctive set of behaviours which is reflective ways of dressing, eating, worship among others, a particular cultural group is distinguished and people from that group are identified.

*Bonding:* Culture is known to provide one of the most important structure of social glue ever known in human history. Through culture and associated rituals, a group of people become intricately bonded and in most cases are willing to die for each other.

*Leisure/aesthetics:* Another significance of culture most often neglected in the literature is the area of leisure and aesthetics. For instance, cultural activities such as dance, sports, wrestling among others provide means of leisure while showcasing the unique beauty of a people's way of life. Culture is now a major source of tourist attraction all over the world as more people continue to seek to understand other people's ways of life.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of culture as discussed in this chapter has enabled readers to see the many intellectual arguments as well as dimensions associated with a single concept. Perhaps, culture as a concept attracted such a widespread scholarly attention because it is indeed a significant determinant of man's social existence as well as what clearly distinguishes man from other animals. So clarifying issues about its meaning, origin, character and significance as we have successfully done here, is indeed a step in the right direction especially for students of culture in Nigeria.

## **Review Questions**

1. What is the definition of culture according to Edward Tylor?
2. Describe the two perspectives on the origin of culture
3. Mention and discuss the two major components of culture
4. What are the different characteristics of culture?
5. What are the basic elements and concepts associated with culture?
6. In what ways is culture significance in our society?

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# **NIGERIA: A PRE-COLONIAL, COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL INSIGHT**

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## **Introduction**

Long before the entity referred to as Nigeria came into being, its people were organized in diverse and mostly dispersed ways. During this period, the enclave now referred to as Nigeria comprised of many autonomous ethnic groups which shared absolutely nothing in common particularly in terms of culture, religion, blood ties except long distant associations that were underpinned by trade and commerce. Essentially, what is today known and called Nigeria could be referred to as more or less 'independent' communities, groups, empires, kingdoms, etc. and different peoples that had dissimilar psychological bonding and allegiance to any traceable common genealogy or ethnic origin. There were no commonalities in language, trade and commerce, religion, cultural contiguity and affinal relations (Iheriohanma, 2003). These explicated the scenario before 1914 Amalgamation.

By 1954, each of the regions that now make up Nigeria had their various ethnic affiliations, distinctive political and social activities in addition to their economic life. For instance, the Northern society had the following independent ethnic groups: Hausa, Fulani, Kio, Kanuri, Igala, Tiv, Nupe, Gwarri, Igbira among others. On the other hand, the Eastern region had the following ethnic cleavages: Igbo, Ogoni, Ibibio, Anang, Efik, Ijaw, Ikwerre etc.; the Western part appeared to be homogenous with the Yoruba dominating, the Ijebu etc.; while the South had the following: the Edo, Delta, Benin, Isekiri, and Isoko among others. As mentioned above, the various autonomous groups were unique in their culture, beliefs and traditions.

At the end of this chapter, the readers are expected to have in-depth knowledge of the following:

1. Pre-colonial Nigeria, with emphasis on the economy in terms of farming, fishing, pastoralism and trade relations
2. Pre-colonial Socio-political system in Nigeria
3. Colonial Nigerian society, with regard to its economy and administrative strategy, and
4. Post-colonial Nigeria, in relation to its neo-colonial characteristics



### **The Pre-Colonial Nigeria - The Economy in Focus**

As stated above, the pre-colonial societies prior to the birth of Nigeria were distinctively unique in the socio-political, economic, religious and cultural systems. However, for the purpose of this work, it is necessary to provide a working definition of the concept - pre-colonial. The term is used here to mean, the period of time before colonization of a region or territory. Hence, pre-colonial Nigeria would mean the period before the British intervention and specifically before British colonial administration came into being in the hitherto separate societies now officially referred to as Nigeria.

As we have attempted to clarify the concept - pre-colonial, it is also necessary to define what economy is at least within the ambit of this work. The term, economy, is seen as a specific cultural and social arrangement, structured by particular kinds of norms, values, roles, social control and practices, the purpose of which is to satisfy societal needs for production, distribution, consumption and exchange of goods and services. Hence, we hear of the economic system which deals with the production and distribution of goods and services within the larger social system or society.

Having dealt with the definitional issues in relation to our concern, we can now look at the substance of pre-colonial economic life. The main spring and life-wire of any society are mostly referred to as its economic and human potentials. Nigeria does not take exception to this universal rule. The kingdoms, states and empires that existed in pre-colonial Nigeria were great and prosperous not only because of their sound socio-political institutions, but also as a result of the endowed natural resources such as bountiful arable land for agriculture, mineral deposits, trade and crafts. In this sense, it is fundamental to state that the pre-colonial Nigerian societies albeit their differences and ways of life, were largely agrarian in nature with rudimentary division of labour underpinned by age and gender rather than the more sophisticated model we currently have in modern societies. The production process in most traditional societies of the period was mainly structured around kinship obligations, tribal affiliations, religious lines and moral values of the people. This perhaps is why Ekpenyong (1993) rightly maintained that land, labour as well as goods and services that were produced in traditional kind of societies were located, exchanged or appropriated through reciprocity and distribution rather than being dictated by market forces.

In trying to analyze the traditional economic processes and institutions of Africa and indeed Nigeria, culture is considered a key determinant of this institution especially in the light of the fact that culture is the foundation of the people's way of life and as such, takes the centre stage in the relevant production processes, the social organization of labour and, of course, the existing indigenous mechanisms for the distribution of social wealth. In doing this, we

shall focus on the key indicators that revolve around the agrarian economy of the people before the changes that emerged during the colonial era in Nigeria.

### **Farming in Pre-colonial Nigeria**

In the pre-colonial agrarian societies, farming was a major activity and access to or ownership of land played a key role in it. In other words, farming as a big part of the agrarian economy depended on a number of land-related factors such as availability, accessibility and how arable it is. Land is one of the non-exhaustible factor of production and access to and or ownership of it was culturally determined. The practices by which land is made available to individuals during the pre-colonial period were subsumed in the popular concept referred to as “land tenure”.

Famoriyo (1979) opined that the central issue in the analysis and discussion of land tenure system is the relationship of man to man in the occupancy and use of land. Hence, land tenure expresses the methods by which individuals gain access to, acquire, and use over land either on temporary or permanent basis and this practice differs from one society to the other. This notwithstanding, three types of land tenure systems were more dominant in pre-colonial Nigeria societies. These are family land tenure, lineage land tenure and public land tenure.

*Family Land Tenure:* This refers to the land tenure practice whereby a man, his brothers and children own a particular piece of land allocated to them as a family. The man to whom the land has been allocated has the right to put the land under use and can always return to it after some fallow period. As the name implies, it is usually inherited from previous ancestors by only those who are members of the family (genitors).

*Lineage Land Tenure:* The concept, lineage, simply means a corporate descent group; a group with common ancestor, and common property ownership. Adetola and Ademola (1985) state that a lineage land is a territorial unit distinctly marked from those of other lineages. In fact, Raimi, Ogadi and Wabah (2012) refer to this type of land tenure system as one in which land traditionally belongs to the ancestors of the people. In other words, this type of tenure involves the ownership of land by the founder of a particular community. Hence, all members who are usually the descendants of the guarantor of the land have perpetual and exclusive right to such land.

*Public Land Tenure:* In some traditional Nigerian societies, there are some parcels of land designated for public use only. Such lands are used for public utility such as markets, schools, village play grounds, church buildings etc. The head of the community and his assistants are in control of such property.

Decision on who, when and how to use it is mainly decided by the chiefs. Such lands are forests, swamps, reserved (sacred) forests among others.

### **Fishing in pre-colonial societies**

The art of fishing in pre-colonial Nigerian societies is to say the least very old and viewed as an ancient economic activity in most of the societies. Its activities cover both the coastal and inland waterways and it was of tremendous economic value to the pre-colonial Nigerians. Fish was one of the major articles among the commodities of exchange between traditional societies. Fish of various kinds were either dried in the sun or traditionally smoked in order to preserve them for long or short distance markets. Fresh fish were said to be marketed mostly in short distant areas owing to the perishable nature and problem of storage facility. Professional fishing is characterized by craftsmanship and special skills, such as boat, canoe, paddle, float, buoy and net construction coupled with invention of a variety of indigenous fishing techniques and gear. Fishing in pre-colonial Nigeria till date engenders migration as many of its practitioners would have to leave their original settlements for better prospects elsewhere.

Fishing of the migratory type was very prominent among the Ilaje, Izon, Itsekiri, Efik, Jukun, Ijebu, Awori among others. According to Bassey (1992), around the early 16th century, fishing is said to be practiced with rudimentary techniques and tools such as raffia materials, wood, and grasses and with very limited scope. By the late 18th century to early 19th century, most Nigerian fishermen had started developing improved fishing gear and techniques such as clapnets, castnets, *ita*, *egho*, *asuren*, *ojijon*, *agada*, *ighee*, *iyanna*, *ekobi ufo*, *riro* among others. To say the least, fishing constituted an important economic activity among the coastal/riverine traditional people of pre-colonial societies in Nigeria and even till date. The people by proximity to the rivers, seas, lakes, lagoons, creeks and streams have demonstrated sufficient skills over the years. Both men and women whose life revolved and continues to revolve around the riverine environment see fishing as their major economic activity. Nigerian fishing economy was in its progressive stage of development before the sudden colonial eruption and intervention that eventually truncated most of the envisaged natural growth associated with traditional economic activities.

### **Pastoralism in pre-colonial Nigerian societies**

Pastoralism is another economic activity practiced in pre-colonial Nigeria. It is the tending of sheep, cattle, goats or doing all of these together at a time. In a simple term, this refers to animal husbandry. Early traces of animal domestication in Nigeria is dated to the Nok era, between 900 or 500BC and AD200 (Stride & Ifeka, 1979; Shell, 1988), at Birnin Kudu near Kano and Geji near Bauchi states respectively.

Cattle herding is one major economic activity among the Northern Nigerians. Notable societies in the North known for this activity include the Shuwa Arabs, the Fulanis, the Kanuris.

During the pre-colonial era, the cattle territory lies mainly in the Sudan savannah zone where there is prolonged dry season while the rainy season only lasted from May to September. Pastoral growth in this area largely depended on the rains.

### **Trade in pre-colonial Nigeria**

Trade between pre-colonial Nigerian societies was another economic activity that preoccupied the people at this period. Trade is concerned with the business of distribution; selling and exchange emerged as a result of occasional surpluses generated over and above the current or immediate desire and needs of the people. There is a clear indication that the natural resources are not distributed equally. Stride and Ifeke (1971) cited in Girigiri & Anele (2003) assert that it was between forest and non-forest inhabitants that trade first started. According to them, trade later spread among different peoples in the forest zone. Some of the commodities that the people traded on were food and non-food stuffs. Trade by barter – where goods were exchanged for other goods - was the dominant character of commerce during this era. Later, currency was introduced when African and Nigerian people started trading with the outside world. But prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, there was the Trans-Saharan trade which was dominated by Hausa and their neighbours in the West African region.

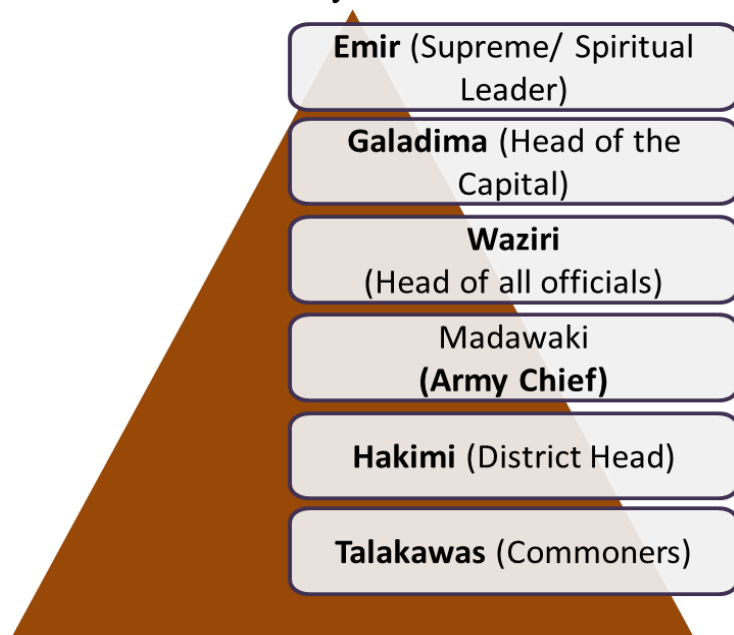
Summarily, it may be proper to state that traditional Nigeria economy before the British conquest was purely indigenous, self-reliant, and of course self-sustaining. The various autonomous groups used different farming implements relevant and preferable to their locality. The tools were produced or manufactured locally. Agriculture, hunting, animal husbandry, fishing, trading, mining and manufacturing developed differently before colonialism.

### **Socio-Political Character of Pre-Colonial Nigeria**

With regard to socio-political structure, it should be said that each of the different societies that made up Pre-colonial Nigeria had their distinctive ways of social and political associations. This to a large extent reflected the historico-cultural foundations of the different societies. Much as this is the case, it is easy to cluster these socio-political systems into three albeit reflective of the dominant ethnic groups of the time. These are the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo socio-political systems. Below, we provide a concise narrative of these socio-political characteristic.

## Hausa-Fulani Socio-Political System

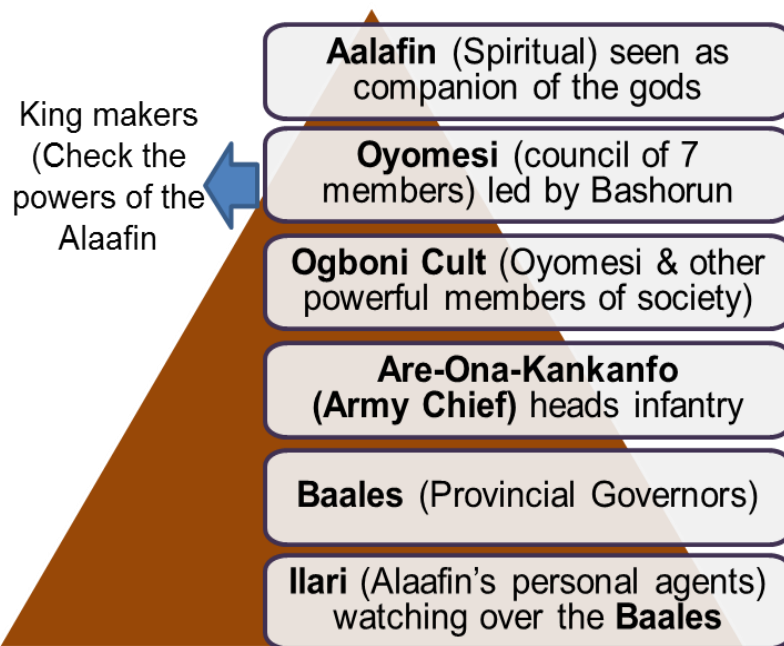
The Hausa-Fulani socio-political defines is associated with Northern Nigeria. This society is known to be home to the NOK (Tarracotta or clay/iron based) culture. The region was dominated by the *Hausa kingdom* which emerged from what was known as the fourteen kingdoms. However, *Sudanic States* displaced the Hausa Kingdoms and Sultanates began to emerge by the 17<sup>th</sup> century leading to a series of Wars that saw the emergence of organized empires. Religious holy War brought by the FULANI's marked a significant cultural, social and political change in Savanna States with the introduction of ISLAM which led to the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1808. Below is the socio-political structure of the Northern society.



From the socio-political structure of the Hausa-Fulani society presented in the diagram, it is easy to see that the Emir had supreme and spiritual powers attribute to the divine rights of kings in the medieval era. He was closely followed by the Galadima who runs the capital on-behalf of the Emir. This is followed by the Waziri who maintains oversight functions over other designated officials. The Waziri is followed by the Madawaki who in today's Nigeria is referred to as the Chief of Army Staff in charge of all the military. He is followed by the Hakimi who is in charge of the districts and lastly are the Talakawas representing the commoners or the masses.

## The Oyo Empire

In the Western part of pre-colonial Nigeria, the Oyo Empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Oyo was one of the rare empires with in-built checks and balances and this contributed to its stability for centuries. Below is the socio-political character of the Oyo Empire.



Alaafin (Oba's) court was the highest in the kingdom, followed by the Oyomesi constituting a council of seven members who were led by the Bashorun. The Ogboni Cult is made up the Oyomesi and other powerful members of the society. The Ogboni Cult is followed by the Are-Ona-Kakanfo who was considered as the head of the infantry akin to the army chief described above. This is followed by the Baales who oversee the provinces as governors and lastly, the Ilari acted as the personal agents of the Oba to watch over the Baales.

### **Igbo Socio-Political Character**

Unlike other pre-colonial societies such as the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani and Bini, the Igbo people did not build any strong centralized states. The largest social and political unit was the village/village group. This was largely driven by the kindred then family units with the council of elders (Ofo title holders) representing the highest decision making body. This was followed by the Ozo title holders, the age grades and the women groups. However, the age grades performed functions such as labour services, defence and to some extent administrative duties. The Igbo socio-political system has been referred to as village democracy or republican government in its rudimentary form.

### **The Colonial Nigerian Society**

Having analyzed the economic characteristics of pre-colonial Nigerian societies, this section focuses on, especially the economic activities in the colonial era. This ultimately laid the foundation for modern day Nigeria. Colonialism refers to a social system in which political conquest of one society by another leads to cultural domination with enforced social change. Because there is a generally held perception that colonialism was chiefly motivated by the expropriation of

material wealth, it is logical to point out that the reason for its existence was economic.

However, there were three main reasons for the European intervention or, to say, colonization of Africa. These were a) to Christianize / Evangelize Africans, b) to stop slave trade, and c) to bring about “legitimate” trade. These were the outward or manifest reasons for colonization but the argument has been that African indigenous peoples knew their creator and were worshiping Him before the white-man came. How come the British came to evangelize a people that had their religion before then or were they here to show us how to worship their own God? The issue of “legitimate” trade sparks off stiff argument in that it takes two to tangle. Who were engaged in the slave trade that made America and Britain what they are economically? Africans could not have involved themselves in the kidnapping and killings of themselves if there were no buyers of individuals that were exploits from the internecine wars. The latent reasons for their coming were i) to source for raw materials for their emergent industries, ii) to extend their political and military prowess otherwise there was no need to Christianize a people with the Bible in one hand and a sword in another. You do not force a people to accept Christ or religion unless you are engaged in a Jihad. Another reason was to protect their political and business interest in Africa, hence the approach through military warfare and conquest. The Berlin Conference explains all these in details as this chapter is limited in its scope (Iheriohanma, 2003). The British colonization in Nigeria altered and derailed Nigeria’s political and economic future and development and this accounts in greater percentage the crab-walk-like political and economic development in Nigeria today and the effect will continue to linger in our face for a longer time to come.

During the nineteenth century, as the Industrial Revolution got under way, European nation-states moved outward for the acquisition of new territories. These oversea territories were to serve as major sources of raw materials and markets for European manufactured goods and services that were mass produced by their new industrial system, without which it would have been difficult for the survival of these industrial nations. The outward drive for overseas territorial possession is simply referred to as imperialism.

Colonialism, as earlier mentioned, is the direct political, social and economic domination or subjugation of one relatively powerless nation by a more powerful one. It is usually characterized by the exercise of political control and generally the manifestation of domestically adverse policies aimed at the structural, economic underdevelopment of the colonized in such a way that those colonized are distanced from the products they produce and are forced to engage in activities with direct bearing to the colonizers. This epitomized alienation of the colonized.

As Nekabari (2000) opines, colonialism therefore is characterized by the presence of political institutions which serve the interest of the colonizing authorities and armed occupation by force and a monumental act of hostility which dispenses a great deal of violence as well as political authoritarianism. When the reasons for European conquest of Africa and Nigeria, through the process of colonialism as at then, are expanded we have the following:

- i. Exploration for Geographical/Scientific knowledge
- ii. Economic
- iii. Religious/Humanitarian
- iv. Political and Military

1. **Exploration for Geographical/Scientific Knowledge** – There was a period of contention that the world was flat, round or spherical. This necessitated the first explorers from Spain and Portugal to scientifically affirm the proposition of this debate. Yet, it is still contentious if this could be a reason for colonization.
2. **Economic** – This has been identified as the primary reason for the coming of Europeans to Africa and by extension Nigeria. This is latent but a clear and potent reason for the domination and exploration as this has tended towards globalization, interconnectivity, interdependence, etc. with the assistance of information and communications technology (ICT).
3. **Religious/Humanitarian** – European Missionaries equally played some important roles in conquering Africa. Their activities were mainly to convert souls by making them have the knowledge of Christ but indirectly they paved the way for the legitimization of the British and other colonizers' commercial business in the region.
4. **Political and Military**: The character of annexing territories by powerful societies or nations of the time was key to their political machismo. Hence, powerful countries maintained and continue to maintain colonies as a way of equally showcasing their military and political power as 'strong political entities' to the entire world. This still reflects in international politics and arena.

### **The administrative strategy of the colonial period**

The subjugation of hitherto existing pre-colonial societies and their subsequent merger as one socio-political entity meant that new forms of governance or administration had to be introduced. This administrative strategy was to ensure that a people that were previously different in so many ways, were easily managed for the gains of the colonial system. Much as this is the case, the colonial administration's form of ruling from Whitehall England, introduced the direct and indirect models as the case may be.



*Direct rule:* The model known as the direct rule, involved the administrative structure set up by the colonizers to regulate both social and economic activities within the colony. The colonial administrators bypassed existing social organizations and structures and supervised a centrally controlled administrative hierarchy for their interest. Here, existing indigenous administrative structures were completely neglected and a direct process of managing the people was followed.

*Indirect rule:* On the contrary, indirect rule involves the exercise of power by colonial authorities via local leaders such as chiefs, kings, and family heads. This was the method practiced by the British colonizers in Nigeria. In fact, this model became more popular to the extent that where chiefs were not in existence such as in the Igbo societies, they were erected for the sole purpose of aiding the colonial administration. In Igbo society, the British established the *warrant Chiefs* stool for the purpose of collecting taxes and reaching the people. Indirect rule in Nigeria was introduced by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard in 1914 after he had introduced and practiced the system in India. He surveyed the existing structures in Nigeria and found the need to introduce it here after the 1914 Amalgamation of Southern and Northern Protectorates. This explains the maxim that 'Nigeria is the creation of the British'. The 'independent' entities that made up present - day Nigeria had no hand in this marriage of 'inconvenience' that could be said to have started as far back as early 1860s with John Beecroft appointed as the British Consul for Bights of Benin and Biafra in 1849.

### **The Post-Colonial Nigeria**

The granting of independence to Nigeria in 1960 was widely celebrated. This was because people were hopeful with the expectation that there would be some fundamental transformations in the society. There was widespread hope that significant changes would ensue that would promote better economic empowerment of the people, industrialization of the country, growth of infrastructure in areas such as health, roads network among others as well as believing that poverty of all kinds would be addressed. But after independence, such expectation could not be realized. At this point, it became clearer that political independence could not usher in the much expected economic and social freedom. This is because the economy remained disarticulated and vertically integrated into the capitalist economic system of the dominant colonizers who are still in control of the economy from outside. In fact, the literature began to witness such new terms as *neo-colonialism*, *external rule*, *flag independence* among others as a way of describing the new character of the social relations that existed and still persist between Nigeria and her erstwhile colonial masters in the post-colonial era.

Consequently, the local economy failed to respond to domestic demands. Therefore, it became evident that the withdrawal of political domination did not mean that foreign domination had ended. Hence, the post-colonial African societies such as Nigeria were analyzed in the third All Peoples Conference in Cairo, Egypt from 25<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>th</sup> March 1961 in the following ways:

1. Puppet government representing a stooge system with characters such as, societies that fabricate elections based on some chiefs, reactionary elements, anti-people, politicians, big bourgeois, compradors or corrupt civil or military functionaries.
2. Regrouping of states before or after independence by the imperial power in federation or communities linked to imperial power.
3. Balkanization as a deliberate political fragmentation or state by creating artificial entities.
4. Economic infiltration by a foreign powers after independence through capital investment, foreign direct investments, loans and monetary aids or technical expertise on unequal contentions, particularly, those extending for long period.
5. Military bases, sometimes introduced as scientific research centres or training schools, introduced either before independence or as part of conditions for independence.
6. Integration into colonial economic blocs which maintain the underdevelopment character of African economies... through modernization policies.

Perhaps, it is in appreciation of the enumerated characteristics of the post-colonial African societies above that Nkrumma (1966) cited in Girigiri, (1999) defined neo-colonialism as “the last stage of imperialism”. To him therefore, it is the process of handing independence over with one hand and taking it back with another hand.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the focus has been to provide albeit briefly the three historical epochs that characterize the Nigerian society. Hence, the beginning point covered the discussion on the pre-colonial societies which as they were, represented some degree of distinctively autonomous societies with different socio-cultural characteristics. However, the coming of the colonial age triggered a forceful unconventional marriage between these hitherto independent societies thereby setting the stage for a long distasteful country-union called Nigeria. This marriage notwithstanding, the character of the post-colonial Nigerian society leaves little by way of expectation given the fact that politically, the country can brag of independence but economically, this seems like a far cry from reality. This doubt in the country’s complete independence from her erstwhile colonial masters gave rise to the neo-colonial discourse in the

literature. It is nevertheless sad, that the colonial hangover is still bedeviling the country till date and there is the urgent need for real independence especially in the realms of economy and politics.

### **Review Questions**

1. What do you understand by a precolonial society and what were the dominant economic activities in this period?
2. Describe the different socio-political system of the pre-colonial Nigerian society
3. How do you describe the place of land tenure system in the agrarian economy of precolonial societies?
4. List and explain the four processes that underpinned the reasons for the conquest of Africa, and in deed Nigeria, through colonialism?
5. Why is the post-colonial Nigerian society considered a neo-colonial society?

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# **FAMILY INSTITUTION, MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP SYSTEM**

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## **Introduction**

The history of human has being characterized by social groupings formed for the purposes of accomplishing basic collective societal goals needed for existence and continued survival of humanity. Man in his bid to achieve vital social needs designed his life and activities into varieties of social group units. The social synergy within family units such as the marriage, family, and the kinship and descent system is crucial to the human and societal functioning. Some functional roles of intimate group organizations include; companionship, sexual regulation, child bearing, socialization process, economic activities, political aspiration, and religious duties.

The centrality of marriage, family, and kinship system to the human society cannot be over-emphasized. Our social nature is inherent in the group we create and live in all through our lives. Also they serve as essential social ingredients linking various groups into a universal social system (Erebagha, Igibuna & Obaro, 2008). The diversity in human culture has aided the creation of myriads of marriages, families, and kinship systems across the globe. Nevertheless, regardless of the diversities in the familial and extra- familial organizations, their functional roles remain the same as it helps in the continued survival of the social system. At the end of this chapter, readers are expected to have gained insight into the following:

- i. The changes currently being witnessed in the intimate institutions and identify factors propelling this changes.
- ii. The contemporary definition of family related institution ( e.g marriage, kinship, and descent system, etc).
- iii. The contemporary functional roles of the family related intimate group organization such as descent, residential patterns, marriage, etc.
- iv. Varieties of the family institution across cultural divide and
- v. The functional roles of the family, marriage, and kinship system.

## **The Family**

The family is regarded as one of the oldest critical institution saddled with the primary role of bearing, rearing, and nurturing the new members of the society.

It is the social milieu in which members of a society access their means of identity (Jack, 2015). Also, the family institution has both particularistic and universalistic attributes. Universal in the sense that the family is an institution that can be found all over the world, and particularistic because its structure and element are relatively unique across cultures. Scholars across the disciplines of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social history have tried to define the concept of family. For example, Smith and Preston (1982) defined a family as a social group whose members are related through common ancestry or marriage and are bound by moral and economic rights and duties. Burgess and Locke (1953, cited in Anele, 2003) see the family as group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social role of husband and wife, mother, and father, brother and sister: creating a common culture. The above definition can easily pass for the traditional meaning of the family. However, with the current transition the family is undergoing as occasioned by globalization and modernization there are contemporary definitions of the family which give room to the ever changing structure and role of the family institution. For instance, Benokraitis (2008) defined marriage as a unit made up of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption, live together, form an economic units; and bear and raise children. In the same vein, but in a more complex form, Benokraitis (2012) view modern family as an intimate group of two or more people who live together in a committed relationship, care for one another and any children, and share activities and close emotional tie. The comprehensive modification in the structure of the family, its membership roles, and the definition of the concept of marriage have impacted adversely on the contemporary meaning of the family. The upsurge and the ever increasing acceptability of family aberrations such as the gay family, same sex marriage, single parenting and cohabiting family have altered the definition of the family.

## **Types of Families**

The family institution differs across cultural lines, historical epoch, authority/power wielded by parties involved, and membership composition. Below are types of family across cultural boundaries.

- a. **Nuclear family**- A nuclear family comprises the assemblage of the father, mother, and dependent children living together as unit. The nuclear family is the most basic in the entire family structure. Some Social Anthropologist call it “elementary family”. It is a universal human social grouping. Okaba (2005) distinguished between conjugal and orientation nuclear family. According to him, the family of procreation is

the conjugal family, while the family where one is born is the orientation nuclear family. In Africa traditional societies a nuclear family might have a single house or a group of huts within a compound, with each hut having its own cooking, sleeping and toilet arrangement( Anele,2008)

- b. **Extended family**- It is an extension of the nuclear family both in size and composition. Usually the extended family is enlarged with the addition of other kinsmen( i.e relative of the nuclear family considered intimate to the family (Anele, 2003:102).Generally, in the third world countries like Africa where kinship affinity is held at high esteem extended family structure is prevalent because it is believed to provide socio economic support and culture balance.

Haralambos and Holborn (2000:504) cited in Anele (2003) opined that an extended family can be incorporated into vertical and horizontal extension. The former include members of the family from the third generation such as the spouses parent and grand -parent. The later, on the other hand refers to family members of the same generation such as husband's brother, wife's sisters and additional spouses.

- c. **Compound family**- The term compound is associated with third world societies of Africa, referring to a group of houses built in clustered form around a square yard. The compound family is structured in such a way that there is a central household head (always a male) at the top echelon of power and authority structure. In a family where polygny is practiced, the man's wives and concubines form the lower echelon of power. Each of the wives is expected to be heads of respective names with their children and other relatives in subjection to the authority flow. According to Erebagha e tal (2008) compound family organization can be seen as overlapping set of nuclear families with the same man as family head.
- d. **Blended Families**- This type of family structure is a product of remarriage. Often time cases of divorce/separation or the death of a spouse (widow or widower) is a prelude to blended family. Blended family is sometime used interchangeably with stepfamilies. It is a type of family that accommodates siblings and children from previous marriages along- side children in current marriages. Blended family is a characteristic of modern society with its attendant problem such as weak family cohesion, dual loyalty challenges due its complexities ( Knox and Leggett,1998).In addition, blended family is typical of industrialized society, with about 17 percent of Americans living under this arrangement (Kreider,2008).

### **Varieties of Family along Authority and Power**

**Patriarchal Family:** This is a type of family in which authority and power rest squarely on the male figure. Decision making and major responsibilities ranging

from provision of food, shelter, security, etc are discharged by the men. In most society men are the head of the households thus the bulk of the social roles and expectation falls within their jurisdiction

**Matriarchal Family:** In this type of family arrangement, power and authority of decision making fall under the control of the woman . A sizeable number of cultures around the world practice matriarchal family arrangement where the woman is the head of the household. Female headed household are practice in places such as West Indies and Nayar in India (Jack, 2015).

It is noteworthy that matriarchal family is not always a cultural condition but a time a product of exigency. The death or desertion of a male household head could force a woman to assume the position of headship. Examples abound of a situation where the incapacitation of the male figure in patriarchal home triggers the emergence of matriarchal family in our contemporary society.

**Egalitarian or Laissez faire Family:** This is a type of family structure that encourages equal share of power and authority between the male and the female (Husband and Wife). It is popular in the nuclear family structure in which both the husband and wife collectively take major decisions with regards family issues. Most modern and industrialized societies of the world practiced egalitarian family as family roles and responsibilities are jointly shared between couple. Women social movement forces as epitomized by affirmative action, gender equality, and clamor for emancipation has been fuelling the increase of egalitarian family in advanced countries.

## **Functions of the Family**

The family is no doubt the most vital social institution given her crucial role of providing platform for bearing, rearing, and socializing new members to become a social fit in the society. Besides this above mentioned primary functions the family institution performs interpersonal and other socio-economic functions that are critical to the existence of humanity and society at large. In specific term the following are some of the functions of the family.

1. **Regulation of Sexual Activity:** Across cultural divides there are norms that culturally defined rules for behavior regarding who to engage in sexual relation, and under what circumstances (Benokraitis, 2012). Man has hitherto all over the world used the family institution to regulate sexual activities within kinship ties to avert conflict of roles and responsibilities among members. One of the oldest rules that regulate sexual behavior is the incest taboo norm. This is a cultural or traditional norm that forbids sexual intercourse between close relative such as blood

brothers and sisters, fathers and daughters, etc can be found within the family institution.

2. **Procreation and Socialization** - Procreation and replenishment is one of the vital functions of the family institution. Legitimate children are raised within the safety net of the family unit. Although companionship seems to be the primary concern of couples as some chose to avoid procreation. Once a couple becomes parent the family embarks on socializing the children.

Socialization is central to the children's moral and cognitive development. Through socialization the children acquires languages; absorb the accumulated knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and values of their culture; and learn social and interpersonal skills they need if they are to function effectively in the society(Benokraitis, 2012)

3. **Emotional Support**- The family is a critical primary group that allows close emotional affinity needed by members during crisis. The family bonding is also vital for protection against external aggression and oppression. Because family identity and membership tends to last for a long time, members do draw emotional strength for happy, healthy and secured life.

4. **Economic function**- The family during the industrial era and even in some contemporary agrarian society served the purpose of economic utility. It provides platform for financial security and stability. The family supplies the fundamentals of livelihood such as food, clothing, shelter, and health, etc.

In the typical traditional family the husband provide for the family while the wife does the housework and care for the children. However, due to the transit nature of work occasioned by changes in the economic structure we have wide range of family economic arrangements. Some of these arrangement includes; the two- person single career, dual-earner/dual-career families, trailing spouses, etc.

5. **Social class placement**- social class connotes the categorization of individual into hierarchies on the basis of wealth, education, power, prestige and other social values. People tend to inherent social position based on parental and spousal social class. In a society where the caste-system is practiced, the family one is born into is used to determine social status accrued to the individual. The family, an indispensable instrument of social stratification provides a channel through which wealth and properties are preserved and transferred from one generation to the other.
6. **Protection**: The family offers safe emotional, psychological, and physical haven for members against external and internal crisis. A closely bonded family provides a platform for rallying against perceived common enemy (i.e unemployment, poverty, illness, etc)



## **Marriage**

There are myriads of definitions explaining the concept of marriage. The versatility and uniqueness of culture makes the task of arriving at a single definition a difficult task. Besides, the constant transition inherent in the society is aiding the modification of the definition of marriage. For instance, Horton and Hunt (1980) viewed marriage as the approved social pattern where two or more person establishes a family. Murdock (1965) cited in Anele and Okaba (1998) see marriage as a socially approved union of a sexually cohabiting pair called husband and wife through which the offering derive their legitimacy. Farley (1994) defined marriage as socially approved union between a male and a female which entails economic and sexual relationship. However, with the modification in the composition of parties in marriage (i.e lesbian and gay marriage/ partners) there has been a gradual alteration in the definition of marriage to accommodate changes in the institutions, especially with regards issues such as cohabiting couple and same sex marriage. Contemporary definition of marriage see marriage as a socially approved relationship between two adult partner (heterosexual and Homosexual) cohabiting or legitimate, with the purposes of sexual relationship, economic support, and other social functions, with or without children.

Okodudu (2010) views contemporary marriage as a union between two consenting adult irrespective of their sexes with or without approval from their parents or family. Regardless of all the changes occurring in the marriage institution, the fundamentals of the traditional marriage across all culture remain intact. The following are some the basic feature of marriage:

- i. It is an economic union
- ii. It is a union between two adult.
- iii. It is characterized by partners living together.
- iv. There is sexual involvement in marriage.
- v. Marriage creates kinship ties
- vi. Marriage is a legal contract between two or more consenting adult.
- vii. Marriage is a reflection of our cultural heritage.

## **Mates Selection**

Mate selection is an integral part of the marriage process. The general principle is that most of us narrow our pool of prospective partners by selecting people we see on a regular basis who are most similar to us along variables such as age, ethnicity, values, social class, religion, and physical appearance. However, because culture differs there are diverse versions of mate selection. Here are some of the varieties of mate selection;

- a. **Homogamy** – Refers to dating or marrying someone with similar social characteristic such as ethnicity, religion, social class, educational background, etc.
- b. **Endogamy** – It implies dating or marrying only from one's own kinship group, ethnic group, and religious group. It is selecting mate from one's social milieu.
- c. **Exogamy**- It occurs when an individual select marriage partner outside one's kinship or ethnic group.
- d. **Hypogamy**- Dating or marriage between an upper class woman and a low class man.
- e. **Hypergamy**- Dating or marriage between an upper-class man and a low income class man.

## Types of Marriages

Marriages are in different forms all over known society. Here are some of its dimensions;

1. **Monogamy**: This is the bedrock of a nuclear family. It is marriage between two partners (husband and wife) at any point in time. There are spouses who remarry due to the death of their partners or incidence of divorce. When there is such an occurrence, and the person remarries another partner, it is termed serial monogamy.
2. **Polygamy**: It is marriage relationship involving more than one partner at a time. Polygamy can be broadly divided into two categories. Namely;
  - i) **Polygyny**: A marriage relationship that allows a man to marry more than one wife. According to Anele (2003) Polygyny in African society persist because it helps to mop up excess population of women of marriage age who otherwise would have remained unmarried. In addition Polygyny is common among the agrarian population where large human labor are required for economic sustenance.
  - ii) **Polyandry**: Here a woman is simultaneously married to more than one man at a time. This type of marriage is found among the Indians and Tibet Bele in Central Africa. Atieme (1994) cited in Jack (2015) confirmed that polyandry is also common among the Irigwe in Plateau State of Nigeria. There two versions of polyandry. In the first one, the woma (wife) live under the same roof with a group of brothers. This type is called "fraternal polyandry ". The second version is such that the woman stays in her home and there is an arrangement of how her husband will live with her in turns. This version is termed Matriarchal polyandry (Goldthorps,1981).

iii) **Group marriages:** This version of marriage occurs when a group of men are married to other group of women and are sexually involved with one and other. Onyeneye (1993), cited in Anele and Okaba (1998) argued that group marriage is synonymous to polygamy. Nevertheless, there is paucity about the practice of group marriage in our contemporary society due to its unethical nature.

iv) **Pawn marriage:** In this type of marriage a man espouses his daughter to his creditor in exchange for the debt owed. Acceptance of the girl as wife connotes that the creditor has been paid for the debt owed. Pawn marriage is popular among the Ijos of the Niger-delta, especially during period of severe financial distress. Anele (2003) opined that pawn marriage existed also up to early seventies in part of River State in Nigeria.

v). **Levirate Marriage:** This is the type of marriage, especially in Africa that mandates the late man's brother or relation to inherit his deceased brother's wife. The rationale behind levirate marriage is to allow a man who died too young without children to have the opportunity of having them after death. In this case we have the social father called "pater" as different from the physiological father "genitor".

Another version of levirate marriage encourages the inheritance of a deceased's wife by his eldest son (where the son is of a different mother). Levirate marriage is found among the Ogonis, Igbos of Nigeria, the Nuer of Sudan, and the Bedouin in Arabia (Erebagha et al., 2008)

vi) **Sadaka or Gift marriage:** As the name implies it is form of marriage where parents, especially fathers give out their daughters as wives to influential friends, loyal servants and political and religious figures in order to maintain or cement a cordial relationship. For instance in the Northern part of Nigeria, an Hausa man can give out his daughter out in marriage freely to a beloved influential friend. Okaba (2005), cited in Erebagha (2008) argued that in central Africa, chiefs give out their maidens to rain queen goddess (Nujaji) who in turn share them to her faithful chiefs as present for their loyalty. Gift marriage is equally common among the Urhobos where the bride wealth of the gifted out maiden is not demanded by her father. However, other rites of passage are observed.

vii) **Widow Inheritance:** This type of marriage arrangement occurs when son, brother, uncle or close relative of a deceased is asked to marry the deceased man's wife to maintain the kinship group tie. Most time the deceased man's widow is given the opportunity to choose among the deceased relative's would be husband. Okodudu (2010) posited that children resulting from the union belong to the new

husband and not the dead husband. Just as the deceased man's children retains their father's name. Widow inheritance marriage is common among the Ibos, Fulani, and the African and Asian societies (Jack, 2015).

viii) **Ghost Marriage:** In Africa people go into marriage because of the desire to have children. However, some couples are not luck to have children before they become deceased. Also, some persons or individual die young without any offspring to keep their name. In some cultures, a wife is married on behalf of the deceased for the purpose of raising children to bear his name. Under this arrangement, the wife is socially married to the dead man whom she never knew. And children gotten from the marriage are named after the deceased man. The essence of this type of marriage is to immortalize the deceased who was unable to have children before death (Anele, 2003)

ix) **Sororate marriage:** This is a marriage arrangement that allows a widower to marry his wife's sister (especially the younger sister). Another version of the Sororate marriage is called Sororate polygyny. Here, one husband can decide to choose any other sister of his living wife and marry as second wife.(Gluckman,1975). This form of marriage is found in some part of South Eastern Nigeria and among the Zulu of South Africa.

x) **Child Arranged Marriage:** This marital arrangement occurs when consenting parents give out their children during childhood. The children are expected to grow separately under watchful eyes of the parents. Later, when the children are grown adult the union is then formally sealed. This type of marriage is common in Asia, especially where getting a prospective wife is difficult due to the culture of femicide. Rich parents arrange wife for their sons during childhood due to the dearth of female children.

## **Kinship System and Descent**

A kinship unit is a group of individual who are related to one another by blood, marriage, or adoption. Kinship group tie serves the purpose of dividing authority, privileges, responsibilities and economic and sex roles. According to Kornblum and Julian (2009) the definition of kinship differs from one society to another. To them, we have the nuclear family kinship group. This comprises the father, the mother, and their children living apart from other kin. In other societies a more common type of kinship group is the extended family. Here you have the parents, children, great grandchildren, aunts, uncles and other living together or in close proximity.

Kinship system forms a powerful system in which man organizes himself across all known historical epochs. For instance, the nuclear family is the predominant kinship group in the hunting and gathering societies as well as industrial societies. On the other hand, extended family is found among the agrarian societies. Almost all societies regardless of their stage in economic and political development are organized around a system of modified extended kinship unit within which the nuclear family is more or less autonomous unit (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2007)

Anele (2003) defined kinship as an extra-familial organization which portrays human networking along blood, marriage and adoption. Goldthorpe (1985) see kinship as network of relationship based on birth and descent. Radcliffe- Brown (1952) describe it as a social construct that expresses the social relationship between an ego, his parent and siblings

Ewuruigwe (1994) in a more elaborate form defined kinship as a network of relationship expressed in ties of obligation, claims to resources, statuses, property rights, duties, powers, privileges, authority, and obedience, social security, mutual assistance and sexual behavior. Kinship can be achieved from four different sources. Namely;

- a. By blood or consanguinity
  - b. By marriage
  - c. By adoption
  - d. By ritual or fiction ( e.g God father in politics or religious circle)
- Any of the above sources can socially tie individual together into kinship organization.

## **Descent Groups**

This is a culturally defined social group of people tied together by common ancestral root. There are kinship group who are lineal descents of a common ancestor. Charles (2005) defined descent as a group mechanism in which individual hierarchically traced their genealogy to a common ancestor. According to Murdock (1965) 64 percent give preference to one side of the family or the other in tracing descent.

The social arrangement of descent system rest on two broad divisions, these are; 1). The cognitive descent system includes the bilateral and the double descent system. Lineage is traced to more than one ancestor (2) The unilineal descent system which include patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems. Here the individual trace his/her ancestor line to either the father or mother (Onwujeogwu, 1995)

Schaefer (2012)while elaborating on the Unilineal descent system opined that Patrilineal (from the Latin word pater-“father”)descent is such that only the

father's relative are significant in terms of property, inheritance and emotional tie. Meanwhile, Matrilineal (from the term mater-"mother") descent only the mother's relative are significant.

Most cultures around the globe adopt patrilineal descent system. In Nigerian communities such as Yorubas, Igbos, Ikwere, Urhobo, Benin, etc practice Patrilineal (Okaba, 2005). On the other hand matrilineal descent is commonly practice in relatively few societies. According to Farr (1999) matrilineal descent is common in nations where men were absent for a long period because of warfare or food gathering expedition. Examples of people that practice matrilineal descent include the Nembe of Bayelsa in Nigeria, Kanuri of Nigeria, Ohafia clan among Igbos, Bema in Zambia, Ashanti in Ghana and a large proportion of Central Africa population (Modo, 2004)

To be precise we have the followings as descent organization;

**Double or Ambilineal Descent:** In this descent arrangement the individual acquires membership from both the matrilineal and the patrilineal lineages according to some peculiar culturally defined norms (Ingiabuna,2012). Some societies or culture areas that practice this type of descent system include Yako of Nigeria and Ijo of Niger- Delta.

**Bilateral Descent System:** A number of tribal societies practice bilateral descent, here relatives are traced through both maternal and paternal sides of the family simultaneously. This type of descent system does not result in any particular lineage or descent grouping (Scupin, 2012). Bilateral descent is not common in tribal societies. In those cases in which bilateral descent is found among the tribes, a loosely structured group known as kindred is used to mobilize relatives for economic, social or political purpose.

**Clan Descent System:** This is a form of descent group whose members trace their descent to an unknown ancestor or in some cases, to a sacred plant or animal. Members of clans usually share a common name. However, they are not able to specify definitive links to an actual genealogical figure (Scupin, 2008). Clan descent group are of two types. Namely; (a) Patriclan- A group distinguishable by a male through who descent is traced. (b) Matriclan – A descent group whose genealogy or lineage is traced through the female.

## **Functions of Descent Group**

Descent system provide platform for distinctive social organizational structure for human survival at every stage of man's historical epoch. Descent grouping are social institution that endures beyond any particular individual life time. Thus, they play a vital role in the regulation of sexual partner and activities,

marriages, production of goods and services. Also, family's rights to land, properties, livestock, and other resources are defined and best understood along the descent organizational pattern.

In a more specific term, the followings are the functions of the descent system:

1. It is a social mechanism used in tracing the genealogical and ancestral flow of individual in the society.
2. Descent system is a veritable tool used in distributing inheritance among tribal society. Within some advanced patrilineal horticulturalist people, land or property is transferred from generation to the other through the eldest male. This practice is termed "Primogeniture". A less common pattern is called "Ultimo geniture", here property and land are passed to the youngest son (Scupin, 2012).
3. Economic function: Descent arrangement when properly harnessed helps in regulating the production, exchange, and distribution of goods and services over a long period of time.
4. Regulation of marriages and sexual activities - Corporate descent system play a key role in determining marital and sexual activities relation, especially in tribal societies. Most tribal people such as the Yanomamo of Asia, maintain exogamous rules of marriage. This indicates that people generally marry outside their clan, lineage, and, kindred. In the same vein sexual intercourse between blood relatives or members of the same descent is seen as an "incest or taboo" and therefore discouraged.
5. Political function –Descent group among the Yoruba's, Hausa's and the Asante royal lineage form political force with corresponding responsibilities of making and executing laws. This function is seen clearly among the Eastern Ijo war canoe House and the "Warri "system where several houses in the community represents a political unit (Jack, 2015).
6. The descent system is social arrangement that represent and projects our cultural identity and heritages.

### **Patterns of Marital Residence**

Marriage and family formation is the pillar of every society and this is based on individual choice and preferences which are significantly shaped by societal norms. In corroborating the preceding statement, Bonvillain (2010) opined that family is a "basic unit of economic cooperation and stability" that generally includes at least one parent or parent substitute and children. When we talk of pattern of residency, it simply means where a couple decides to reside after their wedding and it is pertinent to note that this varies across countries and cultures and can also change over time. In some societies, newly wedded couples don't

establish their own home but rather they become part of an already existing household. When talking about patterns of residency, of utmost importance is the kinship pattern practiced in that area, other factors can include economic and personal factors. In this section, we will look at some types of marital residency and where they are obtainable.

1. **Patrilocal/ Virilocal Residence:** This is perhaps the most common pattern of marital residence. It occurs when a newly wedded couple establishes their home near or in the husband's parent's house. It is pertinent to note that this residence pattern is associated with patrilineal descent. This type of residence pattern is typical of third world societies such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
2. **Matrilocal/Uxorilocal Residence:** This is the opposite of patrilocal residence and occurs when a couple decides to live near or in the wife's parent's house. However, since most societies are patriarchal in nature, it is the mother's brother that is seen as authority figure and not the mothers or wives. This pattern of residence is prevalent in matrilineal societies such as India, Asante, Nembe of Nigeria where dowry payment is common.
3. **Neolocal Residence:** For this residence pattern, the new couple lives outside both the husband and wife's parent's house. The couples are economically independent from their parents. The neolocal residence pattern is becoming increasingly widespread globally and perhaps the commonest in the urban settlements.
4. **Bilocal/Ambilocal Residence:** Here, the couple has the freewill to choose whether to stay with the husband's relatives or the wife's relatives. Young couples resort to this type of residence pattern so as to become financially stable. Ingiabuna (2004) argued along this line that one of the reasons for the perpetuation of Bilocal residence pattern is that, young couple might want to fall back to the financial help from already established parent before they are buoyant enough to set up their home independently.
5. **Avunculocal Residence:** In this type of residence pattern, the man and his wife settles with his maternal uncle and this is also associated with matrilineal descent. Avunculus is a Latin word meaning mother's brother. Culturally, among the Yao and Cewa of Malani in Central Africa a man can live with his wife home after marriage after which he moves to settle with mother's kindred.
6. **Natolocal Residence:** In this type of residence pattern, both the husband and wife reside in their parent house separately and from time to time they alternate the meeting point by taking turn between both parents residence as the case may be.



7. **Amitilocal Residence:** Amitilocal is derived from a Latin word “ amita”, meaning father’s sister. In this type of marital residence arrangement the girl child is expected to stay with her father’s sister for marital training on home making, pending the time she will be given out in marriage. Also, her husband to be remains with his parent during this time lag. Subsequently, both couple move to live with his father’s sister immediately after the wedding ceremony.

## **Conclusion**

Man derives his social nature from living in groups. More importantly, his sense of intimacy and tenderness is best expressed through social organizations such as the kinship system, marriage and the family. Because culture and the environment differs across the world, so also, kinship group and family institution as important aspect of human association varies in terms of function and structure. This chapter has been able to identify and explain the types and functions of the family, marriage and kinship system. Also, the dynamic nature of the human institution has impacted enormously on these familiar social organizations.

Nevertheless, the primary roles of the kinship system, marriage, and the family remains the same across the globe. Notable among the familiar organizations’ functions include: socialization of members, sexual regulation, intimacy and bonding, tracing the blood line, mate selection, pattern of inheritance among others. There is no doubt that the kinship system, marriage, the family and residential pattern, forms and represents the fundamental social units needed for the human and societal survival.

## **Revision Questions**

1. What is family? Examine the types of family structure available in our society?
2. Identify the forms of marriages peculiar to Nigeria’s cultural area
3. Examine the different type of mate selection process, bearing in mind their power and authority differences.
4. What is kinship system? Explain reasons why descent group varies across cultural divides.
5. List and examine five types of marital residential patterns peculiar to Africa.
6. Explain factors responsible for the changes in the definition of marriage in our contemporary society.

7. Highlight the roles of the mass media in the changing form of the family institution.
8. Why is the family institution crucial to the survival of the society?

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# rites of passage: a socio-anthropological insight

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## Introduction

Rites of passage is one basic element of culture that is encompassing because its practice comes with mixed feelings; feeling of excitement, emotional hurts/downturn, trauma among others. As human beings, we move from one social status to another with most times overt or covert ritual processes that define such transitions.

In most cases, man appreciates cultural heritage when he/she undergoes certain celebrations in his/her lifetime. This celebration ranges from childbirth, marriages, graduation and even death as the case may be. Rites of passage are celebrations marking life changes, no man was born an adult, every adult was once a child that grows into adulthood, each of these phases in man's life is symbolic and comes with memorial rites such as; birth rites, naming rites, puberty rites, etc.

Discussions on rites of passage represents a major aspect of sociological as well as anthropological concern. Hence, the understanding of the meaning and associated dimensions of the issue of rites of passage will ensure that young people appreciate their significance as they grow into adults. As a result, at the end of this chapter, readers would have grasped some vital knowledge on issues such as:

- Meaning of rites of passage
- Origin of rites of passage
- Stages of rites of passage
- Types or forms of rites of passage
- Social importance and significance of rites of passage

## Definition of Rites of Passage

Within the discipline of Sociology and especially Anthropology, the concept of '*Rites of Passage*' as formal, customary rituals marking transition from one social status to another. According to Moore and Habel (1982), rites of passage is a ritual action through which the initiate is 'separated' from one 'world' and taken into another. Okaba (2006), explained rites of passage as the embodiment(s) of rituals that accompany every change in place, time, social position and age. However, Girigiri (1999), sees rites of passage as ritual activities which usually symbolize that an individual has achieved a particular

status in the community. By extension, rites of passages has a lifecycle character in the form of rituals that underlines the movement from youth to adulthood. From this definition it can be deduced that rites of passage examines man's totality, its progressive state to the point of answering nature's call (death). This brings us to Warner's definition which sees rites of passage as "the celebration that accompany the movement of man through his life time, from fixed placenta within his mother's womb to his death and ultimate fixed point of his tombstone and final containment in the grave as dead organism". According to him life is inundated and...

*punctuated by a number of critical movement or transition, which all societies ritualize and publicly mark with suitable observances to impress the significance of the individual and the group on living members of the community (Warner, 1959).*

The various definitions highlighted above provides enabling assumptions that makes it easy to summarize the theoretical and practical focus of rites of passage as; ceremonies that signify important transitional periods or stages in a person's life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, graduation and death. This is because all of these domains of human life involves one form of ritual activity or the other, designed to strip individuals of their original roles, prepare and usher them into new roles.

### **Origin of Rites of Passage**

A good number of social and cultural anthropologists have discussed the origin of rites of passage. While there are different perspectives on its origin, there is nevertheless a convergence on the fact that culture provides the historical direction on rites of passage. The notable French ethnographer, Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957), is famous for his study of rites of passage. According to him, in cultural anthropology the term is the Anglicization of the "rites de passage" a French term innovated by Arnold Van Gennep in his work "Les Rites De Passage" translated to mean "The Rites of Passage". His understanding of the phenomenon is now fully adopted into anthropology and popular cultures of modern languages. According to Van Gennep's.

*Each larger society contains within it several distinctly separate groupings.....in addition, all these group break down into still societies in sub-groups.*

The population of a society belongs to multiple groups, some more important to the individuals than others. Van Gennep, uses the metaphor, as a kind of house divided into rooms and corridors. A passage occurs when an individual leaves the group to enter another, in the metaphor, he changes rooms.

Van Gennep further distinguishes between the “the secular” and “the sacred sphere”. Theorizing that civilizations are arranged on a scale, implying that the lower levels represent “*the simplest level of development*”, his hypothesis is that “social groups” in such a society likewise have magico-religious foundations”.

Many groups in modern industrial society practice customs that can be traced to an earlier sacred phase. Passage between these groups requires a ceremony, or ritual, hence rite of passage. In other words, rites of passage has its history or origin in the cultural and religious practices of a people. In fact, Van Gennep believes that rites of passage cannot entirely be separated from culture and religion.

### **Stages of Rites of Passage**

From his early writings, Arnold Van Gennep (1909) proved that rites of passage comprises of three ritual stages; the so-called tripartite structure:

- Separation
- Marge or transition
- Re-Aggregation or reincorporation

These three stages are also known as pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal stages (before, at and past the threshold). The stages are concisely discussed below:

- *Separation*: This is symbolic and well-known for funeral ceremonies. Here the initiate will be removed from the world to which they have belonged. This is simply the detachment of an individual or group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure. There is always a detachment or cutting away from the former self in this phase, which is signified in symbolizations and rituals. For instance; the cutting of hair for a person who has just joined the army he or she is “**cutting away**” the former self: the civilian.
- *Transition*: This is a phase or period between states, during the performance of these rites of passage, a person is considered to be in the liminal world, between old and new states. Here, the initiate gets instructed in the responsibilities of the new role. Transition rituals express the liminal condition of the candidates. In the condition, they are often considered to be in danger themselves, or to others. To mitigate this negative influence, they are provided with a sponsor whose role is to protect candidates. For instance, a young man in quest for wealth goes

into occultic practice, such person will be indoctrinated into the occultic oath. Transitional rites supersede child birth and initiation ceremonies.

- *Reincorporation*: Here the initiate has crossed the threshold. This is considered the final step of the tripartite structure, where the initiate assumes his/her “new” identity and re-enter society with the associated new status. Reincorporation is characterized by elaborate rituals and ceremonies or investing the candidate with new clothes, rings, crowns, tattoos etc. a good example is marriage ceremony, bagging a university degree among others. Here the candidate is announced publicly that the individual belongs to the group or status.

### **Forms or Types of Rites of Passage:**

Rites of passage deals with various rituals which an individual undergoes from one stage to another. However there are five basic African initiation rites that were originally established and practiced by African ancestors. These rites of passages were basically geared towards integrating the individual to the community, and to the broader and more potent spiritual world.

The five forms of rites of passage are

- a. Birth and Naming
- b. Adulthood
- c. Marriage
- d. Eldership
- e. Death and Ancestorship

### **Rites of Birth and Naming**

This is the primary African initiation rites that involves initiating the infant into the world through a ritual and naming ceremony. Although the ritual of birth begins with the pregnancy of the mothers so when a woman is pregnant, she rejoices with her husband and the immediate family. Necessary precautions are taken to ensure normal gestation and delivery. These precautions include both medical and spiritual attention, the pregnant woman must observe certain taboos and regulations example stringent movement at night so as to, avoid been visited by evil spirits. She is given traditional care and placed on traditional medicine like herbs, use of black soap, protective amulets and necklace so as to chase evil spirits or evil eyes on mother and especially unborn child.

Among the Ika (Ibo) Nigeria, a pregnant woman or the husband, or the parent or relations often consult native doctors to predict whether there is obstacle before the full term of pregnancy if there is any, the usual thing done is to

appease the gods of iron (Ugu) or make sacrifice which may involve the feeding of young children. The young children as it is believed will bring luck to the expectant mother. At times if the expectant mother is predicted to give birth to Ogbanye she will be asked to worship the gods of the rivers Olokun (Ika Ibo).

Practices that follow rite of birth vary considerably throughout Africa, even though most traditional rituals associated with such practices are no longer strictly observed as a result of the Western way of life.

Traditional societies in Africa are known for their love for having many children and immediately a mother puts to bed safely the next thing the parent or family scout for is a means of identifying the baby through “**Naming**”. A child is named on the seventh day or ninth day depending on the traditional belief the parents hold. For some, the naming of a female child is on day seven while male is day nine.

The naming of children is an important occasion that is often marked by ceremonies in many societies. Some names mark the occasion of child birth and describes the personality of the individual. For instance; if the child birth occurs during raining season, the child would be given a name like “**Rain** or “**Water**” if the child was delivered during transit the child might be called “Traveler” or Ijeoma (in Ibo) meaning safe journey.

There is no end to giving of names in many African societies. The incorporation of the child into the world would be insignificant without a name. The initiation of naming ceremony significantly undergoes the three stages of rites. Firstly, the child who is a gift from the spirit being is separated from the ancestral world and welcomed by natural world. The rituals that follows the ceremony (for instance, the eldest man or officiating priest will lift the baby and call the baby name three times, after which put a little of bitter cola or honey, depending on the tribe and he prays for the child, welcoming the child into life of hurts and sweetness) are transitory, lastly once the baby is named and finally prayed for the baby is given or handed over to the parents and family signifying re-incorporation.

### **Rite of Adulthood**

This is the transitory stage between puberty and adulthood. Here the child is introduced to his/her corporate community from passive to active membership. He/she enters into adulthood with physical, emotional, social and religious preparedness. Most African societies have rites and ceremonies to mark this great transition, but a few do not observe initiation and puberty rites.



Adulthood initiation rites have many symbolic meanings among which the individual is taught many norms, values, and precepts of the community he/she is encouraged to take responsibility for self, be diligent, loyal, prudent and uphold integrity, the individual is also exposed to punishments that are meted to defaulters or deviants.

In traditional African societies, adulthood rites are usually done at the onset of *puberty Age* (around 12-13 years). Among the *Isu community in Etche* (an ethnic group in Rivers State of Nigeria) for instance, the youths are initiated into adulthood and such initiation holds between August and September. Participation is strictly for males of fourteen years old. The initiation is usually carried out in the forest (some few kilometers away from the outskirts of the living and farm settlements) for six weeks. Here they observe complete seclusion and separation from their living kith and kin. The values of endurance, loyalty, hard work, self-reliance, brotherhood and other societal norms are inculcated in the initiates.

In Africa, girls begin their puberty at the first sign of menstruation. Among the Igbos of Easter Nigeria, such girls are confined to fattening rooms or houses for few weeks where they are taught the virtues or values of motherhood. Similarly, in Akainba (Kenya) girls undergo clitoridectomy. The ceremony takes place in the months of August to October, when it is relatively dry or cool. During the ceremony women watch the girls go through the painful operation, but encourage the children to endure (the pains) without crying or shouting and those who managed to go through it bravely are highly cherished by community. Afterwards, there is public rejoicing with dancing, singing, eating and drinking while libations and foods are offered to the living-dead.

In western cultures, adulthood is seen as a status achieved at the age of 18 or 21 or simply when the individual graduates from high school. Unfortunately, in most cases there is no fundamental guidance or transformation from a child to an adult that is required or expected. This **“leave it for chance”** approach to adulthood development is the root of most teenage and youth **“adult”** confusion, chaos, and uncertainty. On the other hand, African societies systematically initiate boys and girls as a way of teaching them all the socio-cultural guidelines of adulthood. This includes; the rules and taboos of the society, moral instruction and social responsibility.

## **Rites of Marriage**

Marriage in Africa is a social affair. It involves two parties. The families of the bride and the bridegroom. There must be mutual agreement between the two

families. Marriage and procreation in African communities are a unity', without procreation marriage is incomplete.

Different customs are observed in the matter of finding partners for marriage. In some societies the choice is made by the parents. A fairly wide spread practice is the one in which the parents and relatives of a young man approach the parents of a particular girl and start marriage negotiations. Although before the proposal is accepted by the girl's family a diviner is consulted whose duty is to trace and inform the people of the supposed man's (husband to be) ancestral spirits fertility, divinity, past atrocity (if any), diseases and sickness that are common in the family, and even the future of the man.

However, the normal practice today, is that children bring their choice spouse and parents on their own make findings and afterwards give in their consent, although some parents do not engage in any findings, hence, divorce rate is on the peak.

Among the Ethiopians, courtship and marriage take place at an early age. When a boy decides to marry a particular girl, he goes to meet her on the path and openly declares his intentions. The girl pretends to get a shock and chase the man away. When the girl reaches home, she puts her bed against the back wall of the house. At night the boy visits the home when people have gone to sleep, he puts his hand through openings on the wall until he reaches her. She feels the hands and identifies him by the ornaments on his hands. If she still rejects him, she screams aloud to awaken the parents. The young man would immediately run away and never return to persuade her further. Peradventure, she keeps quiet she has accepted the offer for marriage and the two of them will whisper. The boy repeats the visit after few days or works to consolidate relationship. When the relationship is strong, the girl begins to wear bead on her waist which immediately provides a signal to the parents who now enquire who her suitor is. If her parents approve, then the boy and the girl are allowed to meet publicly and this leads to marriage.

Among the Ijos of Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the groom's family first approaches the bride's family saying they have seen a beautiful flower and have come to pluck it. The bride's family will entertain them with drinks and welcome them asking their daughter to come and identify their visitors, also explaining the essence of their visit, if their daughter claims she knows them, they will ask her whether they should take heed to their request if she replies "yes" then the both families shall drink together and fix a date for proper marriage ceremonial rite.

Bride price differs from one country to another, and even within the same country it differs from tribe to tribe, family to families, bride price is never the same in Nigeria. In Ibo culture, high bride price is demanded from the groom's

family. This of course vary from the type of girl e.g. bride price for educated girls are higher than uneducated counterparts.

There is little or no initiation rites in marriages. Although with the Urhobos of Western Niger Delta the bride takes an oath of fidelity at the ancestral shrine of the husband within the first week of marriage. This creates a consciousness that she is now betrothed and expects to be faithful as any unfaithful act will attract her death or that of the husband.

### **Rites of Eldership**

This is an important component of the initiation system, because the elders are the custodians of tradition, they represent the wisdom of the past, they understand and practice the stipulated cultural norms and values, even to the point of transmitting these to younger generations so as to ensure that culture is learned.

In African culture, there is a significant difference between an “**elder**” and “**older**” person. An older person is likened to be someone who has lived longer life than most people in a given community, in Ijo language such person is called Ama-kosu-owei the fact that he has lived longer does not mean he should be considered or deserves high praise and respect. This is because the older person could be a thief, drunkard, a known witch and confirmed evil in the community through his deeds. He might even not be married with no children thus preventing him from being considered a respected elder.

An elder, on the other hand, is someone who is given the highest status in African culture because he/she has lived a life of purpose, and there is nothing more respected than living a purposeful life. The life of an elder is centered in the best tradition of the community, and is someone who has gone through all the previous three rites, and is living model or legend for other groups in the society to emulate. An elder is given the highest status and along with new infants because these two groups represent the closet because these two groups represent the closet link to the wisdom of the spirit world.

### **Rites of Death and Ancestorship**

Death is inevitable and culturally an inescapable end to man’s sojourn on planet earth. The rite of death is simply the transmitting of the deceased remain to his/her ancestors of the great beyond.

This is the final initiation rite for man and reflects the passing into another continuous phase of existence, the spirit world. In African societies there is

little distinction between the sacred and secular. The spirit is a part of all and therefore when a person dies it is believed that communication and ties with the living continues because African philosophy from one culture to another agrees that the spirit of the deceased is still with the living community, distinction must be made in the status of the various spirits, as there are distinctions made in the status of the living so we see a notable difference between an old person who dies and is seen as nothing more than a dead relative; without honour and will not be remembered as a great person nor is someone who should be followed or emulated unlike a respected elder who passes and is a revered ancestor given the highest honour.

Rites performed at burial are intended to sever the links with the living. Women, especially, wail and weep to lament the departure of the dead person in some societies, members recall the good things or deeds of the deceased. This is however, in contrast with Islamic Africa, where it is expected that expression of one's grief should remain dignified. In this sense, Islam prohibits the expression of grief by loud wailing (bewailing refers to mourning in a loud voice), shrieking, beating the chest and cheeks, tearing hair or clothes, breaking objects, scratching faces or speaking phrases that make a Muslim lose faith.

According to Okaba (1997) immediately after an individual gives up the ghost, the family gathers and then invites relations to arrange for the vigil. The corpse is ritually washed, shaved of all hairs, finger nails, dressed beautifully and laid in state. Legs are tied together with raffia strings and stretched out with the feet facing the main entrance. This symbolizes the commencement of the homeward journey of the deceased spirit.

Three gun shots for men and four for women are fired to communicate the message of death to members of the homestead and also to the neighboring villages. Where scars are detected on the deceased during the washing, appropriate cleaning sacrifices and ablution, rituals are performed. The logic is that the deceased was born without blemish and so shall he return.

Thereafter, an elder of the deceased opens the vigil by welcoming guests (both visible and invisible) with drinks and foods. This is first offered as sacrifices to the ancestral spirits and shared among other participants. At the opposite end of the traditional drum stands, are tables set for collecting funeral contributions.

Any amount raised from the funeral contributions is used to augment expenses by the deceased family. In the early hours of the next day, the mein-Ijo would arrange the traditional autopsy (obobohi). A Necromancer is commissioned to find out the cause of death. This mechanism is also used to inquire of the

deceased involvement in sorcery or witchcraft activities. Involvement in these nefarious acts automatically makes the corpse impure. Consequently, the corpse is immediately ferried away to the middle of the river and drowned away with heavy fetters. For this deceased, all funeral rites end with shameful and unceremonial disposition with the belief that the deceased spirit is doomed eternally and unfit to be among the ancestors folks. If the necromancer declares otherwise three gunshots are fired into the air to announce the deceased purity. Unprecedented jubilation in long procession follows, since the deceased's lineage has escaped an indelible social and moral stigma. The corpse is given public dressing. The children presents some pieces of cloths accordingly. Relatives, in-laws, friends etc. pay their last respect by donations which is believed to be useful in the deceased journey to the eternity. At sun set, the male heir apparently serves the deceased with oil soap in a clay pot. This ration is meant to sustain the soul of the deceased on this home bound journey. The corpse is then ceremoniously paraded to the cemetery for internment.

### **The Social Importance and Significance of Rite of Passage**

While there are several importance of rites of passage in African societies, four of these have enjoyed some degree of consensus among scholars. These are; 1) Affirmation of Community Solidarity, 2) Exertion of Responsibility as Individual Status Changes, 3) Process of Socialization, and 4) Promotes Sense of Belonging.

- *Affirmation of community solidarity:* Rites of passage generally affirm community solidarity, especially in times of change or crisis. Solidarity is therefore the acceptance of our social nature and the affirmation of the bonds we share with one another.
- *Process of socialization:* Rites of passage enhances the process of learning the cultural values of one's group/community, their behavioral patterns, norms and the traditional belief system of the people. In this sense, all the younger ones are taught and patterned towards each phase of the rites.
- *Exertion of responsibility as individual status changes:* Each phase or stage in the cycle of a man's life presents new social roles, life expectation and sacred responsibility. For instance, as teens are initiated into adulthood they are obligated to act and perform all ritual rites related to the new status.
- *Promote sense of belonging:* As individuals undergo one ritual to another it often automatically gives the individuals a sense of feeling of integration by family/community members. Each form of rites individual undergoes impose an important value in their life and gives them a feeling of acceptance as members of a family or community.

As stated above, the list of importance of rites of passage are numerous. For instance, it can also expose the nature of the society that individuals live in. The initiation rites is a pointer to man that life (nature) is a twist, is in stages and to everything there is an end, as man is separated from one world and taken into another. It therefore reveals societal norms, values, and beliefs to man as instituted. This is in addition to exposing the linkages between temporary processes (natural world) and eternal paradigms (Supernatural world) so as to give the various stages and phases in our life cycle order and meaning.

## **Conclusion**

Rites of passage generally affirms community solidarity especially in times of change or conflict. Rites are performed on special occasions as individual enter a new stage of life. However, the chapter has shown that there are different forms of rites of passage these include, *Birth Rite, Adulthood Rite, Marriage Rite, Eldership Rite and Ancestorship rite*. All these rites of passage promotes socialization, draws the people close to the norms and values of their community and gives them a sense of responsibility for each stage actualized.

## **Revision Questions**

1. What is Rite of Passage? Using Naming and Marriage Ceremonies as illustration, examine the role of symbolism in African rites of passage.
2. To what extent has rites of passage enhanced social control in our traditional African society?
3. Differentiate between the various stages of rites of passage?
4. Rites of Passage affirms community solidarity discuss with relevant examples?
5. Discuss in brief the origin of Rites of Passage?

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# INDIGENOUS POLITICAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

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## Introduction

Prior to the incursion of the colonial masters who amalgamated most ethnic groups to form one country, there existed autonomous traditional political and economic institutions in the different societies that now makes up Nigeria. These institutions were organised in such a way that they responded to the specific tradition system that underpinned the various societies.

At the end of this chapter, students are expected to understand the following;

1. Understand the meaning of Political institution
2. Discuss with examples the types of traditional political institutions in Africa
3. Briefly discuss the pre-colonial political systems of the Yorubas, Huasa/Fulani, Igbos
4. Understand the pre-colonial political system of the Ijo people of the Niger Delta and Benin kingdom

## The Concept of Political Institution

The political institution is saddled with the responsibility of authoritatively allocating values and scarce resources of the society. According to Iheriohamma (2002), the political institution provides the structure and processes through which interest is aggregated and expressed, power and influence exercised and rules governing behaviour made. Concepts that are often used with the political institution include; state, power and authority, government etc.

## Types of Traditional Political Institution

It has been stated that Africa has one of the most diverse culture in the world. By implication, the indigenous political systems varied from region to region, state to state and country to country. Despite their complex diversity, some literature classify African traditional institutions of governance into two types, based on their pre-colonial forms: (a) the consensus-based systems of the decentralized pre-colonial political systems; and (b) chieftaincy of the centralized political systems.

## Decentralized systems

In most part of the continent, pre-colonial political systems were highly decentralized with law making, social control, and allocation of resources



carried out by local entities, such as lineage groupings, village communities, and age-sets. In other words, these systems were principally based on consensual decision-making arrangements that varied from place to place. According to Legesse (2000), 'the fundamental principles that guide the consensus-based (decentralized authority) systems include curbing the concentration of power in an institution or a person and averting the emergence of a rigid hierarchy'. In such a system, conflicts and disputes adjudication and mediation involves narrowing of differences through negotiations rather than through adversarial procedures that produce winners and losers (Economic Commission for Africa, 2007).

One constrain that has been identified regarding the decentralized authority systems is that decision-making is generally slow, this is due to the fact that it takes time to build consensus. The Ibo village assembly in eastern Nigeria, the Eritrean village *baito* (assembly), the *gada* (age-set) system of the Oromo in Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as the council of elders (*kiama*) of the Kikuyu in Kenya are among well-known examples where decisions are largely made in a consensual manner of one kind or another. The local self-governance system of various Berber ethnic and clan groups also falls within the decentralized consensual systems (Alport, 1964).

### **Centralized systems**

Some other parts of African societies established a centralized systems of governance with kings and monarchs having absolute or almost absolute powers and authorities. However, the level of centralization and concentration of power in the hands of the kings and monarchs varied from society to society (Economic Commission for Africa, 2007). In some societies such as; Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Northern Nigeria (Hausa-Fulani) and Rwanda, the rulers enjoyed absolute power. Whereas in some other cases, such as that of the Yoruba in Nigeria, the power of the rulers was restrained by various arrangements, including the institution of councils made up of seven members (Osaghae, 1989). Still, the level and medium of development of the mechanisms of checks and balances, however, differed widely from one society to another. For instance, among the Buganda of Uganda and the Nupe in Nigeria, the formal institutions of checks and balances and accountability of leaders to the population were rather weak (Beattie, 1967). While in some other cases, such as the Ashanti of Ghana, the Yoruba of Nigeria, Lesotho, the Tswana of Botswana, and the Busoga of Uganda, the systems of checks and balances were relatively better defined with constitutional provisions and customary laws authorizing a council of elders, religious leaders, and administrative staff of the chiefs to check the power of the leaders and keep them accountable (Coplan & Tim, 1997).

Though among the centralized societies, political powers seem to be highly consolidated at the top, they are nevertheless characterized by a great deal of autonomy at the bottom. This means that at the grassroots level, village chiefs often act primarily as facilitators, who preside over a consensual decision-making process by the members or elders of their communities. By implication, at the grassroots level, the chieftaincy system, overlaps in many respects with the decentralized consensus-based systems. For example, the administrative structure of the Ashanti of Ghana, allows each lineage, village or subdivision to manage its own affairs, including settling disputes through arbitration by elders (Busia, 1968). In Botswana also, the power of the chiefs is regulated by the consensual decision-making process in the *kgotla*.

The typology makes it difficult to distinguish succinctly between the relevant and the obsolete aspects of traditional institutions. Hence, the following types of traditional political institution was put forward;

**Table 1. Types and Examples of traditional political structures in Africa**

<b>Types</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Centralized Systems with Absolute Power	Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Rwanda, Swazi
Centralized Systems with Limited Checks and Balances	Nupe, Buganda, Zulu, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Igala
Centralized Systems with relatively Well-Defined Systems of Checks and Balances	Ashanti, Busoga of Uganda, Lesotho, Tswana of Botswana
Decentralized Age-Set Systems	Oromo, Kikuyu, Masai
Decentralized Village/Kinship Systems	Ibo village assembly, Eritrean <i>Baito</i> , Tiv of Nigeria, Owan society of Nigeria, and the council system of the Berbers

Source: (Economic Commission for Africa, 2007)

Whereas the different political systems in the table above incorporates the existing broad classification, it also attempts to classify the chieftaincy system into at least three categories based on the robustness of their mechanisms of accountability. It also breaks down the decentralized systems, into age-set systems and village and kinship systems while showing the similarities between these systems with the chieftaincy systems at the grassroots level.

### **The Yoruba Pre-Colonial Political Organization**

Writing about the traditional political system of the Yorubas, Salami (2006) noted thus;

“looking through the pre-colonial epoch in Yoruba political and cultural history, one can see some elements of democracy featured

in pre-colonial and traditional Yoruba social and political organization. And while it may be true that some tension exists between the monarchic nature of society and its democratic features, it remains that the social and political organization of traditional Yoruba society demonstrated some democratic values, and thus tradition was established on what can be called a participatory democracy”.

Though the Yoruba political structure is often exemplified in the Oyo system of political administration, there were other systems that existed in most Yoruba societies. In this section, we shall discuss the general system that existed prior to the emergence of the Oyo Empire.

In traditional Yoruba society, the leader of an Ilu (town or society) is the *Oba*, the leaders of smaller villages are *Baale*, while the leader of compounds are called *Olori Ile*, and the political and administrative organization of the society was headed by a King (*Alaafin* or *Ooni*) and divided into towns and regions with each major town and settlement headed by a King in council with other administrators (Uzobo & Tobin, 2015).

According to Fadipe (1970), in some of the small Ijebu Kingdoms and the sectional Egba Kingdoms with strong Ogboni societies, the executive transacted all the business while the King merely submits business to be transacted. Nevertheless, the functions of the King as the head of the council of society include the protection of the general interest of members of the society which calls for overseeing the general health of the society and her citizens, including the internal security of members, issues of peace and war, and the administration of justice, with the King as the last court of appeal for the whole Kingdom, and also concerned with the conduct of the relationship with other regional Kingdoms and societies.

### **Oyo Empire**

Oyo is best known as the kingdom that eventually emerged as an empire in Yorubaland. And its political system was somewhat different from other Yoruba kingdoms. Hence, because of its well established political system; scholars have often used Oyo Empire as a model in discussing traditional political system among the Yoruba kingdoms (Uzobo & Tobin, 2015). Various traditions believe that Oyo was founded by Oranmiyan, the son of Oduduwa, who is also credited with establishing the present Benin monarchy. Oyo Empire was founded in the middle of the fifteen century. A century later, it became very powerful and prosperous, extending its authority as far as Dahomey (Now Benin Republic).

**The Alaafin:** The Alaafin was the head of the empire, and was resident in the capital. He was also regarded as “**Lord of many lands**”. The Alaafin was assisted in his administration by a retinue of officials made up of priests, officials and eunuchs. He had a well-organized court as well.

**The Aremo:** He is the eldest son of the ruling Alaafin but cannot succeed his father at his demise. He can only help his father in the administration of the empire (Oldnaija.com, 2015).

**Oyomesi:** Theoretically, the Alaafin was the fountain of authority and was therefore regarded as the “*companion of the gods*”. **Sometimes, he had an autocratic tendency, but in practice, his powers were often limited and regulated by the Oyomesi, a council of seven members headed by Bashorun who acted as the prime minister.** The members of Oyomesi were king makers as well. At the demise of the Alaafin, they were the ones to select his successor. **The Oyomesi also had the power to remove any Alaafin especially when he appeared dictatorial or transgressed the laws of the land.** Usually the deposed Alaafin was expected to commit suicide (Uzobo & Tobin, 2015).

**Baale or Oba:** Each province was administered by Ajele or Oba. They guaranteed the payment of tribute and homage to the Alaafin. There was the claim that these rulers had the power to threaten any hardened Alaafin or chief by invoking the god of thunder and lightning through the cult of Sango, a deified Alaafin (Oldnaija.com, 2015).

**Ogboni Society:** Apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Ogboni cult constituted another arm of government. **It was a very powerful cult. It was composed of free and prominent members of the society as well as members of the Oyomesi. The Ogboni cult had a very vital position in Yoruba society. It played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. It was a kind of counter power to the Oyomesi as well** (Uzobo & Tobin, 2015).

**The Army (Eso)/Are-Ona-Kankanfo:** The Army was another arm of government in traditional Yoruba society. It was very organized. **Its head was conferred with the coveted title of Are-Ona-Kankanfo.** It was made up of infantry and Calvary. **The Are-Ona-Kankanfo was expected to live outside the capital.** The Army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion, as well as keeping dissident territories in check.

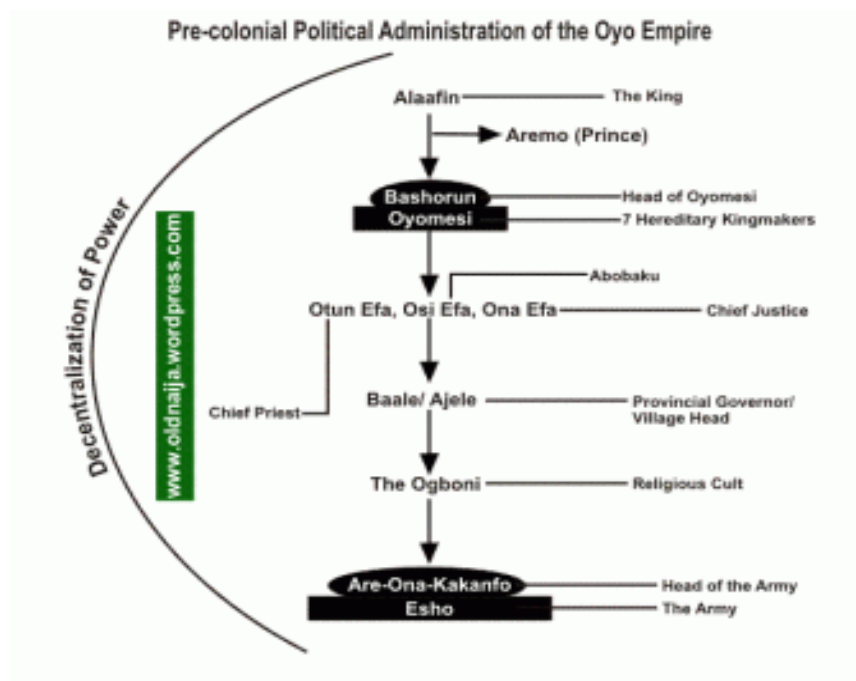
**The Three Eunuchs:** They were also involved in the administration of the empire. They were:

- 1. The Osi Efa:** He was in charge of political affairs; he has to die with the

Alaafin. He was also called ‘Abobaku’.

**2. The Ona Efa:** He was for judicial purpose

**3. The Otun Efa:** His function was to perform religious duties for the Alaafin



Source: (Oldnaija.com, 2015)

The legislative, executive, judicial and religious functions in the Yoruba kingdom were performed at various levels of administration by different bodies and institutions. At the headquarters, the King (Oba, Alaafin, Ooni), and chiefs perform the judicial functions of making and administration of justice. This means that legislative functions were vested in the King and his Chiefs. Apart from the general laws guiding different empire, the Obas and Baales also made minor laws in collaboration with their chiefs in their various villages which were binding on their subjects (Awofeso, 2004). Family heads also make laws to guide the conduct of its members.

In terms of Executive functions, the Age-grades were important force in the implementation of laws and policies made by the King or Baale and their chiefs. They served as the police and law-enforcement agents within the empire. They were also involved in community work. The age-grades which were mainly made up of able bodied men formed part of the military with the Are-Onakakanfo as its commander. The age-grade ensures that decisions and directives of the King and baales are complied with. Another important agent of the executive was the town crier who passed information and decisions reached by the king and his cabinet members to the people.

Judicial duties were vested in the King, Baales, Chiefs, and family heads. The king and his chiefs decided serious cases like murder, war etc, while the chiefs settled minor cases in their localities and referred serious ones to the King. Family heads also help in settling minor cases within their families.

The King also performed religious function. He is seen as a mediator between the gods and his subjects, the custodian of religious beliefs and values. He performed some rituals and sacrifices on behalf of his people and in most situations collaborated with priests and secret societies. This means that the Priests and secret societies (e.g Ogboni society), also performed religious functions. The head of the Ogboni 'Oluwo' assisted the King in performing rituals and sacrifices. The age-grades also take part in rituals and festivals (Awofeso, 2004).

### **The Hausa/Fulani Pre-Colonial Political Organization**

The Habe - Hausas were the original inhabitants of Northern Nigeria. During the nineteenth century a wave of the most awesome jihads commenced. The first was led by Usman Dan Fodio, a Fulani cleric who raised the standard of revolt in 1804. Within a few years his massed calvary conquered most of Hausa land, the northern hail of modern Nigeria. The Fulani emirs or military command took over from the Hausa aristocracy as the political rulers of the whole area. As Almore and Stacey (1979) observed in 1817, Usman's son proclaimed the sultanate of Sokoto, which remained until the British occupation at the end of the nineteenth century (Ifeanacho 1998).

After Usman Dan Fodio had captured the land, he divided the empire into two parts. The eastern section (which compromised the emirates of Sokoto, Gobir, Kastina, Kano, Daura, Zaria, Keffi, Nassarawa, Kastina, Bauchi, and Adamawa with its headquarters' at Sokoto while in western section (Emirate of Gwandu comprising of Kebbi, Yauri, Nupe, Borgu and Illorin) with its headquarters at Gwandu. Usman Dan Fodio appointed his son Bello the emir and latter Sultan of Sokoto (the capital of eastern section) his brother Abdullahi became the leader of western section as well as the emir of Gwandu. Usman Dan Folio remained the Amir Al- kimini or Sarkin Muslimi (commander of the faithful or caliphate) (academia.edu, 2015).

The Hausa/Fulani political system was theocratic. The *Emir* was both the political and religious leader. He was vested with legislative, executive, religious military and judicial powers. The system was highly centralized and consequently the power of the Emir was almost absolute and unlimited. However, within its highly centralized political structure, the Hausa/Fulani political system still maintained a decentralized authority from the Emir who was the head of the hierarchy of authority to the *Hakimi* and village heads who

administered law and order at the district and village levels respectively. The hierarchical structure of the Hausa/Fulani political system reveals the following:

Two headquarters were set up at Sokoto and Gwandu. The Emirs (later sultans) of Sokoto and Gwandu supervised the Emirs of other emirates and consequently, they held their allegiance and annual tributes to these two Emirs. The appointment and dismissal of an Emir in any of the emirates was subjected to the ratification and approval of either the Emir of Sokoto or the Emir of Gwandu. Each Emir had a number of officials who acted as the advisory council. These officials include;

**Galadima** - He was an equivalent of the prime Minister. He was in charge of administration. He was also the high royal official who watched over the town when the king and other chiefs went to war.

**Madawaki** - He was the commander of the armed forces, next to the king, and adviser to the king. He summoned meeting of the chief councillors, and other chief councillors, select a new king if the incumbent dies.

**Waziri** - He shared responsibilities with Madawaki even though his Primary assignment was chief minister acted as Prime minister.

**Mogaji/ Maaji** - He was treasurer in charge or financial minister, what we now call minister of finance.

**The Yari** - in charge of prison, what we call nowadays comptroller general of prisons.

**The Sarkin Dogari** - chief of police or inspector general of police who took charge of prisoners charged with Serious Offences inflicted corporal punishment, acted as town crier and watchman.

**Sarkin Yan Doka** - Head of emirs body guard

**Sarkin Fada** - He was the head of palace officials or workers (he was head of service).

**Sarkin Ruwa** - Head of fishing and water resources.

**Sarkin Pawa** - In charge of butchers

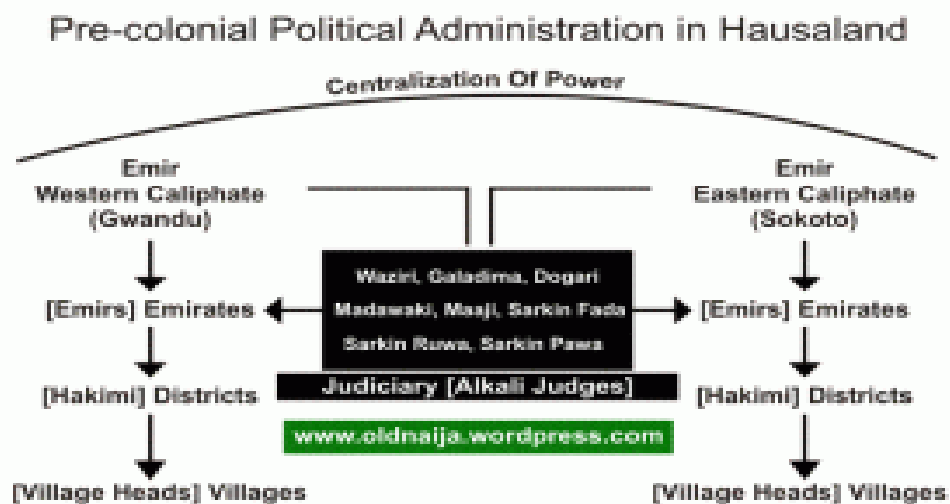
**Arkimi** - Districts head.

**Alkali** - He was Muslim judge who interpreted cases based on Sharia code

The emirate was divided into local government; local government further divided into villages and villages were divided into districts. This was for administration conveniences. The local government administration was carried out through village and district heads appointed by the emirs. They were appointed based on their family position or from tradition ruler of their areas. They had representatives in the emir's palace where they reported event from their locality and received instruction from emir's palace. Arkimi/Harkim collected taxes and enforces laws and orders for emirs in their localities. After collecting the taxes, he retains some as commission and pays the rest to his representative who after deducting his share remitted the rest to the emir.

The emir had a centralized administration since he was in charge of executive, Judiciary and legislative functions. He was the spiritual and political head; he was looked at as someone who was ordained by Allah to rule because of this assumption any disobedience to his laws meant disobedience to Allah.

The Emir's decision was final on every matter; he was the Supreme Judge. All Judicial matters were based on Sharia drawn from Koran which is the embodiment of legal, cultural and social life of Muslims. It is and was a totality of their culture and governance. Lesser cases were settled by Alkali and his Jury. Cases like land disputes, debt, inheritance, slander, fighting, divorce, custody of children etc. These were settled in the court of Alkali while appeals could be sent to Chief Alkali's court at the Metropolitan capital. At the smaller village, the village heads settled such minor offences aforementioned. In all cases, the guiding principle of adjudication was the Milik Code of Muslim law all in Koran (Academia.edu, 2015).



Source: (Oldnaija.com, 2014)

### Pre-Colonial Political System of the Igbos

The Igbo political system was cephalous, republican, fragmented and segmented. This was because the pre-colonial Ibo exhibited a non-centralized political structure. There are different but very similar accounts given by scholars about the traditional political system of the Igbos. However, for the purpose of this work, we shall be relying on the one provided by Essoh (2006) and that Academia.com (2015). Essoh (2006) stated that political authority among the Igbos was not centralized; but shared among various individuals and groups such as, the family, the various title holders (the Ofo and Ozo), the



diviners, the priest, the council of elders and the age grades. The family was the basic unit of political authority as the head of the family assumed the 'ofo' title (Essoh, 2006).

He went further to add that the Igbo political philosophy figuratively expresses that Igbos do not have kings. However, there were instances such as in Onitsha, Oguta, Osamari, Arochukwu and Cross River Igbo, where kingship institution existed. They were sometimes combined with a council of elders or village head men. Outside these areas, the democratic spirit prevailed. Within each segment, the right to participate in decision making was strongly defended by individuals. The rule of law and equality before the law formed part of the democratic spirit. According to Afigbo, the root of Igbo democracy lies on the Igbo principle of equality and equivalence.

The fact of non-centralized political authority did not in any way erase the legislative, judicial and religious functions in the Ibo political system. Various individuals, groups and institutions effectively performed these functions. Individual family head (the Ofo title holders) in their capacity to communicate with the family ancestors gave some specifications and rules of conduct to family members which may be regarded as binding laws on members. At the village meetings, the council of Elders may also come up with certain rules and regulations, which each Ofo was expected to implement in his family; however, the decision of the council of Elders were not binding on individual family. Neither was the decision of the chairman of the council of Elders binding on other Ofos. Such decisions had to be rectified by each family. Also the opinion of the 'Ozo' title holders was very influential in decision taken both at the family and village levels. They were often consulted. The priests could also declare moral laws that had to be obeyed by the people.

Different bodies and individuals also helped in the enforcement of various laws. The Ofo helped to enforce in his family, rules, as well as, the decisions reached at the council of Elders. The age grades also served as police and enforcement agents. They also helped in public works and punish any member of their group who commits a punishable offence. They helped in the implementation of the decisions of the council of Elders. They also served in the military. The oracles, juju priests, and diviners also influence people's behaviour and actions with their sanctions and predictions.

The Ofo settled disputes within his family. The council of Elders also discusses certain cases. They gave judgments on minor cases while serious cases such as; murder, burglary were referred to the chief priest because such cases were seen to have been committed against the gods of the land. The age grade also

punished their members who committed certain offences like theft (Essoh, 2006).

Rituals were used to legitimize political institutions and authority. The Igbos believed that their gods and ancestors were directly involved in the running of village affairs. Thus, the political community comprised the living and the spirits of the dead and supernatural sanctions was sought each time crucial political decisions were made. The ancestors were regarded as the guardians of morality. They could punish a wrong doer. The fear and shame of this tended to discourage the adoption of counter-cultures.

In a similar description of the Igbo traditional political system, Academia.edu (2015) gave the following structure of their administrative system which comprises of the following actors;

**Umunna** - Extended family.

**Oha na eze** - General assembly.

**Nze na Ozo** - the title holders.

**Umuada/ Umuokpu** - Daughters of the land.

**Ozioko / Ichie /Ofor holders** - title (council of elders)

**Umu-ogbo or Ogbo, Ebiti** - age – grades

**Ndi Atame, Onye Ogo arusi Oha** – Deity priest

**Ndi ogba afa** - soothsayers and diviners.

**Ndi dibia** - Native doctors.

**Mmawu** - Masquerade

**Ndi nyom** - Married women in the extended family / village.

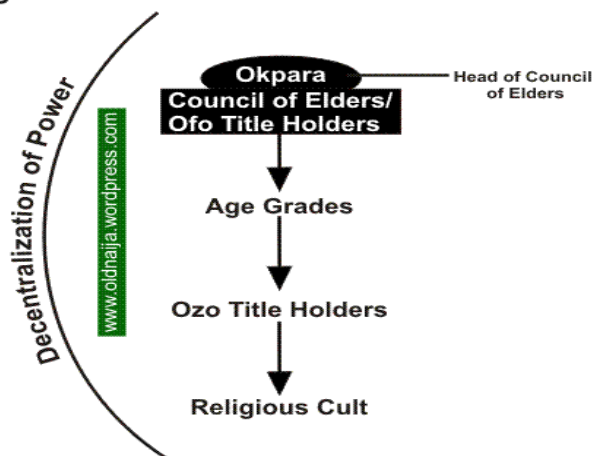
The Umunna (extended family) found a very strong political organization as it was used to initiate policies, settle cases and enforce discipline, communal labour within the members of the same family. It was the basic and the first political setting in Igbo pre-colonial era. The General Assembly (Oha na eze) is the Political organization that formed the most democratic institution in Igbo land. This is a body that is made up of adult male; they performed their function by gathering in a town or village square where members are allowed to air their views to the issue at stake and to the leadership. The Ama-Ala or Oha na- eze (General Assembly) gathering was chaired by the representatives from the eldest family or village by the eldest man of the assembly or council of elders.

For the Umu-ada, the leader was the eldest daughter of the members of the extended family or village. Ndi-nyom, the first to be married in the village or extended family was allowed to preside over their gathering. For the Age grade, it was chaired by the oldest of the most senior village or family but in some town the oldest in the age grade concerned performed the function.

In Ozo title holders, it was headed by first person that took the title among them. This notwithstanding, all the traditional political positions, their leaders performed ceremonial functions, as he/she had no overriding power over any member. Kola was always present to the elders for local Prayers (Academia.edu, 2015).

In some quarters of Igbo society, the council of elders comprising of family heads were known as **Okpara** in the village. However, the most important thing is that each family was administered as a sovereign entity and each family head (okpara) were reckoned of named 'ofo' title holders in the village. They have the responsibility of discussion matters that affect the life of the citizens. They also help in maintaining laws and order in the society and settlement of disputes between or among group of families. The chairman of this council is known as the oldest of the Okparas.

#### Igbo Pre-colonial Political Administration



Source: Source: (Oldnaija.com, 2017)

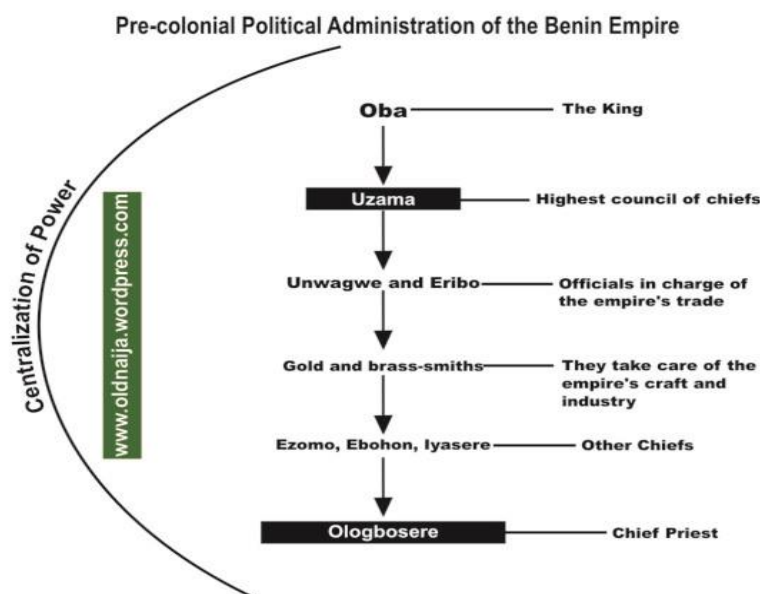
#### Pre-Colonial Political Administration of the Benin Empire

The Benin people inhabit the south western part of modern day Nigeria and are close neighbours to the Yorubas with whom they claim the same origin. The Benin pre-colonial system of government, like the Yorubas was monarchical. The Oba (a title used for the king of Benin) theoretical and political was the leader of the empire with absolute authority. Unlike a Yoruba kings checked by the council of seven chiefs, he was not bounded by the constitution or laws of the land. He solely exercised the legislative, executive and judiciary powers of the empire. Howbeit, he was assisted in the administration of the kingdom by many councils and officials. The highest of the councils were the **Uzama** who advised the King on important matters concerning the affairs of the empire. However, he was not subjected to their advice and decisions; he could heed to them and dispose them at will. Besides advising the King, the **Uzama** were also

saddled with the responsibility of crowning a new king who is usually the eldest surviving son of the previous king (Oldnaija.com, 2017).

Apart from the Uzama, there were a number of officials who helped the Oba in administration of the kingdom. These included officials like 'Unwagwe' and 'Eribo' who were in charge of the empire's trade. They monitored the flow of goods in the empire and advice the king on how the economy of the kingdom can be improved. There were also the gold and brass-smiths that took care of the kingdom's craft and industry. Other notable and important officials were the 'Ezomo', 'Ebohon', 'Iyasere' and the 'Ologbosere', the chief priest. All these officials had specific roles they played in the administration of the kingdom (Oldnaija.com, 2017).

Additionally, the Benin kingdom was divided into two classes; they were the nobles and the commoners. Traditional chiefs and administrative officials were mostly chosen from the noble class. These included: the 'Iwebo' who were in charge of the regalia; the 'Ibiwe' who supervised the king's harem and the 'Iwagwe' who provided the king with personal attendants. On the other hand, the commoners were not involved in the administration of the empire. Their main concern was providing food for their communities. Each of the commoners owns a piece of land he/she cultivated. They were also hired by the nobles to work on their farms for a period of time in return for money, a piece of land or sometimes cancellation of debts (Oldnaija.com, 2017).



Source: (Oldnaija.com, 2017)

### Pre-Colonial Political System of the Ijos of the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta People mainly populated by the Ijo (also known by the subgroups "Ijaw" or "Izon") are a collection of peoples indigenous mostly to the

forest regions of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers States in Nigeria. Some are resident in Akwa-Ibom, Edo, and Ondo states also in Nigeria. Many are found as migrant fishermen in camps as far west as Sierra Leone and as far east as Gabon along the Western Africa coastline.

According to Sorgwe (2014), the indigenous Ijaw political system can be grouped into three. These are the **segmentary lineage structure**, the **semi-centralized structure** and **the centralized structure**. These three political structures located in different parts of the Niger Delta were developed at various times of the collective existence of the Ijaw people.

**The Segmentary Lineage Structure:** This happens to be the or earliest type of political structure that existed among the Ijo people. Alagoa (1972:17) Stated that in this system which existed before the colonial period, had **the highest political authority as the Amagula or Village Assembly**. The Village Assembly recognized age and had the **oldest man in the community or Amakosuwei as the president of the Assembly**. Other functionaries of the village political system were the **spokesman or Ogulasowei**, and the **priest or Orukariwei**. These villages were autonomous political units although they related with one another as an *ibe* kindred-group (Sorgwe, 2014).

The system became adjusted during the colonial period. Men other than the oldest men in the villages were appointed or elected village-heads who became the presidents of the *Amagula*. The traditional offices were also neglected and men were appointed to work with the village-heads as councillors. A further modification which is in vogue is that the village-head or paramount ruler is periodically elected with the councillors to run the affairs of the village community from time to time. It needs to be noted that these village-heads and councillors operate under the Nigerian State and Local Government systems. All the same they are useful because they carry out grassroots administrative services. **A major innovation of this indigenous system is the rise of the Youth and Women organizations**. In many of the Ijaw communities the youth organizations have sacked the elders and taken over as effective administrators due to the failure of the elder statesmen. In many of the communities, there are also **recognized women leaders or Amanararau**. Even these changes are contained within the Nigerian Local Governments Systems. They are measures adopted by the various communities to help government maintain peace and order (Sorgwe, 2014).

**Semi-Centralized Structure:** This second political structure is a higher form of the segmentary lineage type. Under the semi-centralized structure, **the lineage kindred-group or *ibe* is the operational base**. The village administration is subject to that of the *ibe*. **The villages are largely autonomous but certain decisions are taken by the entire *ibe* under the leadership of the High-Priest or**

*Pere*. The High Priest is actually vested with religious authority rather than political authority. This structure was very functional in parts of the Western and Central Delta Ijaw communities in times past according to Alagoa (1972).

**Centralized State Structure:** The Ijo people of the Eastern Niger Delta developed centralized polities described as city-states by 1500 (Sorgwe 1977:31). These were the Bonny (Ibani), Elem Kalabari and Opoobo city-states. The Nembe people of the Central Niger Delta also developed the centralized state system. As noted by R. Horton (1969:37-58) and E.J. Alagoa (1971:278-280), these Ijaw communities modified the non-centralized village democracy into a viable monarchy. It has been argued that the change was due to environmental and economic shift. The shift from farming and fishing environment to an all-fishing and salt-making environment needed a stronger political force than the segmentary system. Thus, the president of the Village Assembly or the High Priest of the *ibe* became transformed to a monarchy. The qualification for the position too changed from that of the oldest man in the community to economic ability. The monarchy is recognized by the Nigerian government today but they do not wield the power they had before colonial period. Indeed, they are contained by the modern Nigerian administrative systems as recognized stools (Sorgwe, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Though the pre-colonial political systems in Nigeria has witnessed a major alteration at the advent of the British colonial masters, there are still some aspect that still persist. For instance, in the era of democratic government, the power that traditional rulers wield, has been drastically reduced. A situation that has made the traditional rulers to be accountable to the government and the people. In most current traditional settings, the traditional rulers are now elected against the practise of hereditary which was prevalent during the pre-colonial era. Several traditional rulers tried to protect and preserve the political organisation of their kingdoms or empires but later gave up after much pressure and threat from the colonial masters.

### **Revision Questions**

1. What do you understand by Political institutions?
2. With Examples, discuss the types of traditional political institutions in Nigeria
3. Briefly discuss the pre-colonial political systems of the Yorubas, Huasa/Fulani, Igbos
4. Describe the precolonial political system of the Ijo people of the Niger Delta and Benin kingdom

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# **TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM IN NIGERIA**

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## **Introduction**

Every individual has wants and needs which are unlimited and insatiable; as a result of these wants, man struggle for various means of sustenance so as to satisfy these needs. In trying to do this, man rely on the environment's natural resources for its sufficiency and survival. So right from the very beginning; man has sought out various ways of meeting his daily subsistence. Man's primary needs have been that of obtaining food, shelter, clothing etc. It is only when these needs are met that he proceeds in search of other secondary needs. Hence, the economic institution is regarded as the most fundamental institution of society that ensures the survival of man. This is the main tenet of Marx's postulations when he stated that all the social relations are determined by the dynamics of the economic base (Okaba, 1999). This Chapter shall discuss indigenous economic system in Nigeria. At the end of the chapter, readers are expected to have significant knowledge of the following:

- The concept of economic institution
- Structure of traditional economic system in Nigeria
- Factors of production in indigenous Nigeria societies
- Systems of distribution and exchange of goods and services in traditional Nigeria

## **Conceptualizing Economic institution**

The economic institution of any society is saddled with the task of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. In specific terms, economic institutions are those institutions that perform economic functions which can be identified as follows:

1. Establishing and protecting property rights;
2. Facilitating transactions and
3. Permitting economic co-operation and organization

According to Wiggins and Davis (2006) economic institutions is further defined as network of commercial organizations (such as manufacturers, producers, wholesalers, retailers, and buyers) that generate, distribute and purchase goods and services. Similarly, Andah (1988) opined that an African economic system is a combination of:

1. A social community comprising of individuals with obvious socio-cultural ties or links (kinship, religion, language, norms, values, etc).
2. Has some form of natural resources (land and whatever that is attached to it), human cooperation (division of labour) and the technological knowhow, all patterned with specific rules and obligations.
3. Indigenous economic system has market places, medium of exchange as well as means of record keeping and units of measurement. This definition is a more encompassing view or approach.

Okaba (1999) also noted that indigenous economic system must be adequately conceived as comprising of structures' and or institutions with peculiar socio-cultural formations patterned on the basis of kinship relations, norms, values, social control and principles that are all geared towards satisfying social needs for food and other material production and consumption.

### **The Structure of Traditional Economy in Nigeria**

The structure of the economy in the pre-colonial period was mainly based on agricultural and non-agricultural productions, distributions of commodities and it also consisted of services.

#### **Agriculture**

Generally speaking, in pre-colonial West Africa, the practice of agriculture was very essential for man's survival. It was mostly based on subsistence farming, i.e., agriculture. More importantly, the factor that sustained agricultural practices of the indigenous people of Nigeria has been the initiatives and innovations of the farmer. Although unlettered, the traditional Nigerian farmer (with indigenous wisdom) had observed the changing seasons over the years and from his investigation he could reasonably predict the pouring of the rains and the coming of sunshine. He thus determined the start and the end of planting seasons and harvested the fruits of his labour when it was time to do so. The production of agricultural produce relied totally on availability of suitable land and labour. These factors of production shall be discussed later in this section. One important point that should be noted is the land-labour ratio. The land was vast but the people were few. One of the explanations for land-labour ratio was the Trans-Saharan trade, and on a much greater scale, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade forced millions of Nigerians out of the region. The result was that land became more abundant in relation to population.

The abundance of land had an important consequence. It allowed a system of cultivation that did not encourage restrictive use of land. That system is known as the 'shifting cultivation' which meant a shift from an already cultivated land that was becoming less productive to a virgin piece of land or land that had been

left fallow for years to regain its nutritive values. Given the situation as it existed in the pre-colonial era, shifting cultivation was perhaps the most effective method that was devised for the maintenance of soil fertility and the eventual regular good supply. The system was not necessarily due to conservation but perhaps to what was regarded as the correct assessment of the prevailing economic situation.

Another considerable change in agriculture was the cultivation of cash crops; some of which were, in fact, permanent crops. The cultivation of kolanuts, cocoa, coffee and oil palm required permanent occupation of land. That meant a large reduction in the amount of land required for food production. Yet, some other cash crops, such as groundnuts, cotton and tobacco were grown on the available land. There was a definite amount of land owned by a community because frontiers existed between one group and another.

Since “necessity is the mother of invention”; it would appear that the above diction was also adopted in the use of implements by the Nigerian farmers during the traditional era. No doubt, the Nigerian agriculture was characterised by low technological levels when compared with agriculture in more advanced countries, especially during (1500 -1800) and even today. Nonetheless, a critical study of Europe during this period shows that European states such as Italy had parallel agricultural developments at that time. Given the situation as it was, the Nigerian farmers relied on simple implements such as the digging stick, the hoes, cutlasses and sickles for agricultural production.

Apart from the production of cotton, kolanuts, and palm oil; agriculture in most part of Nigeria meant food crop production. Food crops produced depended on rainfall, which in turn, determines vegetation and types of soil. Thus, in the grassland or savannah north where rainfall is high and for about three to five months in the year – cereals and grains predominated. Sorghum, maize, rice and specially millet were among the most common food crops. In addition, cotton was widely cultivated. In the forest south of Nigeria, however, where rainfall is heavier, root crops such as yam, cocoyam and cassava were widespread. In addition, plantains, bananas, kolanuts, and oil palm also thrived luxuriantly.

These territorial specialisations bring to mind two related issues. First, the arrangement allowed for intra-regional exchanges which therefore mean that crops that were grown in one area could be exchanged for those that were not cultivated in another but were needed. Second, the arrangement also allowed for self-sufficiency in food items. Each part of the region cultivated what the soil and climate allowed, and the people of Nigeria often confined themselves to whatever was readily available. However, constraints such as cheap transportation, storage facilities and portable monies considerably reduced trade in food crops. Although, this does not mean that there were no exchanges of

agricultural products, the exchanges of agricultural products were limited because of its perishability. Many agricultural products such as cotton and kola nuts were carried on long distances for trade.

## **Non-Agricultural Products**

### **Fishing**

Fishing is regarded as an ancient economic activity in Nigeria. Its activities cover both the coastal and inland waterways and it was of tremendous economic value to the indigenous people of Nigeria (Ehinmore, 2002). Fish was one of the major articles among Nigerian commodities of trade. Fish were of various kinds which were either dried under the sun or smoked in order to preserve them for long or short distance market. Fresh fish were said to be marketed mostly in short distance areas owing to the perishable nature and problem of storage facility. Professional fishing is characterized by craftsmanship and special skills, such as boat, canoe, paddle, float, buoy and net construction coupled with invention of a variety of indigenous fishing techniques and gear. Fishing in pre-colonial Nigeria till date engenders migration as many of its practitioners would have to leave their original settlements for better prospects elsewhere (Olukoju, 2004). Fishing of the migratory type was very prominent among the Ilaje, Izon, Itsekiri, Efik, Jukun, Ijebu, Awori etc. Olukoju (2000) noted that from the pre-colonial period to date, the Ilaje are said to have been the most migratory, famous and professional both in inland and deep sea- fishing not only in Nigeria but in West and Central Africa. Around the early 16th century, fishing is said to be practised with rudimentary techniques and tools such as raffia materials, wood, and grasses with very limited scope. By the late 18th century to early 19th century, most Nigerian fishermen had started developing improved fishing gear and techniques such as clapnets, castnets, *ita*, *egho*, *asuren*, *ojijon*, *agada*, *ighee*, *iyanna*, *ekobiufo*, *riro*, (Ehinmore, 1998) etc. Nigerian fishing economy was in this progressive stage of development on the eve of British colonization.

### **Hunting**

Hunting is regarded as one of the earliest economic activities in pre-colonial Nigeria. It was very significant because, many people depended on it for economic survival at a stage of economic development. However, as time went on, hunting became a relevant alternative to agriculture. Hunting in Nigeria during this period was at various levels. At a lower level, hunting involves setting of snares for birds, young animals, such as glasscutters', rabbits, squirrels, monkeys, alligators, etc. Another level was hunting for larger animals such as crocodile, elephant, wild pig, antelope, etc. It was and perhaps, still, a belief in most local communities in Nigeria that hunting, especially at higher level, apart from special skills involves the use of charms and possession of supernatural powers. Hunting was a dependable source of meat and animals skin for cloth, leather for shoe and drum making. In addition to its profitable

value, it was a means by which foot paths and settlements were created before the advent of the European mode of road construction and town settlement. As a result of these paths, hamlets later developed into roads, towns and villages. Hunters served as security agents by protecting people from attack of enemies and wild animals. Hunters also supplied animals and their special parts which have medicinal value among indigenous medicine practitioners. Complementary to hunting was fruit gathering; it involves the collection of variety of fruits from the forest which was an economic venture to some people, especially women in the indigenous communities in Nigeria. Fruits and spices are very important for food and herbal medicine; hence, there was high demand of such commodities in the local markets.

### **Pastoralism**

This was another major economic practice in the indigenous communities in Nigeria. Pastoralism involves the rearing of animals such as cattle, goats and sheep in commercial quantity. It involves moving the animals from one fertile land to another. Pastoralism was mostly practised by the Fulani nomads in the savannah region of northern Nigeria. The presence of rivers and creeks in the coastal region and the presence of open land in the north facilitated the domestication of livestock's. Both pastoralism and hunting are related to crop farming since they are directly and indirectly dealing with animals. However, pastoralism faced a lot of challenges during the pre-colonial era; the farm lands were infested by tsetse fly in the forest region and there was also scarcity of open land in the south, couple with the marshy nature of the plains. Although, mixed farming was not widespread, some form of symbiosis existed between the crop farmers and the pastoralists. For instance, the droppings of the cattle formed manure to the soil which in turn supported the growth of crops while the pastoralists depended on food crops of the farmers. Moreover, the production of cattle was a source of beef for the forest dwellers, the leather workers demanded the skin for production of shoes, bags, shield for war, quivers for arrow, harness for horses etc. Kano in northern Nigeria was famous for such skills. Pastoral activities were of enormous economic value among the indigenous communities in Nigeria.

### **Crafts**

The development of crafts involves description of their arts and industries at various levels. The foremost arts and craft works in which Nigerians were well-known include; wood carving, salt extraction, soap production, metal work, woodwork and weaving activities. Andah, (1992) argued that this enormous development reminds us of the extent to which indigenous technology had progressed in Nigeria in pre-colonial period. It is evident that iron technology had developed considerably in pre-colonial Nigeria and this revolutionized crafts and manufacturing in Nigeria and indeed Africa.

Salt production was one of the natural resources which were not available in most areas, but it is an important product and also an import commodity for foreign merchants. In pre-colonial Nigeria, production of salt at large quantity was naturally restricted to the coastal areas owing to the availability of raw material such as salt water. The method of production was by evaporation of seawater either by boiling or sunning. This economic activity was famous among the coastal settlers in Nigeria, especially among the Ilaje, Itsekiri and Ijaw. The process was carried out by collecting seawater in a large clay pot, cooked it till it was dry, leaving white and solid substance at the bottom. This would be scooped, using a small basket to filter the dirt. What remained was salt which could be to a large extent free of impurities. This industrial activity improved the growth of trade between the coastal and inland dwellers in pre-colonial Nigeria. In the inland region too, salt is said to be produced in perhaps relatively small quantity especially among the Jukun of the Benue region and the Igbo of the eastern Nigeria (Akinjogbin, 1980).

In addition to this was the economic venture of soap production. This was primarily carried out by the Nigerian forest region settlers. The major raw materials for soap production were palm oil and ashes. These would be boiled together and moulded. In pre-colonial Nigeria for instance, various kinds of soap were produced. In addition to domestic and commercial purposes, soap also had medicinal value. The *Osedudu* (black soap) among the Yoruba for instance, is still used up to date for these purposes.

Two important aspects of crafts which deserve attention in this section are metal and woodwork. A careful study of the Nigerian history would reveal that, of all crafts, iron working was most important to the overall economic and political development in pre-colonial period. The Iron Age was the period in which Nigerians started to actively dominate and control their environments. The discovery of iron gave rise to the manufacturing of iron tools such as hoes, knives, cutlasses, spears, axes and these influenced higher productivities in crafts, farming, fishing and hunting (Williams, 1966). Apart from the economic revolution brought about by iron smelting, it also equipped most leaders with higher and stronger political power. For instance, the ownership of iron weapons influenced military growth and subjugation of weaker communities by stronger ones. The introduction of iron to Nigeria gave rise to black smithing all over the region. The earliest proof of iron smelting in West Africa was Nok, a village in central Nigeria, northeast of the Niger confluence and the Benue Rivers and southwest of Jos Plateau (Thurston, 1971). The Yoruba, Igbo (especially Awka people) and Uneme (in Benin) were famous in iron smelting technology in pre-colonial era. The Uneme, for instance, are said to have developed black smithing before C1370 and iron is said to have played

important commercial role as it was used as a medium of exchange (native currency) (Williams, 1966).

Another important mineral production among the indigenous people of Nigeria was gold. Gold was mined, consumed locally and exported. It had more economic value than other products, as it was mainly an article of foreign exchange earnings. In the pre-colonial period, Benin and Ile-Ife were famous for bronze casting and reputable centres of tin production existed in Jos Plateau and that of zinc in the lower Niger and Benue Rivers. It is however important to note that production was hampered by high level of wood artistry of symbolic cultural value.

Ife and Benin had been regarded as the most famous among West African states in the use of brass and bronze. In skill, quality and beauty, the antique bronzes of Benin are said to have equalled those produced in any part of the world. It was once claimed by some Nigerian writers that both the Nigerian art of bronze casting were used to portray natural figures of humans and animals which were imported by Europeans, either by legitimacy or through smuggling. If this was real, it would indicate that Nigerian art had already reached an admirable and enviable status of world standard before the advent of the imported art. The vital view to be accepted here is that, although European imports of brass and bronze supplemented Nigerian artistic output, much Nigerian works in these alloys predated the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th century.

Studies have shown that naturalistic figures had been found in the Chad region in the So burial sites before the 15th century. Also, early peoples not known to have worked in bronze and brass had produced similar figures in other media. The ancient Nok people for instance, produced replicas of human heads and animals of high artistic merit and value as well as stylized motifs in wood, clay, gold, and ivory. Trade and transport system were equally germane to the growth and development of pre-colonial Nigerian economy. The Nigerian peoples had organized both regional and inter-regional trade based on regional specialization of production which implies the practice of the principle of comparative cost advantage. They developed local transportation system of the use of land (head portage) and water ways (canoes) and some forms of media of exchange, such as barter, Manilla, brass, iron, copper and cowry shells. The various states, empires or kingdoms in pre-colonial Nigeria developed to prominence as a result of organized trade and relatively good means of transportation. Organization of market during this period was largely influenced by the bountiful agricultural and non-agricultural production of the peoples. As a result of variety of supply of commodities to market places, there was departmentalization of goods, orderliness and periodic market system in Nigerian states such as pre-colonial Yoruba society (Akinjogbin, 1980).

However, poor transportation system hindered mobility, production and distribution of goods and services to some extent.

It could be argued that since production was beyond family consumption and there was exchange of inter-regional level based on territorial specialization, the indigenous Nigerian economy was therefore beyond subsistence level. Similarly, it has equally been argued that the organization of the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic trade in which Nigeria was an active participant was international in outlook (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Scholars of western economists also opined that factors of production were not well-co-ordinated and that there was no division of labour or specialization in the traditional Nigerian economy. This appears spurious and misleading. In the African traditional society, male and female are intrinsically assigned to different special socio-economic duties in which each sex would excel (sexual division of labour). Specialization was admittedly applicable to many aspects of Nigerian economic activities. For instance, the coastal dwellers who specialized in fishing took net mending as an area of specialization, while some people were specialized in deep sea fishing (*Oko-Ota* or *Ade-Odo*), others were skillful in inland or fresh water fishing (*eremi*). In both areas of fishing activities, there were still many departments of special skills, hence specialization and skills vary from one person to another. This to a great extent revealed that specialization and skill acquisition was greatly acknowledged in the pre-colonial Nigerian societies.

### **Factors of Production in Indigenous Nigeria Society**

The factors of production describe the processes involved in the production of goods and services so as to make economic profit. There are four major factors of production amongst the indigenous communities in Nigeria. It includes land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship.

**Land:** Land is regarded as the most important factor of production; it is known as the natural resources necessary to create supply. It includes the raw property that comes from the ground; Land tenure system was practised to suit socio-economic requirements of the period. Admittedly, land was plentiful in relation to the Nigerian population.

**Labour:** Labour is defined as the work people do. The value of the workforce depends on workers' education, skills, and motivation. Labour was very crucial in the production process and free labour was more economical hence, pre-colonial Nigerians recruited labour through their wives, children, slaves and relatives. In some cases, supply of labour was through communal assistance. One tenable reason for marriage of many wives among Nigerian men was to secure adequate, cheap and steady supply of labour. Adam Smith, in his *Wealth*



*of Nations* affirms "a numerous family of children, instead of being a burden was a source of opulence and prosperity to the parents". This strongly reinforces the economic philosophy of African practice of polygamy.

**Capital:** Capital was raised through personal savings, borrowing from friends, relatives, co-operatives (*egbe* or *esusu*) or from family or community coffer. Capital is another term for capital goods. These are man-made objects like machinery, equipment, and chemicals that are used in production. That's what differentiates them from consumer goods. For example, capital goods include industrial and commercial buildings, but not private housing.

**Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship is the drive to transform an idea into a business. It is a vital factor in the structure of indigenous Nigerian economy. The entrepreneur combines the three factors of production to add to supply. This is an important factor of production in any economy at any time. It would be gainful to look into what an entrepreneur is. Some people think of entrepreneurship primarily as innovators, others think of them chiefly as managers of enterprises, others place major emphasis on their function as mobilizers and allocators of capital.

In the pre-colonial Nigeria, as in other parts of the world, other factors of production such as capital, land and labour were effectively organized and utilized for production. It therefore follows that all factors of production which existed would not be useful without entrepreneurs. The pre-colonial Nigerian entrepreneurs were rulers, chiefs, potentates, war chiefs, and other influential men and women who had enough wealth and power to mobilize other factors of production. For instance, the Kano potentates organized the production of leather works, the Ijebu chiefs organized production of textiles, the Ilaje chiefs organized fish production, Ikale chiefs also organized production of farm crops. Madam Tinubu of Egbaland and Efunsetan of Ibadan also were among the notable women that organized slaves in their farms. Distributions of goods were also made by Nigerian entrepreneurs by organizing long and short distance market bilaterally and multi-laterally within and outside their regions.

### **Systems of Distribution and Exchange of goods and Services in Traditional Nigeria**

In pre-colonial Nigeria, three systems of distribution of goods and services existed namely;

1. **Reciprocity:** This is the oldest form of distribution and is the mostly used in simple societies. Reciprocity is the giving and receiving of gift. Such gifts often

consist of materials items, favours and specific forms of labour. Reciprocity takes three forms which are as follows

- i. **Generalized reciprocity**- this type of reciprocity involves offering gift without expecting any immediate return or any conscious desire for one.
- ii. **Balanced reciprocity**- it is a straight forward exchange of goods and services that both parties accept as being equivalent at the time of exchange.
- iii. **Negative reciprocity**- is an attempt to take advantage of another person for one's interest. It extends beyond uneven trading to all forms of theft (Eke, 2007).

2. **Market Exchange:** Market exchange is a system of exchange that involves the use of a generally accepted medium of exchange such as money in distributing goods and services within a society and between societies. Market exchange systems go with economic specialization and it develops in societies that have the technological capacity to produce food surpluses. It is only a small percentage of members of the society that are food producers while other members can specialize in the production of craft items. These artisans and food producers then bring their wares to market where they negotiate concerning the worth of what they have to offer. Each person in the market tends to be rational in his decisions and aims at maximizing his profit or gain at the expense of others. In the market, the supply of and the demand for items usually influence prices.
3. **Redistribution:** Redistribution is a system of distribution of goods and services. It involves a system by which goods and services which are accumulated in a geo-political centre are reallocated to members of the society in dire need of such commodity. It denotes a movement of goods and services to and from a centre or approved location by the community. The accumulation of such goods and services may involve an obligation to pay money or contribute goods and services to a centre which is approved by the society. This centre is often the King, chief, or priest as in several African societies. In the state, the government collects a portion of the national income in the form of taxes. This is subsequently distributed to the public in form of the provision of social amenities such as electricity, water, educational and health facilities and the construction and maintenance of roads.

## **Conclusion**

Given the general features and myriads of sub-sectoral components of pre-colonial Nigerian economy, it is convincing that the economy was progressive in growth and responsive to innovation before colonization by Britain. This is in reaction to Eurocentric writers that pre-colonial West African economy was

stagnant, subsistence and that it lacked real market status before colonization. This work has shown that, pre-colonial Nigerian economy was a traditional African economic system in which production depended largely on families, communal efforts and professional groups or guilds. However, this does not make it stagnant or primitive in anyway.

As a scientific analysis which relates to value-free nature of enquiry, the positivist stand-point reinforces the claim that pre-colonial Nigerian economy was dynamic and market-oriented. It is the position of this economic philosophy that the fundamental economic problem in any society, irrespective of place and point in history, is to provide a set of rules for channelling competition and resolving conflict among individuals who cannot satisfy all their wants given the constraints of scarcity. As a result, the aim of production throughout ages in the world remains the same and that human behaviours toward economic issues are universally similar.

### **Review Questions**

5. What is the meaning traditional economic institution?
6. Discuss the structure of traditional economy in Nigeria
7. What role did the factors of production play in pre-colonial economy of Nigeria?
8. Describe the various systems of distribution and exchange of goods in traditional economy of Nigeria.

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# **NIGERIAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION**

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## **Introduction**

There is hardly any society at any given point in time in the history of humanity that is without the presence one form of religion or the other. Religion is as old as man himself and it is a cultural universal. In contemporary Nigeria, there are several forms of religions practiced but the most popular forms include Christianity, Islam and indigenous religions amongst others. Irrespective of the popularity and huge followership of Christianity and Islam especially in Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria respectively, both religions are historically alien to Nigerians. They are foreign religions that were introduced to Africans and the indigenous people of Nigeria foreigners especially European missionaries and Arabian merchants/jihadists.

Before the advent of Islam and Christianity, Africans had their own indigenous forms of religion basically known as African Indigenous Religion (AIR) or African Traditional Religion (ATR). In its entirety ATR is the belief system of indigenous Africans, as represented in their belief of the existence of the supernatural, their understanding of the cosmos and life after death. This form of traditional religion represents the basic form of religion practiced by the indigenous people of Nigeria prior to Islam and Christianity. This religion has been with the fore bearers of the continent for thousands of years and has been passed down from one generation to another through oral tradition. This implies that unlike other foreign religions which have Holy Scriptures such as the Christian Bible or Islamic Quran or Hebrew Torah, there exist no classical texts or literature for African traditional religion. In the case of ATR, the elements, norms and values associated with the religion are stored in the folktales, songs, dances, myths, shrines, liturgies, proverbs as well as pithy and wise sayings of the people. More so, unlike most conventional religions which are traceable to a historical founder e.g. Jesus Christ for Christianity, or Prophet Muhammed for Islam, the African indigenous religion cannot be traced to any specific originator, its origins are rather spontaneous and context specific to the people's historical and cultural experiences. As Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) rightly observed, despite the fact that indigenous religion has no zeal for membership drive as is the case with Christianity and Islam, it still offers persistent fascination for Africans, both young and old.

This notwithstanding, despite its historical and cultural foundation, in most parts of Africa, Nigeria inclusive, its saddening that indigenous religion is fast losing its place and relevance in the daily lives of Africans as a result of the gradual

substitution of traditional beliefs and practices with foreign religions such as Islam and Christianity. Consequently, the rich cultural and religious heritage that has been passed down from generations long gone is being eroded as traditional practices are now tagged fetish, primitive or evil. In buttressing this, Mbafo (1989) submits that with the advent of Christianity and Islam in Africa things have never remained the same. Just as the prominent Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe in his classic 'Things Fall Apart' (1958) puts it: "... The white man is very clever ... He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart". This is evident in the widespread abandonment of the traditional belief systems as well as inadvertent adulteration of the traditional practices. More so, exposure to Western and Islamic education has further weakened the allegiance of Africans to the traditional heritage that has been bequeathed to them by their fore bearers.

The above clearly portrays the changes that have engulfed the traditional religious institution which has been bastardized and drastically eroded. This has in addition tampered with the self-identity and self-worth of the African. More so, the historical experiences and cultural belief systems which provided meaning to the life of the African is fast eluding him with reckless abandon. It is in the light of the foregoing that this chapter explores the traditional or indigenous religious institution in Nigeria. At the end of this chapter, readers are expected to have an understanding of the following:

- I. The meaning and scope of religion
- II. Theories of the origin of religion
- III. Functions of religion
- IV. The nature and the uniqueness of the African religion
- V. Structure and components of Nigerian Traditional Religion

### **The Meaning of Religion**

Indeed there is no consensus to what religion actually means amongst scholars as several definitions have been propounded based on the theoretical, ideological and philosophical inclination of the definer. To the German philosopher, Karl Marx, religion is "*the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless situation. It is the opium of people*" (Marx, 1967: 42, cf. Umoren, 1996). Marx views religion as only a tool devised by the ruling class to perpetually subjugate the ruled class. It is embodied by the dominant ideology of the society which is the ideology of the ruling class. Hence religion is an instrument of social control and it is used to maintain and justify the status quo of inequality in the society. Relatedly, Nigossian (1994) defines religion as "*an invention or creation of the human mind for regulating all human activity, and this creativity is a human necessity that*

*satisfies the spiritual desires and needs inherent in human nature*". This perspective is similar to the Marx's as both view religion as a human creation necessitated by the need to regulate human behavior and exert social control. However, unlike Marx, French Sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1982) viewed religion from a spiritual and moralistic perspective. He defined religion as a *"unified systems of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them"*. Extrapolating from Durkheim's definition, Alex Theo (cited in Olumati, 2003) argued that all religions possess aspects of what Durkheim referred to as 'sacred' (aspects of life having to do with the supernatural that inspire awe, reverence, deep respect and even fear) and 'profane' (aspects of life not concerned with religion but represents everyday living experiences). More so, all religions possess beliefs relative to the sacred as adherents of such religion over time develop a set of beliefs relating to the sacred. In addition, the beliefs are affirmed through faith and rituals through which the beliefs can be put into action. Religious rituals can be in form of communicating with the sacred through incantations, going to church or mosque, rendering offerings and sacrifices and so on. Lastly, all forms of religious activities and rituals are made up of an organization of believers partaking in the ritual. This is what Durkheim called a 'moral community' or 'church' which implies a collectivity of believers participating in the beliefs and practices regarding the sacred.

### **Scope of Religion**

Religion despite been a cultural universal has discrepancies in its practices around the world and this explains its very broad scope. This notwithstanding, we have been able to identify four key areas which most religious practices cover:

- i. Belief in Supernatural Force:** In its entirety, what heralded the birth of religion is the belief in the supernatural. The natural realm refers to the physical world which can be understood and experienced with the five senses i.e. sights, hearing, feeling, smell, and taste. However, the super natural refers to a higher realm beyond the natural world and is believed to have control and influence over the physical world (Olumati, 2003).
- ii. Man's Adjustment with the Supernatural Forces:** The supernatural is beyond the control and manipulation of man. His knowledge, thinking faculty, tools and skills are limited and are far from comprehending the supernatural in its totality. The supernatural hence inspires awe in man thereby making him helpless and subject to forces of the supernatural. The subordination of man to the supernatural is therefore expressed through worship, prayers, hymns, and other religious rituals. Worship is the essence of religion as it is a means through which man can derive

good luck, blessings and favour from the supernatural while on the contrary his disrespect to and negligence of the supernatural would bring him disaster.

**iii. Distinction between the Sacred and the Profane:** Every religion is symbolic and these are represented in religious objects and things both inanimate and animate that are defined as having attributes of the supernatural. These sacred objects hence are revered, worshipped and feared by the adherents of such religion. For example carved images representing religious figures or gods are highly revered as it is sacred to those who adhere to that belief. On the contrary other aspects of life that do not have any religious significance or spirituality attached to it are profane. A profane element can automatically become sacred when elements of spirituality are subsequently ascribed to them. For example, a handkerchief is a profane element, but if a religious priest imparts power on it to perform miracles through incantations or prayers, that ordinary handkerchief have moved from a profane to sacred object.

**iv. Some Methods of Salvation:** The idea of salvation is rooted in believe in the life here after. Every religion is built around the innate need of man to connect with the incorruptible and eternal supernatural which is believed to be the original source of life and hence the need to be reconciled with god or the supernatural becomes the essence of life here on earth. It is believed across all religions that how a man lives his life here on earth determines his rewards in the afterlife to come. Hence, each type of religion has its own explanations about salvation. It is regarded as ultimate aim of a devotee.

### **The Origin of Religion: Theoretical Considerations**

The subject matter of historical research on religion has Anthropologists and Archeologists at the forefront. The general consensus surrounding these fields of study over time is that history of religion is as old as the history of mankind. The practice of religion existed in pre-historical and pre-illiterate societies. Religion has taken several diverse forms world over and as the new encyclopedia Britannica rightly points out, there has never existed any people anywhere, at any time, who were not in some sense religious.

The question that comes to mind therefore is how did religion come into existence? Did all religions emanate from the same source? What accounted for the emergence of religion in the first place? Several theories of the origin of religion have been provided. Although they may be contradictory in their accounts but one point of convergence is that just like other institutions in the society religion originated in response to certain needs of man. Some of these theories include:



- i. **Animism:** This deals with the believe that humans, animals, and even plants inherently possess spirits. The theory of animism is traced to classical Anthropologist, E.B Tylor who in his book ‘primitive culture’ published in 1871 argued that animism is the earliest form of religion and it is rooted in the believe in spirit beings. He posited that there was need for men to provide explanations for sleep, dreams, hallucinations, shadows and even death and other mysteries he couldn’t provide explanations for. Hence, man ascribed spirits to be able to possess each of these phenomenon including natural objects, plants, animals, and other phenomenon such as the stars, moon, sun, rivers and so on.

This believe in spirit beings hence formed the basis for the sacred identity attached to both animate and inanimate things and also the idea of soul and spirit which outlives the mortal existence of humans and animals.

- ii. **The Fear Theory:** The fear theory holds that religion originated as a result of innate fear that is prevalent amongst men. This has been a long held position even amongst the ancient Greeks and Romans. For instance, ancient Roman philosopher and poet Lucretius argues that the emergence of religion and the belief in gods was based on the illusion and fear that were held amongst men. Similarly, 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, David Hume in his “Natural History of Religion” (1757) posited that the fear of natural forces such as rainfall, earthquakes, thunder and so on which man had no explanations for necessitated men to believe in gods who are responsible for natural disasters and death. To survive the conditions of nature, men resorted in worshipping gods who are believed to have the capability to manipulate nature to intervene on their behalf.

Similarly, the British sociologist, Herbert Spencer in his classical “Principles of Sociology” (1896) suggested that religion originated as a result of fear of death and the mysteries surrounding death. This, Spencer argued made men to worship their *departed dead* otherwise known as *Ancestor Worship*, and this according to him was the earliest form of religion (Olumati, 2003).

- iii. **The Theory of the Aleatory Element:** Aleatory simply means chance or the probability of something happening by chance or luck. Tracing the origin of religion, Summer and Keller (cited in Shankarao, 2008) in their book “The Science of Society” have argued that the ever present element of chance or what they called “the aleatory element” has been the main factor for the rise of religion. They are of the opinion that, resolving the problem of bad luck and misfortune has been a major pre-occupation of the primitive man. Hence, to them the rise of religion is directly proportionate to the need for man to respond to the need to adjust his

supernatural or imaginary environment which is capable of causing fortune or unleashing misfortune on man.

Aside the above, there are other several theories explaining the origin of religion. None however, is most generally accepted or credible than the other since there is absence of any historical proof that any of the theories are true. These theories were indeed speculative and products of the imagination of the investigator and thus easily replaceable by emergent theories in future.

### **Functions of Religion**

The fact that religion has a universal existence suggests that it has immense value for the survival of man and society. This is not based upon the several religious forms, practices and belief systems, but upon the social functions it meets in all society. We shall discuss these functions it plays for man and society here:

- i. **Provides Meaning to Life:** Man's religious beliefs (founded on cultural systems/ structure) gives meaning to his life and provide answers to man's questions regarding himself, his environment and world at large. It is through religious belief systems that man can understand his true essence, why he is on planet earth, where he came from and where his destination lies. Religion has been able to provide answers to how the universe was created, how man himself was created and what his purpose here on earth is. More so, the promise of the glorious after life or conversely the eternal damnation or endless circular reincarnation after death, whatever the case may be depending on the religion, these have provided man a purpose to live and how best he can live his life.
- ii. **Psychological Relief:** Humans face diverse kinds of challenges during their lifetime including stress, struggles and sometimes misfortune on daily basis. Such discomfoting realities may arise from threats relating to the physical environment which they have little or no control over. Others may arise from natural occurrences such as losing a loved one to death or disillusionment from their daily social interactions with fellow humans. In such perilous times, religion offers psychological relief from anxiety, fears as well as suffering and further provides consolation. The promise of a glorious eternal afterlife becomes a soothing solace and relief for many whose lots are unfavorable in this present life.
- iii. **Social Control:** Religious values and norms provide code of conducts and guidelines for everyday living. It teaches morals and values and regulates every aspect of our lives from personal discipline to inter

personal relationships with fellow men. It also provides reward systems where pious and godly characters are rewarded positively and negative characters punished with sanctions here on earth and even life after death.

- iv. **Recreation:** Through religious rituals and ceremonies man has been able to derive recreational value out of religion. Several religious activities such as religious dramas, dance, lectures, fairs, music, festivals, and so on provides recreational value. Engaging in such activities helps participants to be happy, fearless and have a stronger sense of belongingness. A wide range of religious festivals, including rituals has been noted to provide relief to those faced with perturbed minds. Furthermore, the practice of religion promotes man's self-worth and in furtherance, broadens man's self to infinite proportions as he sees himself as one with the supernatural divinities. These religious beliefs relate man to the infinite and this unification with the infinite makes him majestic.
- v. **Promotes Social Welfare:** Religion enhances social welfare through the provision of social service to its members and the larger society at large. Most religious teachings emphasize showing love to one another and helping the needy and the poor. This includes teaching the virtues of the need to be merciful, sympathetic, and co-operative. In essence, this develops a mind of mutual-assistance and co-operation among adherents.

### **Nature and Uniqueness of the African Indigenous Religion**

The African traditional religion is indigenous to the African people. The ATR and its belief systems have been held by Africans for hundreds and thousands of years. In fact, the nature and uniqueness of African Traditional Religion could not have been more emphasized by Awolalu and Dopamu (1979), when they opined that the traditional religion is a religion of the Africans and not a fossil religion. Therefore, it can be said to be a religion that has become traditional, passed down by the fore-bearers from past generation to the present generations of Africans. The African indigenous religion is not one of written literature with sacred scriptures like the Bible or Quran. Instead it is one of oral traditional which are products of the forbearer's experiences and responses, their observations, reflections and formulations. These experiences, observances and formulations forms the fulcrum of their religious beliefs and practices which are then taught to their descendants. The medium through which they are passed include songs, proverbs, myths, folklores, stories, dance, and conversational music etcetera. More so, unlike Christianity, Islam and other oriental religions, African indigenous religion does not have a specific human originator. It emerged naturally with a long but slow and steady time span and in the process,

experienced several conditions of continuities and discontinuities which continued to be of great help and use. Hence, those beliefs and practices considered appropriate for the peoples spiritual and social development was sustained while those that were found unsuitable was dropped.

In addition, the indigenous religion of the Africans is centered on the community instead of the individual. Its activities are built around social solidarity and oneness in the community. The consequences of the sin or misdeed of an individual can rub off on the entire community hence it emphasizes a strong collective conscience in its belief systems. Its rituals and practices are done communally as everybody in the community partakes with unity of faith and purpose. The communal nature of ATR makes it generally accepted in the community thereby making it indigenous to the people. In other words, it is an evolving religion based on experiences of the people, linking the forbearers with the descendants who live it and practice it. Thus, it originated from the people's collective conscience and contextualized environment in which they live in. It is for this reason that ATR needed not be preached to Africans nor imported from outside the shores of the continent. Africans were born and not converted into ATR; they take pride in its ownership and practice. Therefore, we can say without doubt that the African religion is revealing and natural. This is because of the originality of the ATR given that its existence stemmed from man's experience of the mysteries of the world.

### **The Structure of Nigerian Traditional Religion**

The Nigerian Indigenous Religion share the same structure and character with other indigenous religions found across the African continent. The basic nature and structure of the Nigerian indigenous religion is discussed under the following thematic considerations:

**1. The Belief in a Supreme Being (God):** In all religions, there is the belief in the existence of a supreme being who created the universe and everything therein. This belief system is not any different in Nigerian traditional religion. The Supreme Being is real to Nigerians; the Supreme Being is considered immortal, eternal, and transcendent (i.e. not limited to time and space). The existence of the Supreme Being in Nigeria is evident as almost every ethnic/linguistic group in the country has a name for God. For example, the Igbos refer to God as 'Chukwu', the Hausas 'Ubangiji', the Yorubas 'Oludumare', the Benis 'Osanobua', Isoko's and Urhobos 'Oghene' and the several Ijaw clans call God 'Tamuno', 'Aziba', 'Izibe', 'Ayiba', 'Woyin', 'Tamaru' and so on. Describing the Nigerian indigenous religion, specifically the Yoruba religion, Idowu (1962) argue that the Yoruba religion is a "*diffused*" monotheism. According to him, originally the Yorubas had a monotheistic religion; however overtime the religion decayed gradually, leading to a growing

proliferation of divinities overtime which overshadowed the earlier monotheistic beliefs and practices. Irrespective of Idowu's notion of "diffused" monotheism in the Yoruba religion, the believe in the Supreme Being remains true amongst Nigerians.

**2. Belief in Many Divinities:** There are many divinities in Nigerian traditional religion with each one having its specific area of control and influence. In most legends, divinities are believed to be originally mythological figures who were not mere men, but heroes and heroines who did great deeds during their lifetimes. These divinities are associated with several aspect of the natural world and as such have influence/control over certain aspects of human life. Hence, most communities do have divinities of thunder, sea, rain, sickness (or health), fertility, family, planting (or harvest), family deities, tribal deities etcetera. Also, these divinities took other forms like forests, mountains, moon, rivers, stars as well as the ancestors. The plurality of the divinities with their varying powers, influence, hierarchy, territoriality, even within one ethnic group or community, says a lot about the Nigerian traditional religion, as well as the nature of the worships, beliefs and practices that embodies the religion. This to a great extent leaves an open door for religious accommodation, tolerance, assimilation and adaptation within the traditional religious thought systems.

**3. The Belief in Spirit Beings:** Traditional Nigerian concepts of reality and destiny are deeply rooted in the belief in the existence of the spirit world. The activities and the actions of the spirit beings govern all social and spiritual phenomena. The spirit world can be divided into two broad categories:

- i. Non-Human Spirits** – These are spirits that are associated with natural objects and forces. These spirits are personified by the worshippers by giving them human attributes. Non-human spirits include spirits associated to forests, trees, moon, sun, stars, water bodies, mountains and so on. Non-human spirits are regarded in hierarchical order in accordance with their kind and importance, depending upon their power and the role they play in the ontological order in the spirit world (Oji, 1988).
- ii. Human Spirits** - These are spirits that once lived amongst men as mere mortals. However after they died they have transcended into the spirit world and appear to possess people in their dreams and visions. There are two types of human spirits namely: **the long dead or ghosts** (these are spirits of persons that are long dead and are hardly remembered) and **recently dead or living dead** (spirits of people that are recently dead and are still remembered by their families and friends for a duration of four to five generations). These spirits are still believed to be part of their families in the land of the living and still live close to their homes where they resided during their life time. They are believed to be benevolent

spirits and are known to watch over and protect their families and kin members here on earth from the spirit world.

The spirit realm constitutes the world of all supernatural forces and these spirit beings exist and operate in a hierarchical order. At the apex of the hierarchy is the Supreme Being who is known to be the creator of the spirit and non-spirit world and its creatures. Next in the hierarchy are the deities who are akin to the divinities and are ascribed to certain aspects of the natural world which they oversee. These are followed by object-embodied spirits, and then ancestral spirits and other miscellaneous spirits. In the midst of these spirit beings, stands man who is between this array of spiritual hosts in the spirits world and the world of nature (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987). In describing the place of spirit in the religious worldview of the African generally, Mbiti (1969) stresses that the spirit world is densely populated with spirit beings of diverse origin such as ancestors, spirits of the dead, object embodied spirits and so on. Endowed with the spirit beings are special powers which they use on humans for either their good or harm. As a result, the spirit beings are perceived to be malicious and capricious although sometimes benevolent, hence men need to be cautious in their dealings with the spirit beings since they can be easily angered and provoked.

**4. The Belief in Ancestors:** Ancestors are progenitors or founders of a family, kin, clan or community. They once lived on earth and are long dead but exist only in the spirit world from where they care, protect, bless and even curse their living descendants on earth as they will. In the traditional Nigerian world view, there is the strong believe in life after death as earlier mentioned hence death do not sever off family, kin, and community ties. There is continuity of ties even after death.

Ancestral worship therefore is an integral part of the Nigerian traditional religion and these were organized according to lineage lines. In the community, shrines are established according to the lineages where members of a particular lineage gather to pray, worship and offer sacrifices to their ancestors for blessing, care and protection. More so, ancestors are believed to be the mediators between man, deities and God, who relay their prayers and supplications to God. It is argued that ancestors have the capacity to unleash disasters on their living descendants whenever they fail to keep the ancestors peaceful by revering them and offering them libations and occasionally offering them part of food as meal is given to them before eaten (Anele, 2003). More so, ancestors are venerated during ceremonies such as those marking fishing, planting and harvest seasons since they are believed to guarantee fertility and good fortunes to their living descendants (Okaba, 2006).

**5. The Practice of Magic and Medicine:** In traditional Nigerian society, magic and medicine are integral part of the indigenous religious belief systems. Medicine men are known to chant several magical incantations as they cure the sick.

In traditional Nigerian society, most medicine men or herbalists are partly sorcerers and magicians. In highlighting this, Mbiti (1970 cf. Okaba, 2006) argues that *“magicians belong partly to the category of sorcerers and partly to the category of medicine men. We find it practically difficult to detach medicine from magic as homeopathic magic could be seen as medicine”*.

Magic is known to be an attempt on man’s part to compass his ends by mysterious or occultic means. Anele (2003) argued that since it is traditionally believed that man is surrounded by host of spirit beings who influence man negatively or positively, magic hence is a means of compelling these beings in man’s service to do his will. Hence magic and medicine are highly practiced since they complement each other. This is made possible because it is believed that some herbs or plants possess spiritual powers that can heal and perform several spiritual exercises. Hence, it takes one who possesses the requisite knowledge of the use and potency of these herbs to administer them. Most of these herbs require incantation before plucking them which will make them more effective and efficacious for the ailment. This is where the magical medicine men are preferred to the ordinary medicine men. Magic hence is a potent means of manipulating nature due to the service it renders, specifically its ability to unravel the mysteries surrounding the cosmos as well as compelling spirit being to man’s service.

In traditional and even our contemporary Nigerian society magicians are consulted to help men solve their physical, medical and spiritual problems. Although magic in itself is not necessarily an aspect of the Nigerian traditional religion, it has however been a potent means through which man has been able to reduce his overtly helplessness and dependence on the benevolence of the spirit beings. With the advent of magic, man hence has moved from a passive force that hitherto was largely at the whims and caprices of the spirits to an active force who can curtail the spirits and even manipulate them to do his biddings through immense magical powers he has acquired by his continued understanding of the natural and super-natural world.

**6. Magic and Religion:** Magic in its own right is an integral part of the indigenous worldview and is a part of everyday living. This has been substantiated earlier in the central role it plays in indigenous medicine. However, as highlighted earlier, magic is not necessarily a part of the traditional religion. If this is so, what then is the relationship between magic and religion? It has already been established that religion evolved before magic and both operates within the realms of the supernatural world while seeking to satisfy human needs. However, where both differ is in the approach and techniques used as well as discrepancies in the individual attitudes of the practitioners. For

one, whereas religion is dependent on the Supreme Being or God who is magnanimous to help humans if they appeal through prayers and trust, magic on the other hand is anchored on control of the supernatural forces. This implies that whereas religion ‘implores’ and works on the principle ‘Thy will be done, Amen’, magic on the contrary ‘commands’ and works on the principle ‘My will be done’. Little wonder magic is looked upon with intense suspicion and is usually perceived as something bad while religion on the other hand is viewed as good and is upheld highly by the society.

These discrepancies notwithstanding, there still seems to be a blend of magic and religion in Nigerian indigenous religion since both are often practiced together. For instance elements of magic are integrated in religion whenever certain prescribed observances are obeyed for certain types of religious rituals or worship to be efficacious and effective. These sets of prescribed observances may involve certain kinds of prayers, chants and incantations which has the potency of putting erstwhile dormant spiritual forces to active forces in fulfillment of man’s needs. Similarly, there are practices of magic in relation to cults of certain divinities which involves several types of sacrifices that are magical in nature. Irrespective of the somewhat covert blend between both, the practice of magic actually are associated with the non-religious or those who are referred to as ‘evil’ or ‘wicked’ and what they do are sometimes termed sorcery and witchcraft. These kinds of persons are often considered anti – social, most of them are known to possess the power to take non-human forms and are usually grouped into the category of ‘black magic’.

Magic whether used for evil purposes or good it is a part of the daily life experiences of the traditional Nigerian society. It evolved in its own right but was gradually integrated into the indigenous religion. The evolution of magic and its integration with the indigenous religion hence is as a result of weakness in man’s concept of God and the weakness of faith or man’s impatience (Anele, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

We can say for a fact that religion affects the lives of billions of people across the world on a daily basis. The belief in the existence of God and other spiritual beings is universally held and the worldview of the traditional Nigerian society is not an exception. The discussions in this chapter have shown that the traditional religion in Nigeria is collectively oriented and the Nigerian worldview is anchored on the division of the natural world of humans and the supernatural world of the spirits and the gods. The indigenous religion in Nigeria is an inseparable aspect of the daily lives of the people as it emphasizes harmony between both worlds through divination and oracles, magic and medicine and so on. The interplay of these elements at varying levels of hierarchical structure involves a chain of communication between the worshipers and the Supreme Being. In all, the cultural context within which



these elements exist by and large influences the chain of communication. The influence of the traditional religious institution on the Nigerian society is far reaching as it goes beyond fulfilling the basic religious functions in the society; it has become the bedrock of the traditional society upon which other sectors of the society including the traditional economy, polity, family, judiciary and education system are rested upon. The social structure of the traditional Nigerian society hence is a reflection of the strong force of cohesion, social control and solidarity which the traditional religious institution exerts on it.

### **Review Questions**

1. What is the meaning of religion?
2. List and discuss the scope of religion?
3. Discuss the various theories of the origin of religion
4. What are the basic functions of religion?
5. Why is African Traditional Religion unique?
6. What are the basic components of Nigerian Traditional Religion?

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# **SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA**

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## **Introduction**

Social inequality occurs in all societies Nigeria being inclusive. The presence of social inequality is an indicator of the unequal distribution of social assets or resources such as income, power and prestige/privileges to members of a given society. This unequal distribution of social assets is engendered by religion, kinship, power, race, ethnicity, age and gender among others. There is no known society in existence that is devoid of inequality, making it a universal issue. An examination of all types of societies from the primitive to modern one attests to the fact that inequality is inherent in society.

In the primitive societies, inequality manifested itself in the allocation of special privileges to certain categories of people who by physical prowess or otherwise distinguished themselves in the society. As a result, such individuals are awarded titles and seen as the nobles in the society. Such privileged positions are differentially rewarded by the society. Inequality also existed even in the primitive or the so called egalitarian societies in the form of differential strength, height and age etc. All individuals are not equally endowed with these qualities and/or attributes. In spite of the belief or claim that egalitarian societies are inequality free it is obvious that the existence of age differential among individuals, sex/gender differential, titles held and so on, are indicators of the existence of inequality. The inequality in such society however did not necessarily metamorphous to group level nor did it assume a patterned structure as is the case in modern societies.

Inequality in modern society is vividly reflected or seen in the form of income/wealth, prestige/privilege and power differentials etc. Due to the openness of the system, individuals attain differential heights in the society and such differential heights or achievements are duly and unequally rewarded. Modern society consciously and unconsciously through its reward system entrenches and promotes inequality.

In modern societies, it would be of interest to mention, that social inequality manifests in various forms. Such manifestations include: economic inequality, political inequality, racial and/or ethnic inequality, and sex and gender

inequality among others. These various manifestations have implication(s) on the life chances of individuals.

At the end of this chapter, it is expected that readers should be able to have a clear understanding of the following:

1. Conceptual issues and forms of social inequality in society
2. The causes and effects of social inequality in the society
3. The theoretical perspectives in the study of social inequality
4. Forms and types of social mobility and
5. Factors influencing social mobility

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Social Inequality**

The major concept to be clarified in this chapter is social inequality. Hence, from a more loosed sense, social inequality has to do with the unequal distribution of social desirables or assets amount individuals in society. Iwarimie-Jaja (2009) defined it to mean “lack of equality in opportunity, treatment, or status. It is a form of social or economic disparity between the rich and the poor and also the lack of smoothness or regularity in social mobility”. He summed it up by asserting that “in fact inequality implies the unevenness of conditions, situations and circumstances related to society (Iwarimie-Jaja: 2009). To Sanderson (1988), social inequality refers to the existence of differential degrees of social influence or prestige among individual members of the same society. From the above definitions and explanations it is obvious that inequality is embedded in all spheres of human endeavours and so, logically inherent in all known human society. Inequality as earlier noted has its existence from the pre-industrial era or society to the industrial or modern society. In pre-industrial society inequality exists in the form of reward as titles to individuals that distinguished themselves in terms of bravery, extraordinary skill and strength etc. in Industrial society inequality manifest in the society in terms of income disparity, power and privilege amongst individuals in the same society.

### **Forms of Inequality**

Social inequality as earlier stated manifest in various forms such as economic/income inequality, political, ethnic/racial and sex/gender inequality etc. These are the various facets of social inequality. Let’s examine these facets to understand their forms of manifestation and their implications on individual’s life style and life chances.

**Economic/Income inequality:** Economic inequality has to do with the difference in economics among individuals in the society or among countries. It is sometimes referred to as income inequality. Economic inequality exists in all societies and among individuals or groups in a society. Economic inequality manifests itself in the form of income or wealth disparity among individuals or groups. In Nigeria, wealth inequality is so pervading in that the income gap between the rich and the poor is so high to the extent that it has become a life threat to the poor whereby some of the poor in the country have developed a fatalistic attitude to life.

The cause of wealth inequality can be attributed to several factors such as; differential educational attainments by individuals resulting in income differentials between the individuals, and preferences for hard work. Others include differential risk taking ability, innate ability (special skill, creative work) and wealth condensation (more money in the hands of the already rich arising from their investment drive).

There are consequences on either the individual or the society arising from income or wealth disparity (economic inequality). The consequences range from health challenge arising from low access to Medicare to increase in death on the part of the low income earners in the society. Other consequences of wealth inequality include; the inability of the poor to afford a decent accommodation thereby resulting in their living in shanty houses or squatter settlements, and also their developing a frustration/aggression attitude towards life.

**Political inequality:** There is no known society where all individuals are equal in terms of political positions and privileges. All societies are all hierarchically structured politically. Some are bestowed with more political power than others. In the Nigerian pre-colonial feudal society, there were the feudal lords such as the Kings, chiefs and other nobles in the society wielding more political power than the vassals/commoners and peasants with little or no power at all. Now in the post-colonial Nigeria the same asymmetrical power relations still exist. Those at the administrative and power helms of affairs in the country such as the President, Governors and other political office holders in the country control more power than the other led. This unequal power of course determines their differential influence over the decision making process and policies which have great impact on their life chances and life styles.

Political inequality, it should be noted comprises the extent to which citizens have unequal voice over government decisions. In most contemporary societies there is an unequal consideration of the preferences and interests of all citizens (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2009). This unequal consideration of preferences and interests has implications on both the individual citizen and on the country at large. These include; unequal access of individuals to wealth/income, status, prestige

and privileges etc. It also leads to what is termed 'power shift' (Obafemi, 2005) whereby individuals manipulate the political system to their advantage with the belief that their interest can only be protected if and only when their 'own person' is at the helm of political affair in the country. This belief and attitude create suspicion, tension and conflict in the society.

**Sex/Gender inequality:** Gender to Zanden (1990) is a basic category by which the social world is organized. It is the social role of being a female or male. Whereas sex has to do with a person's biological characteristics and erotic behaviour, gender refers to the social creation of girls, boys, women and men... Gender places us in the social structure, establishing where and what we are in the social terms. It lays the framework within which we gain our identities, formulate our goals and carry out our training. Additionally, gender is a major source of social inequality. Just as our society structures inequality based on race, ethnicity and age, so it institutionalizes inequality based on gender.

This form of inequality has to do with the unequal distribution of societal assets between the opposite sexes of male and female. This is most noticeable in terms of discrimination in wages, political positions etc. in the country. In Nigeria for instance women are highly discriminated when it comes to political appointments/positions. This has implications on their life chances and their life styles that has resulted to the clamour by women for equal representation at all levels of human existence.

**Ethnic/Racial inequality:** An ethnic group is a group set apart from others primarily because of its national origin or distinctive cultural patterns (Schaefer, 2003) while the term racial group refers to those minorities (and the corresponding dominant groups) set apart from others because of obvious physical differences e.g. whites, blacks etc. (Schaefer, 2003). Inequality based on race is common around the world. For instance, the Black race because of their perceived disadvantage technologically compared to the White race are discriminated and placed on an unequal position with the Whites. In America and other Western world, discrimination of the blacks on the ground of the colour of their skin is noticeable. The Whites (Europeans) are seen as being superior to the Blacks are equally treated so, likewise also with ethnicity. Instances abound in Nigeria revealing inequality based on ethnic group identification and affiliations. It is this inequality arising from perceived discrimination and marginalization that transcends to the agitation and clamour for the restructuring of the country in the bid to ensure equity and fairness and equal co-existence by the multifarious ethnic groups composing the political entity known as Nigeria.

**Social Stratification:** It is the differential or unequal ranking of individuals or groups in the society in terms of power, wealth and privilege/prestige. Social

stratification has to do with the placement of individuals into different groups or strata and then unequally rank them in terms of the amount of wealth, power and/or privilege/prestige they possess. In line with the above, Sanderson (1988) refers to social stratification as involving the existence within a single society of two or more differentially ranked groups, the members of which control unequal amount of power, privilege and prestige. Social stratification therefore implies a hierarchical ordering of the social groups hence Iwarimie-Jaja (2009) sees it as a system of differential distribution of desirables, scarce resources or assets.

It should be noted that there is a distinction between social inequality and social stratification. While social inequality has to do with differentials in social assets of individuals, social stratification in turn has to do with the differential ranking of individuals or groups in terms of the social assets. Here the ranking confers on the members the status of superiority and/or inferiority depending on the group's position in the ranking. However social stratification is an aspect of social inequality in that it connotes unequal social assets (power, wealth and prestige etc.) distribution. Power involves the capacity of some persons to commend the action of others, even against their will and despite their resistance (Ifeanacho & Okaba, 2009). Wealth refers to all material assets of an individual – income, property/ material products while prestige in turn refers to the honour or respect accorded a person by others. It is the favourable assessment and social recognition giving to someone by others.

It is interesting to note that all known societies, Nigeria inclusive have a form of stratification system or the other. This can be seen from the pre-colonial days of slavery to feudalism and then to the present day capitalism. In the pre-colonial Nigeria slave era, the society had elements of stratification. The society was stratified on the line of slave masters and slaves. The slave masters were at the top of the hierarchy while the slaves were at the bottom of the social ladder. The slave masters occupied the upper class position in the social strata while the slaves were seen to occupy the lower class position in the social stratification system. Their various class positions determined the nature of the social relationship between them. The nature of the social relations of production between these two classes off-course was that of master servant relation. It should be noted that their differential class positions culminating into the nature of their social relations of productions invariably determined their differential life styles and life chances.

In the Nigerian feudal society, elements of stratification still existed. The society was stratified based on the then prevailing means of production which was land ownership. Land ownership then determined ones class position in the society. With this, two distinct classes were visible in the society as in that era. These were the land-lords and the vassals or serfs. The Kings, Emirs, Chiefs and

other title holders by virtue of their claim to divine ordination and authority had privileged access and also became the custodians of the means of production which was land. These constitute the upper class. On the other divide were the non-land owners who were the peasants and the commoners. They make up the lower class in the stratification system. The social relations of production between these two classes were that of master/servant relationship.

In the colonial/post-colonial Nigeria, the society was equally stratified based on the individual's access to the prevailing means of productions which is capital. Capital in the economic sense can be seen to depict any man made good that is used for further production. Arising from its ownership, two distinct classes from the Marxian view point existed in the country. The classes are the capitalist or the bourgeois and the proletariats or the non-capital owners. However from the view point of Mas Weber, apart from the class of property and non-property owners as espoused by Karl Marx, other classes such as the middle and the manual working classes also exist. The point here is that irrespective of the divergence in postulations and classification models, the society was stratified. They were those that constitute the upper class such as the rich and mighty in the society and the lower class such as the wage earners and the commoners. Their differential class positions in the stratification system equally determines their differential life styles and life chances in that the rich in the society (upper class) tend to have better opportunities and access to improved medicare, political rights and priviledges, standard and decent houses/accommodations, qualitative education for their wards etc. as against the poor and down-trodden (the lower class) in the country. From the above it is evident that in either the traditional Nigerian society or the modern Nigerian society, the society was and is still stratified.

**Social mobility:** It is the upward or downward movement of an individual or group from one social position to another. Unlike the closed system where social mobility is restricted, it is however flexible and high in an open system typified by the industrial society where social mobility is enabled through achievement as against ascription as in the pre-industrial or closed system. It should be noted that social mobility by its upward and downward placement of individuals or groups with its accompanying differential rewards promotes and sustains social inequality in society. Social mobility by its differential rewards to positions or placements affects individuals' lifestyles and life chances thereby reinforcing the inequality between and among individuals in the society. These issues will be further detailed in the course of the study.

### **Theoretical perspectives**

Social inequality/stratification has been subjected under various/varied theoretical perspectives. It should be noted that various theories have attempted



to explain social stratification/inequality as a subject matter. For a proper illumination of social inequality/stratification in Nigeria, it is therefore imperative that a review of some of the contending theories be undertaken. The major theories are the Functionalist theory and the Marxian Conflict theory.

**The Functionalist theory:** The functionalist theory tends to view social inequality/stratification from the standpoint of its role or function in the society. The position of the functionalist theory is that social stratification/inequality is functionally important in that it ensures societal stability and equilibrium. Differential jobs should attract differential rewards. By so doing the society is maintained. The key proponents of this view is Davies and Moore, whose position is that some roles or functions in the society are more important than others and so should attract differential reward thereby ensuring that such roles are enacted in the society. A major function of stratification is to match the most able people with the functionally most important positions (Haralambos & Heald, 1980). The more functionally important the role, the more reward accorded or attached to the role or position. Based on their postulation, Lawyers because of the length of training and their relative scarcity should be ranked higher in society than gardeners. So, the former should be more rewarded than the latter group of people. This view of course gives credence to social inequality and stratification in society in that individuals' rankings are based on merit or what they called 'meritocracy'.

This view of meritocracy and functionally important roles or jobs has been subjected to lots of criticisms. This is based on the argument that it is misleading and deceptive in that all roles or jobs in the society are important arising from the fact that their non-enactment will lead to societal disequilibrium. If there are no gardeners, how will the society be cleared of refuse and garbage which constitutes environmental hazard to the society? This functionally important role only gives credence to capitalist ideology for exploitation. Their 'meritocracy' view is also questionable in that unequal access to opportunities (arising from their position in the social relations of production and distribution) denies the less privileged in society the opportunity to compete. More so, the question may be asked, who determines which job is functionally important and which is not? The answer of course is obvious.

**The Marxian perspective:** According to Marx the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. To him man must eat to survive and do other things in life. Therefore the economy is the determinant of man's existence. However in the course of this material production man enters into a social relation. It is this social relations of production that determines one's social or class position in the society. Based on this, two social classes can be identified in the society. The two classes are the minority and the majority class

which Marx referred to as the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariats. These classes emerged as a result of their relationship to the means of production whereby one (the dominant class) can appropriate the surplus value of the other arising from their class position in the society.

Social inequality is therefore rooted in the system of social production given rise to class interest. These class interests are however dialectically opposed to each other hence resulting to class conflict which is the cornerstone of social change in society. To Marx it is this class conflict and the social change thereof that saw society move from one stage of development (mode of production) to the other. Society according to Marx has passed through five stages of development ranging from; primitive communalism, through the slave mode of production, feudalism, capitalism and the socialist/scientific communal mode of production. To Marx inequality exist in all the modes of production with the exception of the last mode of production which is the scientific communism due to the absence of private ownership of the means of production. Therefore to eliminate inequality and class struggle invariably social stratification in the society, private ownership of the means of production should be abolished in that inequality and social stratification is an off-shoot of private property ownership.

This postulation by Marx has also been subjected to several criticisms. One is his monolithic assumption of workers. Marx saw the working class as being one. This assumption is erroneous is that the working class are never one but fragmented into several groups with different interests. This fragmentation and polarization of the working class makes it equally difficult for them to develop class consciousness that is need for a class action or a revolution as envisaged Marx. In the Nigerian context, a class action/revolution by the working class is near impossible due to the fact that the workers are fragmented on the base of ethnicity, religion, and politics and even on economic interest.

In spite of the short falls, Marx's postulation however is a pointer to the existence and the ills of inequality and social stratification in the society due to its bearing on individual's life chances.

### **Understanding Social mobility in Society**

According to Sorokin (1959), there is no society which is closed, not even India with its rigid caste system and no society is completely open even though it may be based on the class system. The term social mobility is a relative term because no two societies are exactly the same with respect to the amount of movement allowed or discouraged. Further the speed of movement or change may differ from one period of time to another. The rate of change depends upon the level of modernization of a given society.

Social mobility could be defined as the movement of individuals, families, households, or other categories of people within or between layers or tiers in a system of social stratification. The movement can be in a downward or upward direction (Sebastian, 2010). Also, Barber (1957) defined social mobility as the movement either upward or downward, between higher or lower social classes; or more precisely, movement between one relatively, fulltime, functionally significant social role and another that is evaluated as either higher or lower. This movement is to be conceived as a process occurring over time, with individuals moving from one social role and position to another because of what has happened to them in various kinds of social interaction. Therefore, mobility arises out of social interaction as each individual reacts to others in changing series of social roles.

Social mobility therefore is the upward or downward movement of an individual or group of individuals from one social ladder (status) to the other. Thus, people in society continue to move up down the social scale. This movement is called 'social mobility (Shankar Rao, 2008). Here the poor of today may become rich tomorrow as a result of hard work and also the rich of today may become poor tomorrow as a result of unforeseen circumstance thereby leading to an upward movement in the social ladder of the former and a downward movement of the latter. This movement is mostly possible in an open as against closed society. In an open system or society, social mobility is flexible in that individual or group can freely move from one position to another as a result of several factors such as educational advancement, innate ability, right marriage etc. In a close system or society, mobility is very rigid and so does not permit or allow individuals or group to free move from one social position to another.

### **Types of Social Mobility:**

Social mobility is assumed as a positive rather than a negative value and an open society is preferred over a closed one. Sociologists study how various structural and social factors contribute to the social mobility of groups or individuals. Change of social position of an individual or group of individuals take different forms and shapes. At one period of time there would be one type of mobility and another period of time it can be another type. Each of the following types is not exclusive but they may overlap, it is only for the purpose of convenience and analysis they are given different labels.

There are several types of social mobility such as vertical mobility, horizontal mobility, absolute mobility, intergenerational mobility, intra-generational mobility etc.

**Vertical mobility:** It is the movement of an individual upward or downward in the social ladder which is expressed in the manner of promotion or demotion in

position. For example, the manager of the meat department who is promoted to general manager of the supermarket has achieved upward vertical mobility. The promotion is accompanied by an increase in income and overall responsibility. On the other hand, a manager who is demoted to a rank previously below him or her say a sales man is said to have suffered downward vertical mobility. Here one's position improves or declines in hierarchical order. Vertical mobility is intensive in relatively open societies. Sorokin (1959) has indicated the following general principles of vertical mobility:

- i. There has scarcely been any society whose strata were absolutely closed or in which vertical mobility in its three forms – economic, political and occupational was not present.
- ii. There has never been existed a society in which vertical social mobility has been absolutely free and the transition from one social stratum to another has had no resistance.
- iii. The intensiveness as well as the generality of vertical social mobility, varies from society to society.
- iv. The intensiveness and generality of the vertical mobility – the economic, the political and the occupational- fluctuate in the same society at different lines.

**Horizontal mobility:** This is a movement that does not bring about a significant change either upward or downward in the social ladder. In other words, horizontal mobility is the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated on the same level. An example of horizontal mobility is a medical doctor working in a hospital in Lagos relocating to Abuja still as a medical doctor. Another example is; when a lecturer is transferred from one Federal University to another still as a lecturer with the same grade or salary scale. Here the change is only in the location and not in the status of the individual.

**Absolute mobility:** It means an increase in an individual's standard of living arising from an increase in the individual's income.

**Intergenerational mobility:** It involves changes in the social position of children relative to their parents (Schaefer, 2003). It refers to social mobility that takes place between generations (that is children compared with parents). If a man who is a gardener has a son who is a lawyer, that son has experienced an upward intergenerational mobility in his life. Thus, a lawyer father having a gardener son provides an example of a downward intergenerational mobility. According to Sebastian (2010) intergenerational studies focus on entire dynasties, tracking their movements from one generation to the next. It refers to changes that are observed from one generation to the next.

**Intra-generational mobility:** This type of social mobility involves changes in social status in an individual's life time. Thus, intra-generational mobility studies follow individuals throughout their lives (Sebastian 2010). A man who started work as a messenger but later rose to the position of an accountant has experienced an upward intra-generational mobility while an individual who was employed as an accountant but due to economic recession was laid-off now becoming a taxi driver has experienced a downward intra-generational mobility.

### **Factors Influencing Social Mobility:**

Generally several factors influence social mobility in human societies. These factors are discussed below:

**The Stratification System of the Society:** The Stratification System of the Society concerned highly influences social mobility. The societies of the world can be divided into two groups— closed societies and open societies. Closed societies are caste ridden (as in India) and the status of a person is determined by his being born in a particular caste. Therefore, in such a society chances of mobility are very slim because such a society remains within the bond of caste and heredity (Sebastian, 2010). For example, a person born in a family of Brahmins may be poor, of bad character, will enjoy the status of Brahmin due to his birth in a Brahmin family. But in an open society equality of opportunities are provided which encourage more social mobility.

**Education:** Social mobility is promoted through development, propagation and spread of education. The people who receive more education tend to achieve higher social status. Education provides one with the most promising chances of upward social mobility into a better social class and attaining a higher social status, regardless of current social standing in the overall structure of society (Sebastian, 2010). Education not only helps an individual to acquire knowledge but is also a passport for occupational position for higher prestige. It is largely only after acquiring minimum formal education that an individual can aspire to occupy higher positions. In the modern industrial society in which statuses are achieved, education is the basic requirement. The contribution of education to social mobility is that it has the potential to transform the relationship between social class origins and destinations.

**Occupation:** All the occupations in the society do not get the same respect. Some professions carry higher prestige in comparison to other professions. For example, Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers are considered to be better than the Teachers and Technicians. Different occupations are hierarchically arranged because the incumbents of these occupations get different economic rewards

and enjoys different power, prestige and privileges based on the economic returns.

Weber (1946) opine that we keep in mind that society grants recognition, prestige and power not only based on economic returns from an occupation or profession alone. It could also be according to the skills of the individual which are valued most in the society. A smuggler may be earning more than a clerk but his means of livelihood are not recognized in the society.

**Influence of intelligence:** The role of an individual's level of mental ability in pursuit of educational attainment (professional positions require specific educational credentials) enhances the individual's chances of an upward social mobility. Furthermore, educational attainment contributes to social class attainment through the contribution of mental ability to educational attainment. Even further, mental ability can contribute to social class attainment independent of actual educational attainment, as is the case when the educational attainment is prevented, individuals with higher mental ability manage to make use of the mental ability to work their way up on the social ladder.

**Social status and social class:** Social mobility is highly dependent on the overall structure of social statuses and occupations in a given society (Grusky, & Robert, 1984). The extent of differing social positions and the manner in which they fit together or overlap provides the overall social structure of such positions. Add to this is the differing dimensions of status, such as Max Weber's (1946) delineation of economic stature, prestige, and power and we see the potential for complexity in a given social stratification system. Such dimensions within a given society can be seen as independent variables that can explain differences in social mobility at different times and places in different stratification systems.

**Class cultures and social networks:** These differing dimensions of social mobility can be classified in terms of differing types of capital that contribute to changes in mobility. Cultural capital, a term first coined by French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is the process of distinguishing between the economic aspects of class and powerful cultural assets. Bourdieu described three types of capital that place a person in a certain social category: economic capital; social capital; and cultural capital (Ritzer, 2014). While economic capital includes economic resources such as cash, credit, and other material assets. Social capital includes resources one achieves based on group membership, networks of influence, relationships and support from other people. Cultural capital is any advantage a person has that gives them a higher status in society, such as education, skills, or any other form of knowledge. Usually, people with all three types of capital have a high status in society. Bourdieu (1984) found that the culture of the

upper social class is oriented more toward formal reasoning and abstract thought. The lower social class is geared more towards matters of facts and the necessities of life. He also found that the environment in which person develops has a large effect on the cultural resources that a person will have.

**Family Income:** Family income is one of the most important factors in determining the mental ability (intelligence) of the children. According to Herrnstein, Richard (1994) low income families do not have a choice but to settle for the bad education because they cannot afford to relocate to rich suburbs. The more money and time parents invest in their child determines to a large extent the success of these children in school. Research has showed that higher mobility levels are perceived for locations where there are better schools.

**Skills and Training:** Each society makes provision to impart skill and training to the younger generation. To acquire skill and training one has to spend a lot of time as well as money. Why is it that persons spend money and time to acquire skill? The reason is that society gives incentives to such persons. When they complete their training, they are entitled to high positions, which are far better than those positions which they might have taken without such training (Davies & Moore, 1945). For them, Society not only assigns higher social status but also gives higher economic rewards and other privileges to those persons who have these training. Keeping in view these incentives people undergo these training with a hope to moving up in the social ladder.

**Migration:** Migration can also facilitate social mobility. People migrate from one place to another either due to pull or push factors. A particular place may not have opportunities and facilities to improve upon an individual. Therefore, such individual(s) may be forced to relocate to other places so as to improve the life.

These factors, in as much as they promote social mobility can as well become impediments on social mobility depending on where an individual or group is placed by having or lacking them and the very structure and cultural values of the society concerned. For example education is frequently seen as a strong driver of social mobility. The quality of one's education varies depending on the social class that they are in. The higher the family income the better opportunities one is given to get a good education. The inequality in education makes it harder for low-income families to achieve social mobility.

## **Conclusion**

Social inequality is the presence of unequal distribution of societal assets among individuals or groups in society. Inequality is universal and endemic in that it exists globally and no society can claim to be devoid of it since individuals are not equally endowed with the societal desirables. Inequality in society can

manifest in various forms such as economic inequality, political inequality, sex and gender inequality and ethnic/racial inequality etc. The unequal distribution of social assets is engendered in societies by religion, kinship, power, ethnicity and gender among others, and so, this leads to the stratification of society based on one's access to the means of production and appropriation. A look at the Nigerian society starting from the traditional to the modern reveal the existence of stratification along the line of haves (upper class) and have nots (lower class). The possibility for either upward or downward mobility is visible in the country because Nigeria is a modern and open society.

### Revision Questions

- i. What is social inequality?
- ii. List and explain the various forms of inequality in society.
- iii. What is social stratification?
- iv. Is stratification universal?
- v. Differentiate between social stratification and social inequality.
- vi. Must some members of society receive greater rewards than others?
- vii. List and explain the various types of social mobility.

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# HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

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## Introduction

At the beginning of creation there was peace and tranquillity among the creations of nature. Man's greed, selfishness and vaulting ambition led to the destruction and imbalance of the natural order of our environment with resultant deterioration in the health of humans.

World Health Organization (WHO), in its 1948 constitution defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 2017). Health is also a relative state in which one is able to function well physically, mentally, socially and spiritually in order to express the full range of one's unique potentialities within the environment in which one is living (Gale Encyclopedia of medicine, 2008). Both definitions express a need for one to be sound physically, mentally and socially. The situation in the developing countries especially, Africa and Nigeria in particular, would mean that there are only a handful of healthy people in those regions. This is because the environment; which includes the Circumstances, objects or conditions by which one is surrounded (Webster's New Explorer Encyclopedia Dictionary, 2006), is polluted.

Environment is the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community. Since the environment includes objects and living conditions that influence lives, any contamination or pollution to it, will adversely affect lives physically, mentally, socially and even spiritually. This adverse effect is the fact that toxic agents are added to the environment by society in quantities that are harmful to living organisms (Ehrlich, 2004). The question is: What are these toxic agents, why are they added to the environment in disproportionate quantities and who are responsible?

This chapter that started with the explanation of health and what makes up our environment, will make effort to respond to the questions by looking at the following areas:

- General Health condition of the world population
- Nigeria and its environment
- Environmental pollution and
- Sanitation

## General Health Condition of the World Population

Technologically Developed World (otherwise called, Western World) includes, United States of America, Canada, Britain, France, Germany and Russia to name a few. Technologically Developing World (otherwise called, Third World), include all African countries except South Africa and most Asian and South American countries. General health condition can be ascertained by looking at health indicators such as life expectancy and rate of infant mortality.

TABLE 1—Health Indicator for Selected Nations

	Life Expectancy (LE) at Birth (years)			Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) (per 1000 live births)		
	1970	2005	2014	1970	2005	2014
<b>High Human Development</b>						
United States	70.7	77.7	78.9	20	6.5	6.5
Sweden	74.4	80	82.3	11	2.8	2.6
<b>Low Human Development</b>						
Nepal	42.1	59.8	69.2	156	67	28.9
Nigeria	42.7	46.8	54.5	120	98.9	71.2

1970, 2005 data source: Kornblum and Julian (2009); 2014 data source W.H.O. (2016)

The above table shows a high rate of infant mortality in technologically less advanced countries such as Nepal (IMR=28.9) and Nigeria (IMR=71.2). It also shows a very low life expectancy for both countries, Nepal and Nigeria, 69.2 and 54.5, respectively. This is in contrast with United States and Sweden that have Life Expectancy of 78.9 and 82.3 respectively. The infant mortality for both countries is 6.5 and 2.6 respectively. Kornblum and Julian (2009) included poor sanitation among all others as contributing to the low life expectancy and high infant mortality rate in technologically less advanced countries. Most of the technologically advanced countries are likely to have good health condition than the technologically developing countries. Advancement in technology has helped in the clean up and maintenance of a healthy environment that translates into healthy citizenry. The rich nations live long enough to only expect to suffer or die of what Henslin (2012) called “luxury” diseases, such as Cancer and Heart Attack. While the poor nations, during their short life “would face four major causes of illness and death: malaria (from mosquitoes), internal parasites from (contaminated water), diarrhea (from food and soil contaminated with human feces), and malnutrition (p. 536).

TABLE 2: Changes in Key Global Indicators of Environment and Population Health

	<b>1985-1989</b>	<b>2005-2009</b>
Lack Safe Drinking Water	1.3 Billion	1.1 Billion
Lack Sanitation	2.7 Billion	2.6 Billion

Source: Griffiths (2011: 157)

Table 2 shows that 1.3 billion people in the world lacked safe drinking water between 1985 and 1989 and by 2009 the number only decreased to 1.1 billion people who lacked safe drinking water. It also shows that 2.7 billion people were lacking in proper sanitation in 2009. The number only decreased to 2.6 billion in 2009. Majority of the world population reside in the technologically developing world where having good health is a challenge. Lack of adequate sanitation and safe drinking water is an indicator of poor health condition. Most of the world population are in the developing countries, as a result, poor health condition will be predominant in those areas.

From the Conflict Perspective, not all those in the poor nations die early. Most poor nations with capitalist economy have few very rich and/or royal families with enough wealth to take care for their health and illness. These privileged few may even fly themselves to the technologically advanced nations to get proper healthcare. The cost of their search for better health care may be equivalent to the cost of building the healthcare facility and providing a sustainable healthy environment that would have benefited everyone in their developing nations.

### **Nigeria and Its Environment**

The deplorable and insanitary condition of the Nigeria environment has generated lots of debates among concerned citizens of this country. Scavenging, improper and delayed garbage collection, legal infringements relative to sanitary laws are among the many problems that beg to be addressed to ensure a healthy and responsible living. According to the report by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, 2017), in Nigeria, there are “human diseases and conditions with well-established associations with exposures to environmental contaminants.” Risk factors, they reported are multi-factorial and the development of a particular disease or condition depends on the magnitude, duration, and timing of the exposure.” However, the diseases and conditions are associated with air, water and land even though it cannot be tied directly to the contaminant levels. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2012) reported

that Nigeria is among “the ten countries with the largest population without access to an improved drinking water source” as of 2010. By 2015, improvements have been made in some local government areas, where some communities demanded for water in exchange for the 2015 political votes. In general, access to improved drinking water is associated with class in developing nations. Those belonging to upper class are likely to have access to improved drinking water than those belonging to lower class in Nigeria.

## **Environmental Pollution**

There are different categories of Environmental Pollution of which Air, Water, and Soil/Land are examples.

**Air Pollution:** The natural air cleansing method is a process called photosynthesis where “green plants combine water with carbon dioxide that humans and other organism exhale, and they produce oxygen and carbohydrates” This natural clean air sustains humans, plants and animals (Kornblum, 2009). However, there is a limit to how many harmful substances can be cleansed by this natural air cleansing method. When it is polluted, the critical function of the atmosphere can be affected. Kornblum (2009: 491), states: “in urban areas, almost half of the carbon monoxide in the air comes from motor vehicles.” This and other types of air pollution can affect ones visibility thereby increasing the rate of motor vehicle accidents. Many vehicles around the world especially third world countries like Nigeria, Cameroon and Kenya have harmful emission problems that are hardly taken care of thus leaving the environment polluted.

Air pollution from cars can also lead to health defects such as bronchitis, heart and asthma attacks, respiratory problems and early death. On a global scale, according to United States Environmental protection Agency (US-EPA, 2017), “air pollution can change the atmosphere's composition with important consequences, including depletion of the Earth's ozone layer and climate change.” Also, “certain types of outdoor air pollution when deposited on the Earth's surface through rain and other processes, damage other valued resources, such as forests, lakes and streams, and building surfaces.

Nigeria has National Environmental Regulation that has the task of controlling vehicle emissions (Regulations 2010. S.I. No. 20) so as to “restore, preserve and improve the quality of air from vehicular emission (Sambo, 2016). The country is yet to enforce the regulations since the pollution is still on going.

**Water Pollution:** Water is very important to human existence. According to Helmenstine (2017), the human body contains 75% of water on the average. Keeping this constituent is very vital because any pollution of water may be lethal to human as well as animals' survivability. The mission of many environmental protection agencies (EPA) World Wide is to protect human health. United States EPA requires their citizens to get drinking water from a community water system, which is being monitored for contaminants and treatment techniques. By 2016, the EPA reported that 91% were in compliance and "roughly 97% of Americans got at least some drinking water from a community water system (US-EPA, 2016). Comparatively, technologically less developed countries such as Nigeria, do not have mandate for all to have access to community water system. Areas with such facilities are lacking in proper operation and maintenance, which give the residence no option than to be dependent on "water from unprotected wells, rivers and streams (Atkin et al, 2014). These untreated and apparently polluted water supply are capable of causing some water related diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, and typhoid, among others. In Rashidul's (2007) research, he found that Roundworm (*Ascaris Lumbricoides*), Whipworm (*Trichuris Trichuria*) and Hookworm are intestinal nematode infections that affect those in developing world who have little or no access to treated water, as is the case with Nigeria. Gundry et al (2004) stated that in developing countries, "it is not only water contaminated at source or during delivery that is an issue, but water stored within the home, where it may become contaminated." Therefore, lack of adequate water, sanitation and good hygiene practice, results in unstable health conditions in developing countries.

**Oil Spills and Toxic Wastes on Soil/Land and Water:** Oil companies that do a good job of controlling wastes and spillage in developed countries apply different standard when they are in developing countries where they operate in euphoria as the laws for proper waste disposal and restoration of damaged natural resources are not enforced, especially in Nigeria. Polluted waters, seafood, contaminated with drilling chemicals, arable lands rendered infertile and unproductive by chemicals and oil by products, have driven citizens to abject poverty with resultant deteriorating health and reduced lifespans. One example of a community in the Niger Delta with such severe consequence of oil spill is Ogoniland. As captured by Agbonifo (2016), the Bodo oil spills in the Niger Delta region in 2008, which was caused by operational problems recorded about 4,000 barrels of oil spill a day for 10 weeks. The scale of the spill is likened to the Exxon Valdez 1989 disaster in Alaska, where 10 million gallons of oil destroyed the remote coastline. The spills contaminated the surface water, ground water, ambient air, and crops with hydrocarbons, including known

carcinogens like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon and benzo (a) pyrene, naturally occurring radioactive materials, and trace metals that were further bio-accumulated in some food crops.

Till this day, not much has been done to improve the life of those affected by oil spill that has not stopped. This is one out of many devastating effects of carefree oil exploration and unconcerned oil drilling with very severe negative consequences especially in the oil producing areas of Nigeria. As with many oil companies operating in Nigeria, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) report, indicated that Shell does not achieve the Nigeria environmental standard, its own standard as well as the oil industry standards (Amnesty International 2014). Shell is rather spending time blaming the cause of spillage on sabotage and theft instead of taking action, working with communities to remedy the environmental disaster.

**Industries:** When the western world welcomed industrialization with open arms, little did they know that it would come with a cost. Upon realization of the detriments, research to reduce the harm followed suit. This is unlike the technologically less developed countries such as Nigeria that embraced technology and is doing very little about the adverse effects of the embracement. Due to unreliable electrical supply, many families and industries use generators for electricity. These generators pollute the air with very dangerous gas that kills when inhaled. Many homes have lost their loved ones as a result of this. “Burning fossil fuels to run motorized vehicles, factories, and power plants has been especially harmful to our earth” (Henslin, 2012). Acid rain produced by burning fossil fuels releases sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide that become sulfuric and nitric acid when they react with moisture in the air. This acid rain is very harmful to fish as well as other mammals. The industries, while producing and creating jobs, are killing humans, animals and plant life with toxic wastes (Henslin, 2012).

## **Understanding Environmental Sanitation**

Sanitation is the science and practice of effecting healthful and hygienic conditions; It is also the study and use of hygienic measures such as drainage, ventilation, pure water supply, etc. (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 2014). World Health Organization (WHO) defines it as “the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and feces. (UNICEF AND WHO, 2012). Also, Park (2011) documented that the Michigan based National Sanitation Foundation defined sanitation as way of life that is

expressed in the clean home, farm, business, neighborhoods and community. To ensure a safe, clean and healthy environment, many countries including Nigeria introduced Ministries or Agencies to embark on the countries healthful living. Environment Sanitation Agency is one of them.

### **Environmental Sanitation Agency in Nigeria**

Environmental Sanitation is the principles and practice of effecting healthful and hygienic conditions in the environment to promote public health and welfare, improve quality of life and ensure a sustainable environment (Mohammed, 2011). The essential components of Environmental Sanitation include but not limited to the following: Solid waste management, Medical waste management, Excreta and sewage management, Food sanitation, Sanitary inspection of premises, Market and abattoir sanitation, Adequate potable water supply, School sanitation, Pest and vector control, Management of urban drainage and Hygiene education and promotion (Mohammed, 2011). These different areas of the agency have regulations that seek to minimize pollution that will keep the environment healthy so that life expectancy can increase and rate of infant mortality reduced. Two examples of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations are as follows:

- i. National Environmental (Sanitation and Wastes Control) Regulations, 2009. S. I. No.28. The purpose of this Regulation is to provide the legal framework for the adoption of sustainable and environment friendly practices in environmental sanitation and waste management to minimize pollution.
- ii. National Environmental (Mining and Processing of Coal, Ores, and Industrial Minerals) Regulations, 2009. S.I. No. 31. This Regulation seeks to minimize pollution from mining and processing of coal, ores and industrial minerals (Mohammed, 2011).

### **Trash Removal**

In cities across Nigeria, trash is dumped along the streets uncollected and unremoved. The dumpsters become breeding grounds for flies, mosquitoes, roaches, rats and other infectious life threatening carriers. Dumpster trucks, if any, are inadequately equipped for trash removal and incinerators are not properly serviced. In many homes and institutions, that have no removal facilities, trash is littered everywhere and the people tolerate the deadly conditions. To reduce the menace, some states introduced environmental day. Few examples of such states are: Bayelsa, Rivers, and Imo, that observe the last Saturday of the Month as Sanitation Day. On this day people are mandated to



clean up their environment and remove any trash in ones' area of residence and business.

### **Excreta/Sewage/Drainage System:**

Open urination by men and children are common practices everywhere in Nigeria. Children as well as adults defecate indiscriminately at dumpsites, gutters or any available nearby bushes. These insanitary methods of excreta and sewage management have negative effects on the health of the public and the environment. This practice is an eye saw that denigrate a community. Research report by Abutu (2014) referred to Kannan Nadar, the Chief Water Sanitation and Hygiene section of United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF), who said that the prevailing practice of open defecation adversely affect the environment, health, economy as well as the overall development of the country. He said the adverse impact of open defecation is disproportionately skewed towards the poor, the elderly, the disabled, women/girl and children under 5. UNICEF report as quoted in Abutu (2014) shows that Nigeria has over 50 million people defecating in the open and is among the top five countries in the world with the largest number of people practicing open defecation. Countries around the globe are making efforts to improve water supply, construct drainage and sewage system and educate people on personal hygiene. Despite such efforts, report from UNICEF and WHO (2012) shows that 2.5 billion people around the world lack access to basic sanitation services. About 1 billion people continue to practice open defecation and additional 748 million people do not have ready access to an improved source of drinking water. In Nigeria, millions of people live without access to treated water facilitating the spread of diarrhea, typhoid and many water borne diseases.

### **Summary**

A healthy person is one who is able to function well physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. Most of the more than seven billion people in the world are not healthy. This is because the natural clean air that sustains humans, plants and animals has been polluted due to greed, selfishness and vaulting ambition of people, industries and government agencies. This indifference to good environmental conditions results in the deterioration of the health of the people.

The technologically developed world, otherwise known as the Western world invested deeply in the clean-up of their environment and has effective enforcement of violators. On the contrary the technologically developing world otherwise known as the Third world, Nigeria being one of them, has done little or nothing to clean up their environment. Some industries that are concerned

about the welfare of the people are highly responsible for meeting good safety environmental and health conditions of the community in which they operate. While some other industries take advantage of the ignorance, poverty and lack of exposure of the people, as well as ineffective law enforcement to disregard the safety and environmental conditions of the people with resultant challenges to healthful living. Today, many third world countries have high rate of infant mortality, reduced life span, suffer from all types of waterborne diseases, vector-borne diseases, lower respiratory infections, intestinal nematode infections and malaria to name a few.

## **Conclusion**

To alleviate these problems that concern the lives, longevity, and probably to maximize the utilization of nature's abundant gift, Nigerians and most of the citizens of the developing countries must be educated on the importance of cleanliness and adequate use of private and public sanitary facilities. The value system must be redefined to embrace healthy living in a healthy and hazard free environment that ensures a dignified living and equitable sanitary conditions.

Given the multifaceted destructive and deadly consequences of insanitary health and sanitary conditions to human life, adequate measures must be taken to ensure that awareness of these fatalities are communicated to the public. Since Knowledge is power, and since prevention is better than cure issues concerning good health and sanitation must be of paramount importance at both federal, state, and local governmental, units as well as, at corporate, institutional levels. The following measures are recommended to advance the issues of good health and sanitary living:

- i. Health and sanitation education, starting from pre-kindergarten to adulthood.
- ii. Efforts need to be done by the Federal government to construct adequate sewage systems in large cities. (Currently only Wuse, Maitama and Asokoro districts of the Abuja metropolis of the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, have adequate sewage system (Abutu, 2014).
- iii. Effective enforcement of rules and regulations regarding good sanitary conditions
- iv. Strict enforcement of laws against hazardous oil drilling, oil spillage, chemical pollutions and emission control
- v. Provision of public fountain, rest areas, and convenience centers
- vi. Inspection of manufacturing facilities to ensure their compliance with applicable healthy and sanitary conditions

- vii. Imposition of fines on littering on the streets and open defecation and urination
- viii. Provision of garbage disposal facilities and the establishment of trash recycling programs
- ix. Require every community to save acres of trees and preserve or replant medicinal trees and or plants.
- x. Provide community water system to all the communities in every local government areas.

## Review Questions

- a. Define the following: Health, Environment, Sanitation, Pollution
- b. Use symbolic interactionists' perspective or social conflict perspective to explain if we should applaud or jail eco-saboteurs.
- c. Name Water-borne diseases, Vector diseases,
- d. What is photosynthesis?
- e. What is the general health condition on Nigerians?
- f. What are the trends in outdoor air quality and their effects on human health?

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# **NIGERIA IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION**

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## **Introduction**

It would be a step in the right direction to point out first, that the age where we currently are, is a product of the motion of technological innovation and by extension globalization. As a result, what is today referred to as the Information Communication Technology (ICT), provided the necessary incentive for the emergence of the age of information as a distinct phase of globalization. The incremental advancement in ICT has culminated into what Cogburn and Adeyi (1999) refer to as a Global Information Infrastructure (GII) which is made possible as a result of increased digitization of society. There is a subtle logic in existing literature on the development of society suggesting that the world has moved from a mostly capitalist system, to a knowledge society which in itself was ushered in by the information society. In the opinion of Andreas and Robin (1998), information has come to be regarded as a symbol of the age in which we live. Talk nowadays is frequently of an information explosion, an information technology revolution even of an ‘information society’.

However, while the understanding that the world is a mobile train in terms of human progress is clear, not all societies or countries arrive at the same destination with regard to time or even follow the same route to this progress. This is perhaps why the world is diverged into regions or countries that are considered developed and others tagged developing or even less developed. In more advanced or developed countries such as the United States of America, Britain, France among others, internet penetration and actual deployment for use in development which is the key driver of the information age is considered high. However, while countries in the Third World may record high internet penetration, its deployment in terms of value to the growth and development of these societies has been really low.

For instance, Nigeria is ranked number one in Africa with regard to internet penetration (DigitXplus, 2015). While this has attracted positive commentaries, a good number analysts believe strongly that this enviable position has not been effectively leveraged for socio-economic growth or even the required transition into the information society. This progress is mostly undermined by weak service quality, epileptic electricity supply as well as network congestion among others.

This paper attempts to provide insight into the emerging discourse on information age or knowledge economy around the world especially focusing

on the place of Nigeria within this new society. At the end of this chapter, readers are expected to among other things, be able to:

- Identify basic concepts (and their meanings) associated with the information age or society
- Have an idea of what the information society is, in terms of its different dimensions and characteristics
- Have an understanding of how Nigeria is faring in the information age with regard to its contribution to:
  - The Gross Domestic Product of Nigeria
  - Other sectors such as industry, agriculture, commerce among others
  - Social relations in Nigeria
- Identify the problems associated with the information society in Nigeria

### **Basic Concepts of the Information Society**

All historical societies that have existed from slavery to capitalism are associated with some concepts that help the understanding of that society especially in the course of understanding their statics and dynamics. In most cases, these concepts tend to be more confusing even when they are fully defined. However, the concepts remain irresistible especially when we take into cognizance the fact that they provide us a means to identify and understand essential elements of the world in which we live and from which we have emerged. With regard to the Information Society, it seems inescapable to clarify the following concepts:

- **Information (Data):** While the concepts data and information are separate, in this text, we choose to define them in a process form. The concept information is critical to the IS and it is defined here as data that is processed and conveyed as a representation of a thing or person which by way of depiction, provides an idea of the thing or person it sets out to represent.
- **Information Communication Technology (ICT):** There is an understanding among scholars on what ICT means albeit insignificant differences. ICT is defined here as all associated technologies especially telecommunications that enables the acquisition, analysis, manipulation, storage and distribution of information; and the design and provision of equipment and software for these purposes (DeWatteville & Gilbert 2000).
- **Internet:** The internet is already implied in the definition of ICT above. This notwithstanding, it is not a mistake in any way that it has been singled out for further clarification. This is because, the internet represents a unique enabler of the ICT. That said, the Internet is defined here as a globalized network of computerized system depending on

interconnected networks and a standardized sets of communication protocols required to enable access to information as well as communication facilities.

- **Global society:** The concept global society emerged in response to the motion of globalization. It is suggestive of the close knitting of the different nations of the world into one society through the process of globalization and supported by information communication systems. Global society is an umbrella society for all other societies of the world as a function of the globalization of information communication technology.
- **Network Society:** As a concept, network society is associated with the work of Castells (2004) where it was used to suggest the sociological outcome of globalization as well as ICT in society. In this sense, Castells defines it to mean 'a society whose social structure is made up of networks powered by micro-electronics-based information and communications technologies.'
- **Knowledge economy:** Before defining the knowledge economy, it is important to note that in most literature, it is often used as an outcome of the information society. In other words, it is believed that the information society ushered in the knowledge economy as distinct from capitalism. As a result, the knowledge economy is suggestive of a distinctive mode of production dependent on information rather than industry or manufacture. It is an economic system where growth and development is realized and sustained through the quantity, quality, and accessibility to information.
- **Virtual social system:** This represents a new phase of social systems thinking where social networks transcends physical interactions. Consequently, virtual social systems refer to a situation where individuals or groups are networked through social media platforms across geographical locations and boundaries on matters of socio-economic, political, religious and cultural interests or goals without necessarily making physical contact.

### **The Idea of an Information Society: Meaning, Dimensions and Characteristics**

Before going into the meaning of the information society, it should be stressed that just like every social process that has been subjected to academic scrutiny, information society has its optimists and sceptics. However, the argument as to whether the society is true or not is not the primary concern of this paper, we make bold to align with optimists especially because corporations that produce information or the enablers of information systems (e.g. Google and Facebook) are the richest in today's society. However, it is too quick to express victory for

the information society or the knowledge economy since at the moment, it is just emerging.

### **Meaning of the Information Society**

There are different meanings of the information society and this difference is a function of the scholarly conviction of those who have defined the concept. The term was believed to have been used for the first time in 1980 by Yoneji Masuda, who identified the information society as post-industrial society (Yoneji, 1980). In the light of its usage and depending on the user, the term information society can also be referred to as '*communication society*', '*service society*', '*third wave society*', '*network society*' or '*learning society*' (Mannermaa, nd).

The definition provided by Cogburn and Adeyi (1999) is particularly useful to us here. They defined Information Society, as a form of social organization, where information generation, processing and transmission are the fundamental sources of productivity and power. The emergence of the information society according to Castells (1996) is rooted in the ICT revolution which was triggered by microchips innovations in the 1970s.

The term information society and knowledge economy are most times used interchangeably; however in a bid to clarify both concepts Pareek and Gangrade (2016) argued that the knowledge economy is a second generation phase in the development of the information society. In this regard, knowledge economy was bourgeoned by the information society as a distinctive mode of production resting on information and knowledge. Pareek and Gangrade argued that whereas the information society aims to make information available and provide the necessary technology; the knowledge economy aims to generate knowledge, create culture of sharing and develop applications that operate mainly via the Internet thus leading to an economy that is solely dependent on information. The goal is to fill social needs, create wealth and enhance the quality of life in a sustainable manner through the application of ICT innovations. According to Viano (2012) the information society is best described as the tool that provides an almost infinite capability for wide human interaction without borders and barriers and at any time of any day, a true and genuine open virtual market of ideas, information and transactions that can be shared instantly across the globe.

### **Dimensions of the Information Society**

Several scholars have approached the discussion or analysis of the information society from different perspectives or dimensions. However, Webster (1999) developed five dimensions of the information society which have enjoyed widespread acceptability in the literature. These dimensions are discussed below:



- i. **Technological Dimension:** From this perspective, Webster opined that an information society is one which lays emphasis on technological innovation especially breakthroughs in information processing, storage and transmission. In this regard, the point is made for a scenario where all of these breakthroughs enable the application of information technologies (IT) such as computers, telecommunications and the internet in virtually all spheres of human endeavour and society at large.
- ii. **Occupational Dimension:** According to Webster, the enabling conditions generated by advancement in ICT catalyzed a significant alteration in the occupational space. The information society is characterized by an occupational change as evident in decline of factory labour and predominance of the workforce in the information industry. This implies that in an information society, clerks, teachers, lawyers and entertainers outnumber coalminers, steelworkers and builders.
- iii. **Spatial Dimension:** The spatial dimension represents a geographical perspective that goes beyond sociological or economic understanding of the information society. Here, Webster focused on a distinctive feature of space where he emphasized the ability of information networks to connect locations and consequently impacting organization of time and space. This dimension clearly addresses the issue of geographical integration especially of hitherto separate regions into one small networked society through advances in ICT. The spatial dimension hence emphasizes the centrality of *information networks* linking together locations within and between towns, regions, nations, continents and the entire world.
- iv. **Cultural Dimension:** While not clearly conforming to Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations, the cultural dimension as espoused by Webster reflects a situation where the information society enables free movement of cultural ideas and practices from one society to the other through information communication mediums such as the mass media. According to Webster (1999), ICT tools such as the internet, television, mobile telephones and so on provides us with information and cultural products from all over the world.
- v. **Economic Dimension:** The economic dimension of the information society is by far the most discussed because of the narrowing of trade and the world of work among others. In strictly economic terms information society refers to post industrialism where the economy has moved from factory lines production to knowledge production. It is in the light of this that the knowledge economy is viewed as a distinctive mode of production characterized by the information industry such as education, media, information services, information technologies among others.

While the dimensions discussed above have been widely accepted in the literature on information society, it is possible to highlight other dimensions such as; political dimension (e-governance) where governments are knitted together through telecommunication platforms, as well as health or disease dimension where information society and its associated technologies provide enabling environment for healthcare delivery to become easy and collaborative enough as to reduce travels and further fatigue associated with previous societies.

### **Characteristics of the Information Society**

Like every other social system, the information society is characterized by some identifiable features that make it unique from others. Below, we discuss the major characteristics of the information society.

*The information society is global:* The information society is significantly global in nature and in this case, space does not matter as much as time. In other words, with ICT acting as key enabler of the information society, a boundless scenario is created where interaction in every activity within all sectors of human endeavour can be done in a speed of light.

*Governed by knowledge:* The information society knows only one rule and that is “the governance of knowledge. As Isazadeh (2014) points out, the wealth of information and knowledge available for the citizens of information society provide an environment, where only informed, knowledged, and competent individuals can survive as key players of the society.

*It is a new environment:* The information society has been described as a new environment with new rules dependent strongly on knowledge and access to information. As a result, people must learn the new rules associated with the information society in order to survive. Just borrowing the Spencerian logic, those who cannot adapt to the new environment or violate the rules will not survive.

*Mostly service driven:* The information society unlike industrial society is significantly service driven. Hence, the information society is more service oriented than the industrial society. Table 1 below shows the difference between the industrial society and information society.

***Table 1: Industrial Society and the Information Society at a Glance***

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Industrial Economy</b>	<b>Information Economy</b>
<b>Source of Competitive Advantage</b>	Land, Labour and Capital	Information & Knowledge
<b>Production Mode</b>	Command and Control Hierarchies	Innovation-Mediated through Services and Networks
<b>Scope</b>	Local/Region	Global
<b>Industry Classification</b>	Distinct, Multiple	Diffused, Architectures

*Source: Cogburn & Adeyi, (1999)*

## **Nigeria and the information society**

So far, the point has been made that the information society is global in nature and signifies a new socio-economic environment by virtue of its character and content. Also, we have clearly discussed the fact that the information society is ushering in a distinctive mode of production known as the knowledge economy. It is necessary therefore to analyze how Nigeria is faring in this emerging society especially in terms of the critical indicators that underpin the information society.

As already stated at the beginning of this chapter, Nigeria has recorded a favourable rating in terms of ICT penetration especially when compared to other countries in Africa. However, just like the familiar argument on issues of economic growth and development, having a favourable statistics would in most cases mean very little if the statistics does not translate into measurable human development outcomes. So, there are two dimensions to understanding Nigeria's place in the age of information. The first is the level of contributions that the central indicator (ICT) of the information society has brought to the country, while the second is to provide an argument concerning how this translates into wellbeing for citizens in Nigeria.

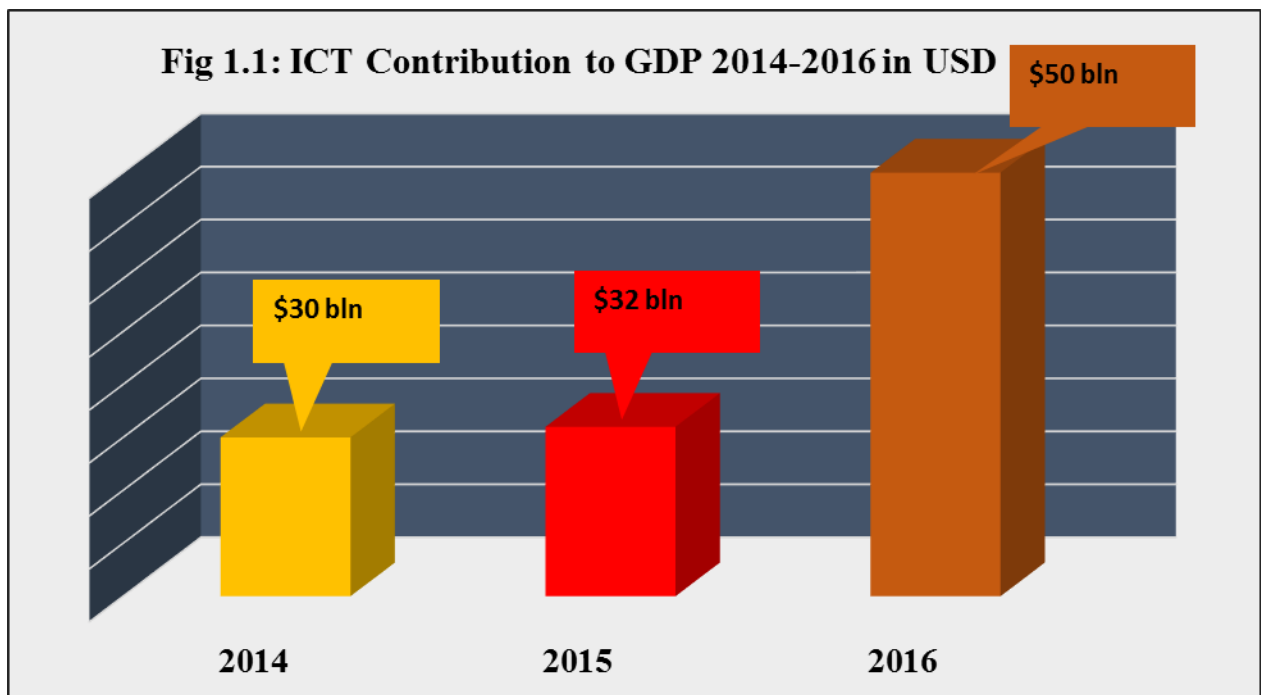
## **Contribution of ICT to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product**

For quite some time now, the ICT sector especially its service related aspect has contributed immensely to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria. This shows that Nigeria is taking a deserved advantage of the information age at least with regard to economic growth. The realization that the oil sector alone cannot drive the much needed growth in the country has led to a major concern by the government to focus on diversifying the economy especially in the areas of agriculture and telecommunications.

While investment in agriculture is particularly key for Nigeria's growth especially given the snail-like economic progress in recent times, investing in information communication sector has proven to be a major driver of growth in most developed nations of the world. This is because, ICT and its associated commercial platforms are known to be the backbone of business activity, productivity, trade and social development. This is why Sylvester (2011) rightly argued that, for a developing country like Nigeria, effective implementation of ICT policies is a precondition to the emergence of a strong market economy. In fact, in the preamble to the Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology of 2012 it was clearly stated that an ICT policy built on reliable human resources and infrastructure constitutes the fundamental tool and means of assessing, planning, managing development change and for achieving sustainable growth.

Since the early 1990s, it has been established that there is a positive correlation between investment in information communication sector and increase in the

GDPs of countries (Mody, 1995). This has been further justified in Nigeria given the trend in the country's GDP since 2014 as indicated by data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Investment in telecommunications and other areas related to information services and the associated contribution to the GDP have over the last three years grown remarkably. This is a signal that Nigeria is on the right track with regard to taking advantage of the benefits of the information society even though some structural circumstances may undermine this progress. Figure 1.1 below shows the contribution of ICT to GDP since 2014 compared to 2009.



*Source: Compiled by authors from NBS reports 2014, 2015 & 2016*

The Figure above shows the contribution of telecommunication sector to the GDP of Nigeria between 2014 and 2016. The data was collated from the various NBS reports for the three years represented in the chart and it shows that ICT contributed \$30 billion in 2014, this moved to \$32 billion in 2015 and a remarkable growth was recorded in 2016 as the figure skyrocketed to \$50 billion. This is a significant deviation from the contribution of the sector in 2009 where ICT only contributed \$18 billion to the GDP.

### **Contribution of ICT to other Sectors in Nigeria**

While information communications technology contributes directly to the GDP of Nigeria as shown above, ICT is known as an umbilical infrastructure that has strong relationship with other sectors given the fact that within the information age, every other sector's growth is strongly dependent on the amount of information that it can get. According to Sylvester (2011), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) network is the basic facility through which

information needs of industry, commerce and agriculture can be satisfied. *Industrial* development requires the coordination of a series of operation, including the acquisition of supplies, recruitment of labour, control stocks, processing of materials, delivery of goods to buyers, as well as billing and record keeping. Information technology is vital to the effective development and control of many of these operations.

The sector that surpassed other sectors in terms of benefit from the information age in Nigeria is the trade and *commerce sector*. Here in Nigeria, e-commerce has made the buying and selling of goods easier than before with proliferation of online shops such as Jumia. Sylvester (2011) opines that commerce is essentially on information processing activity, effective buying, selling and brokerage rely on the continual supply of up-to-date information regarding the availability of prices of goods and services. Within the *agricultural sector*, farmers, must not only grow food but they must sell effectively and buy seeds and fertilizer. To do these activities efficiently, they need information on the best possible prices. They also need information on weather conditions, disease outbreaks and new agricultural techniques. The ICT sector avails them ample opportunities to get useful information concerning their various activities as agriculturalists.

Similarly, the healthcare sector is not left out of the positive impact associated with the information age in Nigeria. ICT has also helped to reduce costs and improve efficiency in health care delivery. Patients' records can now be stored and transmitted electronically so that doctors can call upon specialist as the case may be. In fact, the introduction of telemedicine applications which includes connecting remote super computers to lasers for precision, focusing, transmission of digitized X-ray photographs among others, have gone a long way to show that the information age in Nigeria is gradually taking root.

In the same vein, the education sector has witnessed its own share of the positive effect of being part of the information age. Through various ICT platforms, the fatigue associated with education during the pre-information age is almost a thing of the past. Sylvester (2011), has argued that the age of information in Nigeria has necessitated a situation where social distance and gaps have been reduced tremendously. For instance, the rural – urban distance has been closed significantly with the introduction of telecommunications and most importantly Internet Services, which delivers educational programmes to remote locations in the country. Educational institutions are becoming more dependent on telecommunications to access super computers and broadcast instructions. This has paved way for the introduction of distance learning, which is improving educational achievement in rural areas (Masden, 2014).

## **Information age and Social Relations in Nigeria**

It is worthy to mention here, that nowhere has the information age been so revolutionary than in the area of social relations. In Nigeria, as well as in other societies, the information age has revolutionized mediums of social interaction and made social relations quite easy. The contributions of ICT to social relations is completely invaluable and cannot easily be listed. Notwithstanding, a good number of the social benefits can still be discussed. These benefits include social interactions. Keeping in touch with friends and relations is one of the major social benefits of the information age. In Nigeria for instance, the information age and its associated social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat among others, have completely altered the way transactions are conducted, the way in which information is circulated and the way in which we educate and inform ourselves.

## **Obstacles to Effective Information Society in Nigeria**

Nigeria has always experienced the problem of not gradually progressing into new kinds of societies owing to its abrupt integration into the world capitalist economy through the colonization process. So in most cases, the country has had to import new ways of running society through the process of modernization. Consequently, the information society like the industrial system is a product of transplantation from the so-called developed nations of the world.

As a result, the information age in Nigeria is likely to be bedeviled by some familiar structural-historical obstacles that have continued to undermine socio-economic development in the country over the years. While Nigeria has a lofty Information Technology Policy in place since 2012, the translation of its underlying strategy for development has not been done. This constitutes a major setback to Nigeria's progress in the age of information. Hence, the major clog in the wheel of progress with regards to Nigeria's human development realities in the information age is the government's indifference towards adequate investment in ICT. Thus, while the policy document exists, associated action which should be measured by outcomes of implementation has been very slow.

While the information society and indeed the knowledge economy present unique opportunities for Nigeria, the notion of information driven society in the country seems to be elusive. Some key challenges have been identified as limiting factors to information society in Nigeria and these include:

1. Inadequate Information and Communications Infrastructure
2. Insufficient physical and social infrastructure particularly power
3. Inadequate Human Resource Development
4. Insufficient Legal and Policy Frameworks
5. Weak maintenance culture
6. Slow implementation of existing IT policies

7. Inadequate access to ICT services as over 70% of Nigerians still reside in rural areas.
8. Inadequate local content development to meet indigenous demands in software and hardware components of ICT.
9. Pervasive cybercrime in the country is a clog on the wheel of information society in the country.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has examined the place of Nigeria in the age of information with particular interest in the ongoing discourse on the information society and by extension the knowledge economy as a distinctive mode of production. The argument is that the information society represents a unique kind of economic system dependent on information and knowledge as the drivers of growth. It was clearly highlighted that while the ICT sector which is the major force in the information age has in recent times contributed positively to Nigeria's GDP and other sectors, familiar structural-historical obstacles continue to undermine this progress.

The challenges to effective information society in Nigeria can be addressed if the obstacles highlighted above are tackled. However, this can only be done when ICT policies are translated into full strategies and action. Government at all levels have major roles to play as enablers of the required environment for information and knowledge to become major drivers of growth and development in Nigeria.

## **Review Questions**

- 1) What is the meaning of Information Society?
- 2) Discuss the various dimensions and characteristics of the Information Society.
- 3) Define the following concepts associated with the information society
  - a) Global society
  - b) Network Society
  - c) Knowledge economy
  - d) Virtual Social System.
- 4) How does ICT contribute to the growth of other sectors in Nigeria?
- 5) How has the information society enabled social relations in Nigeria?
- 6) Outline the various obstacles to effective information society in Nigeria.

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