

**NCAC HONOURS
LECTURE SERIES 6**

**CULTURE, NATIONAL IDENTITY
AND GLOBALIZATION:
THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT**

By

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INTRODUCTION

Considering the demands of our national expectations, there is need more than ever before, to identify, harness and develop all aspects of our living art and culture in order to meet the challenges of our time. Towards this, the Management of the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) in line with its statutory mandate and in consonance with the National Cultural Policy (1988) is re-engineering, re-focusing and repositioning the Council towards effective performance and contribution to the realisation of the rôle of Arts and Culture in fulfilling our national objectives.

The National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) Honours Lecture is designed to bring to the fore the virtues of our culture, creativity, hard-work, and excellence such that we can tap from in our collective quest in building a solid and virile nation.

Planned as an annual event, each lecture draws from various walks of life as well as features, scholars from the Academia, Captains of industry, Economic experts, Diplomats and Stakeholders in the Culture sector. The lecture dwells on values of our culture which promote creativity, hard-work, communal efforts, good governance, understanding and peace and other attributes which are necessary and meaningful in addressing the needs of our time.

The lecture being the main event, other activities such as cultural exhibitions, book presentation, awards to personalities that have

distinguished themselves in the field of Art and Culture promotion were part of the package at the NCAC 6th Honours Lecture. The event was splendid and you will find the lecture of the day very worth while.

M. M. Maidugu

Executive Director/CEO

NCAC, Abuja

CULTURE, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND GLOBALIZATION: THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION:

Whilst there have been varied and desperate attempts at defining culture and its notions or tendencies, there hasn't been a match, hitherto, to conclusively define its complementary notion of identity. Certainly, an agreement could easily be reached on a general idea of what constitutes culture in a geo-political space. For instance, we may hazard that a conceptualization of culture is the totality of the ways, in which a given society lives and preserves its institutions. It is also implied that culture is dynamic and can change or re-aggregate its own outlines as to take on new accretions or discard old ones. This is true even within the specialized definitions of Fanonⁱ or Gyekyeⁱⁱ where culture is situated within a particular polity or within modernizing nation states. The point I make here is that culture is by and large tractable as Kroeber and Kluckohnⁱⁱⁱ have tried to do by listing over a hundred and fifty definitions of culture which they have classified into six categories: descriptive, historical, narrative, psychological, genetic and structural. Because the work of Kroeber and Kluckohn are preoccupied with definitions, there are indications that there will always be room for newer additions as societies move from one stage of articulation to the other. There are, however, limitations, which are inherently imposed on works, which dwell on definitions.

The first is that definitions, in themselves, tend to be limiting; they seek to establish boundaries, sometimes 'monopolies' if not

'hegemonies'. There, certainly, is nothing overly wrong with this because definitions, in any case, help to configure and track down, even conceptualize frameworks. But the second and real problem is that definitions can also be value-laden; they are subject to the vagaries of individual perception depending on where one stands and what one stands for. One terminology, which is not free of value or assumption, is, according to Diagne and Ossebi^{iv}, the term 'development'. They have rightly called for the establishment of an epistemological paradigm, which frees the conception of culture from a preconceived 'development'. If it is possible to describe in clear, concise terms what the culture of a people is like, then it can be safely assumed that we would be able to establish a stable identity – political, social or cultural; inclusive of ethnicity and gender – for such a people. In other words **a particular culture validates a particular identity and a definite identity reinforces or fashions its own culture**. But as we have earlier affirmed, it cannot be a needle-head affair. Culture is a dynamic phenomenon and can apply to as many definitions as there are studies. Also, it is only one half of the ingredients for identity formation.

In an attempt to trace the semblance of a cultural unity through the whole of Africa, in spite of her diversity of linguistic and oral forms, Jacques Maquet^v grapples desperately with a protean phenomenon:

The total intuition of the reality of African life, the analysis of artifacts and institutions, the claims of negritude, the political action of Pan-Africanism converge on the same point: sub-Saharan Africa is culturally a unity. This cultural unity is Africanity. It is the special African Configuration of various features that may be found separately elsewhere.



Prof. Dele Layiwola delivering his lecture

Suspecting that he hasn't gone far enough, he tries an empirical analogy:

All human faces are made up of the same elements: nose, eyes, mouth, etc.; one or another of these elements may be identical in form in several faces, but the combination of these features forms one unique face. Africanity is this unique cultural face that Africa presents to the world.

Sensing still that he has not succeeded in a convincing and holistic representation of this mercurial phenomenon, especially in a deeply pluralist situation, such as we have in Nigeria, he plods further, albeit apologetically:

It is true that each society has its own heritage, its culture. To avoid confusion, let us continue to use this term in its exact sense; the totality of ways of living, working and thinking and the totality of what results from these activities (institutions, artifacts, philosophies, etc.) as they are constituted in a given society. Each society has built up a culture, each culture is based on a society ... 850 traditional African societies, which means 850 different cultures.^{vi}

I have quoted copiously from Maquet to demonstrate the typical predicament of definitions in their attempt to grasp at the particular and to set boundaries. Kroeber and Kluckohn have cast their nets wider to be able to escape the pitfalls of the particular. But Maquet's definition is still as relevant, if we relate it to the particular epoch in which he was writing. Definitions of culture have always related it to the summary of values, which make up the totality of a way of life. The whole problem arises because modernity, industrialization, globalization; new modes of production and consumption and new ways of thinking are always re-inventing preconceived notions and values.

I believe that the greater benefit of this paper will be its attempt to use culture as a vector of identity. It will be its attempt to establish culture as a polar enantiomorph of identity. How do I mean? There is a relationship which makes a culture the vector of its identity, and vice-versa. This makes it possible to locate the one concept as an index of the other. However, in attempting to do this, I do not intend to seek a definition, as indicated earlier, of culture because culture changes over time, space, historical condition and according to the degree of choices to be made. Instead, I shall attempt to locate the basis of identity in ideational and philosophical quantities like mythology, history and the concept of collective memory in art whether plastic or performance. The latter concept is useful because we are dealing with post-colonial societies and nation states, which are relatively young in terms of the history of nation making and nation building. In many cases, we still rely on oral traditions and memories of our past; traditions of folklore and craft. For even in the works of individual authors, artists and performers, there are indications that the sum total of expressions and images do carry codes of a collective cultural identity. Art defines its own society and society, in turn, validates its own art and crafts. In establishing identities, I shall like to distinguish three forms of identities or 'pieces of identities':

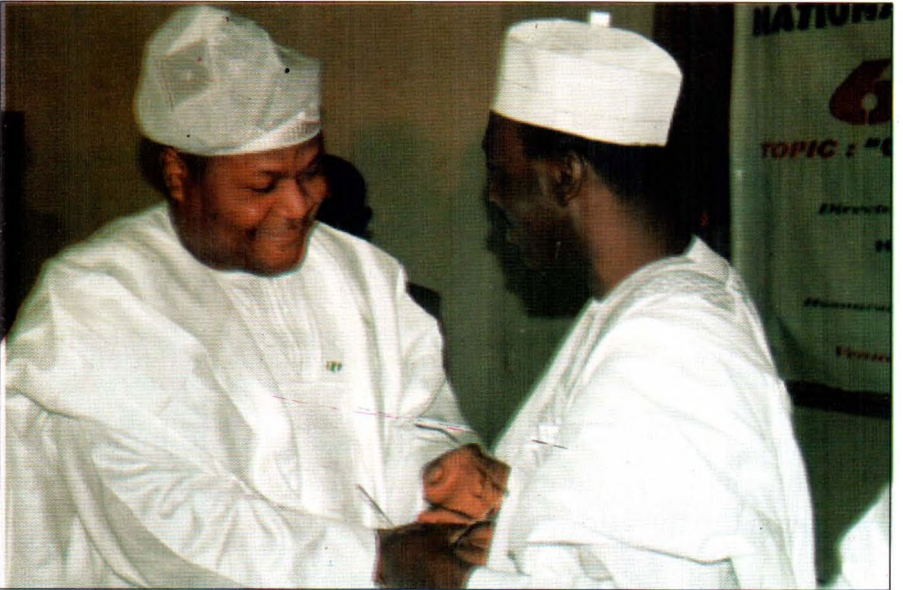
- i. Individual identity;
- ii. Group identities which include ethnic and nationalistic identities;
- iii. Post-modern , industrial or transnational identity.^{vii}

Whilst distinguishing three forms, I shall like to indicate that there are five other identifiable conditions of identity paradigms on which the three forms are based:

- i. Blood and lineage ties
- ii. Linguistic grouping



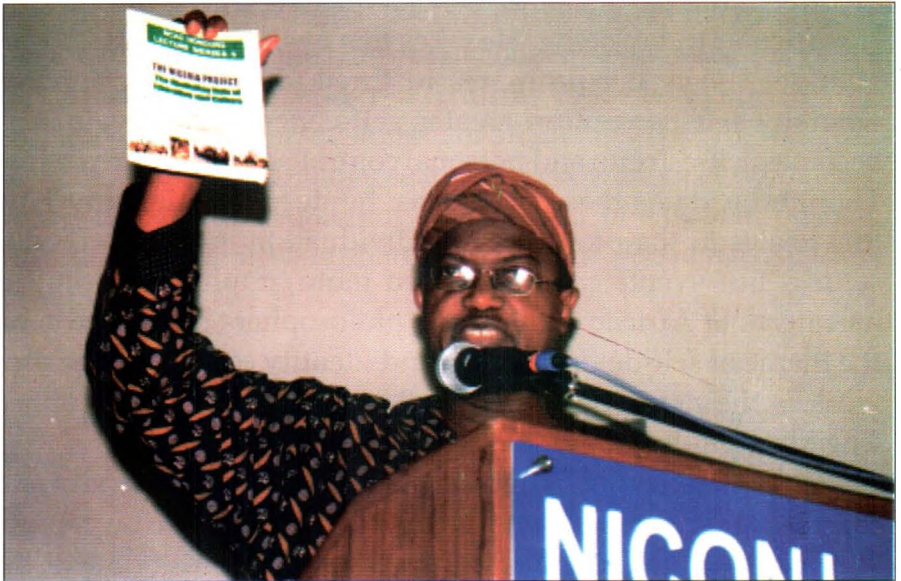
The Minister of Tourism, Culture & National Orientation Prince Adetokunbo Kayode (SAN) being ushered into the Lecture venue by the Director/CEO, NCAC, M. M. Maidugu



The Minister in a warm handshake with the Honoured Speaker



The Director/CEO NCAC, M. M. Maidugu welcomes the Chairman, Her Excellency, Mrs. Pauline Tallen.



Public presentation of the 5th Honours Lecture publication by Hon. Wale Okediran, President, Association of Nigerian Authors.

- iii. Geographical contiguity
- iv. Historical necessity and
- v. Economic regimes.

But let us discuss the forms of identities rather than the conditions which determine them.

I. INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY:

There is no doubt that Sigmund Freud and his apostles have exhaustively dealt with the concept of the individual ego and its attendant sub-conscious energies, which are in perpetual conflict to create, particularized identities. It is same for other such studies by Lionel Trilling^{viii} and Charles Taylor.^{ix} This phenomenon, as Erikson^x portrays it, often encourages a centrifugally controlled switching of impulses where, as Charles Taylor represents it, that identity that is particular to me; that of being true to myself; that is particular to my being. He takes this over from Trilling.^{xi} Karl Hausser^{xii} says it culminates in three identity components whereby self-perception creates self-concept; self-evaluation becomes self-esteem; and personal control helps belief in control. Though he states these principles, he does not highlight how this relates to the problems of individuation in a post-colonial setting. But events can be gleaned more graphically from the narratives of African writers and philosophers concerned with the theme of self-determination and identity complex. One such work is the novel by the Senegalese author and philosopher, Cheikh Hamidou Kane titled *Ambiguous Adventure*.^{xiii}

The novel raises a few questions in the quest after identity and thereafter comes to its own conclusions on what is to be the goal of a society in the search for an authentic identity. Some of the questions he raises are as follows:

- i. Can identity be preserved after an external intrusion

- such as colonialism, conquest or displacement? (p.10)
- ii. Can the search for identity equate with the search for harmony? (p.69)
- iii. Is the lack of an identity a form of enslavement? (p.69)
- iv. Is the search of an identity a search for truth or an eternal verity? (p.77)
- v. Is identity concerned with internal or external values? (p.78)

The novel problematises the concept of identity; the individual and the collective search for it. The philosophical disputations in the novel are carried out through a series of dialogues between the narrator and hero, Samba Diallo; his father; his teacher and mentor; his aunt; friends and acquaintances. On other occasions, the disputations are carried on through a series of interior monologues and stream of consciousness technique.

Though *Ambiguous Adventure* takes through the career of a young man and his community at the crossroads, it concludes unambiguously that the concept of collective memory, religious faith, mythologies and traditional believe systems are fundamental to the establishment of an identity (pp. 73, 102, 152, 161 ff). After Samba Diallo's search for knowledge at home and abroad, he concludes that though the whole of nature imposes a uniformity of identity, humanity have their peculiar, disparate identities (pp. 152 – 3).

II. ETHNIC OR NATIONAL IDENTITY

There is no doubt that in pluralist societies, with diverse languages and communities, there is always a confusion of categories in establishing definitions and boundaries. But since the evolution of the nation state in Africa is relatively recent and



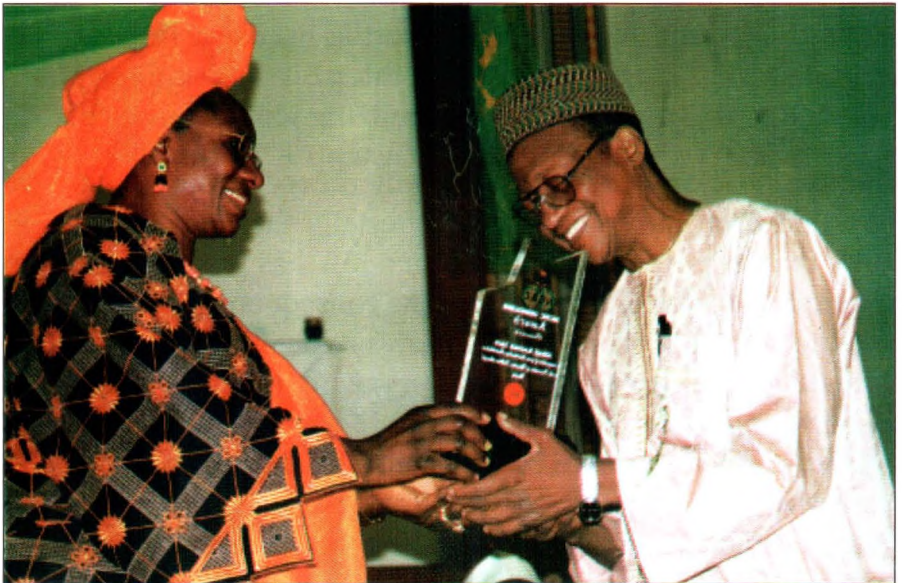
The Hon. Minister Prince Adetokunbo Kayode presents the Honours Award to Prof. Layiwola.



Dr. Yakubu Levi O'bem receives his Honours Award for the promotion of Nigeria culture through Visual Arts from the Minister.



Chairman of the occasion, Her Excellency, Mrs. Pauline Tallen presents the Honours Award for the promotion of Nigeria culture through Choral Music to Prof. Laz Ekwueme represented by his wife.



Mallam Kassim Yaro receives his Honours Award for the promotion of Nigeria culture through Folklore (theatre) from Mrs. Tallen

does not always coincide with ethnicity, then we can conceptually refer to distinct ethnic groups as nationalities (see Davidson^{xiv}, Gyekye^{xv}). But the confusion of categories often creates problems with the search for identities with respect to the placement of nationality sentiments and loyalties. The confusion has created hybridized citizens seeking to modify allegiances whenever it is convenient to do so. This phenomenon is what Peter Ekeh^{xvi} calls 'the two publics in Africa'.

A resume of Ekeh's thesis is that in post-colonial Africa, the civil society and its individuals have two public allegiances. The first public is the primordial one consisting of family or ethnic links; and the second realm; the civic, is that of public service or government to which the individual holds vocational or career links. Because these two publics do not synchronize as in Western societies, the individual in a post-colonial society often shows loyalty to one public to the detriment of the other. For example, it is usual to find public servants or politicians who would take funds from public coffers to satisfy the needs of their ethnic relations or kin. If we pause to give this a bit of thought, we can hazard that this is an identity-legitimizing phenomenon.

The roots of African politics, the emergence of a new elite as inherited from the colonial era; especially that idea of an elite corps that lives apart 'on the top of a hill' has given a different texture to the idea of citizenship. The consequence of this is that the elite in the governance of the new nation is always alienated from the civic public, which it serves or governs. There is therefore, almost like the emergence of a parallel economy, the evolution of a primordial public which, in any case, has a longer history in its relationship to the individual or the new elite. This phenomenon is so pervasive that the post-colonial woman or man is often overwhelmed by the semblance of loyalties that often comes from the ethnic group whenever a son or daughter

is elected to serve in the civic public. It is only logical that something is always returned, *quid pro quo*, for that primordial loyalty. Ekeh touches on the actual point when he writes that: 'the individual sees his duty as *moral* obligations to benefit and sustain a primordial public of which he is a member'. His analysis states further that:

The foci of such duties may of course vary from one setting to another but in most of Africa they tend to be emergent ethnic groups.^{xvii}

In addition to the point made by Ekeh, a strong geo-political factor subsists in the case of particular ethnicities or language groupings creating isolated, homogenous quarters in urban centers and settlements. Wherever they settle outside of their homeland, they seek to maintain a separate identity and propagate a primordial culture. It is therefore clear that quite apart from the mere sentiment of allying with something familiar, there is some other thing to be gained from holding or encouraging such allegiances. Or can we convincingly argue that it is just symptoms due only to libidinal identity drive? Hardly! For, as Ekeh posits:

Although the African gives materially as part of his duties to the primordial public, what he gains back is not material. He gains back intangible immaterial benefits in the form of identity or psychological security.^{xviii}

It needs no gloss to see why bribery, and political corruption, have become a public feature of many young nation states in Africa. For unless there is a strong national identity rather than ethnic, religious or class identities, which are in any case, diffused identities, there can be no loyalty to a unifying, broad-based centrifugal ideal. Rather, a weak national identity will encourage profuse, centripetal attraction from a center or a number of centers; the public domain, and encourage a de-centering

attraction to other minute centers which are actually ethnic, religious or class based.^{xix} But the point needs to be made that Ekeh's study is by no means the last word on the subject since the primordial is far from limited to Africa or third world nations alone. There is amazing evidence to show that primordial shifts occur along professional, vocational, and mercantile as well as racial lines.^{xx} It would appear that people seek for areas of identification or primordial strength whenever their survivalist interests are threatened or modified. There is a classic inference in David Laitin's study to which we shall turn in the next section.

With respect to Nigeria, Vremudia Diejomaoh and Wambui wa Karanja^{xxi} have made suggestions on how to attain a strong national identity. I have summarized their ideas as follows:

- (a) The emergence of strong national leaders;
- (b) The introduction of a broad-based democracy where leaders strive for national appeal amongst various ethnic groups;
- (c) The emergence of political parties with national appeal and spread;
- (d) The fabrication of a strong federalist constitution;
- (e) The invention of a consistent cultural policy.

But even with these in place, the two scholars realize that from a historical perspective, a young nation-state like Nigeria will need several decades of growth before a distinctive national identity can be expected to emerge. I do not hesitate to lay a premium of emphasis on group or corporate identity because the individual automatically gives image to what Taylor terms "significant others" outside of the self and to which the "self" must relate. Ultimately, a national identity is the sum total of that exchange between the self and its concentrically related others to which, ordinarily, his/her life relates like a web and with which it attains to significant meaning.

There is every indication that the sense of a group identity is not totally bereft of a strong, particularistic individuality. After all, a group identity is the sum total of the majority of the individual identities subsumed within it; and which is what gives it a peculiar form. It is also useful to note as an addendum to Diejomaoh and Karanja that as Mabogo More^{xxii} infers, a constitution 'despite the accommodation of diversities and its pretensions to synthesis, remains an expression of liberal universalism'. This leaves us with the responsibility to be critical of constitutions because, by default, they often guarantee individual rights and tend to gloss over group rights. Group rights are thereby subordinated to the general individual rights enjoyed by all. The problem often arises that minority identities and expressions are marginalized when the sum total of the individual rights correspond to that of a particular majority who would always hold sway in political and economic matters.

III. POSTMODERN, INDUSTRIAL OR TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY:

What do we mean by an industrial age identity? For the want of a more representative term, this identity formation is one that can be attributed to situations that are not synonymous with truly conservative, truly traditional worlds. And such societies are now very rare. This identity matrix is inchoate and amorphous and is often mainly found in truly industrialized or industrializing societies. In such industrialized societies, there have crystallized, in the past, classed derived identities where we could differentiate between working class, or 'lumpen' elements, and an owner or bourgeois class. In 18th or 19th century England, for instance, a miner would belong to the former class whilst a factory owner or landed gentry would belong to the latter. However, in late 20th century societies, migrations and settlements across borders



Mr. Emma Eze receives his Excellence Award from the Hon. Minister



Ondo State Cultural Troupe entertains guests on the occasion



Adamawa State Troupe performs at the event



Performing Arts Division presents a drama sketch at the event.

and continents have tended to create an epigenetic kind of humanity where modernizing tendencies have disrupted age-old markers of identity. We now have a growing population where our primordial identities are slowly giving way to influences, material as well as moral or spiritual which – in a manner of speaking – partake of multitudes. For instance, Chinese or Japanese Americans will neither be Chinese nor Japanese in spite of their distinctive physiological features. Rather, history and accidental circumstances have now put these otherwise different persons into the same identity matrix: they are simply Americans. This then goes to show that in negotiating ‘new horizons’, we must be prepared to give up as much of our own being as we have adapted from others. Then the transnational citizen will be truly born when we begin to fine-tune those prejudices which often drive us to the selfish motive of ethnic puritans. This is a moral as well as a theoretical point.

One salient factor about this class of identity formation is that instead of deriving its propelling power primarily from ethnic or nationalistic solidarity, as in the previous group, it derives its power from a *means of production and a parallel means of consumption* which can be roughly termed transnational or trans-cultural. Whilst it can be argued that its goal is to improve the condition of living of those in its fold who have migrated or immigrated to a present geopolitical space, it does not depend solely on primordial psychology. It therefore has a guarantee that it is ‘non-religious’, non-puritanical and only seemingly ‘apolitical’ since industrialization takes place in societies irrespective of their political or religious ideologies.^{xxiii} Here, identity formation is first of all mechanical and, thereafter, affective. This factor is what makes a modern, industrial citizen more attached to his country than to his primordial kin. There are, of course, occasional exceptions, which prove the rule. This means that, in spite of

global and cosmopolitan drives, a group can identify based on the seemingly racial or ethnic categories alone. But often, it will be seen that there are more fundamental modes of consumerist tendencies involved where categories and boundaries have been temporarily destabilized or confused. Even then, the cultural identities of displaced persons make more sense to outsiders within the totality of the cultural capital against which they have chosen to act and live. This may sometimes confound otherwise informed debate where a theorist may suppose that the phenomenon of race or ethnicity is phony or even non-existent. This is also dependent on political manipulations, which challenge or threaten well being or survival. Citizens from the present categorization of identity matrix have the same public and private realm. This is a post-industrial identity. For some curious reason, this identity marker has a throwback reflex to a psychological approach for its understanding. We have to theorize again through an apostle of Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson:

Primitive tribes have a direct relation to the sources and means of production. Their tools are extensions of the human body. Children in these groups participate in technical and in magic pursuits; to them, body and environment, childhood and culture may be full of dangers, but they are all one world. The inventory of social prototypes is small and static. In our world, machines, far from remaining an extension of the human body, destine the whole human organizations to be extensions of machinery...^{xxiv}

It is worthy of note that in many instances, a reflex from without can essentially compel identity as indicated here by Erikson. But even when this is the case, there must be an inwardly propelled coherence to help the character to tow a line of consistency as he writes: 'It is this identity of something in the individual's core

with an essential aspect of a group's inner coherence which is under consideration here: for the young individual must learn to be most to himself where he means most to others – those others, to be sure, who have come to mean most to him.^{xxv} In meaning most to one, it may sometimes be that those individuals may be chosen without reference to ethnicity, race or class.

It is of course certain that Erikson is concerned with developmental psychology as it occurs in youths. But he also attempts a wider scope by affirming that the self-sameness within a thing or person is at the same time sameness shared with others. This confirms the fluidic, enantiomorphic nature of identity, which renders it prone to change either way. This is why he thinks that the more one probes the identity concept; the more ambiguous it becomes. This recalls what Anthony Appiah tries to describe when he writes that collective identities often come up with loose norms and model which then shape the lives of those whose individualities partake in those collective identities. Those norms become almost like scripts and written codes into which narratives from which individual life patterns are drawn and in which they derive validity.^{xxvi} I am interested in the chirographic dimension because of the self-determination that it entails and the somewhat entrepreneurial dimension of culture elite who vend the notions of identity for their own selfish ends. I shall take this on in the last section of the paper. Unless an individual or group succumbs to a mindset, their identity codes will slowly change or metamorphose with the currency of historical or political culture. But it is exasperating to accurately predict or attempt to legislate a permanent identity status as Erikson equally infers in his conclusion:

At one time, then, it will appear to refer to a conscious striving for a continuity of personal character; at a third, as a criterion for the silent doings of ego synthesis; and,

finally, as a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity (Emphasis)^{xxvii}

Though Erikson ends the chapter inconclusively with an apology, his hesitation has been resolved with the notion of the split, complex or multiple identities. It may be useful to take up David Laitin's defense of Erikson in this respect.

David Laitin^{xxviii} realizes that unlike the strictly ideological expression of the nation, which can hold a national identity strictly to the notions of a common culture, language, economic life and a common territory, there often exist the possibilities for identity shifts. There are, after all, no true boundaries for ethnic groups in nations where boundaries had been drawn arbitrarily and the concept of the nation fairly artificial. This is the sense to which Wole Soyinka also applies the concept of identity in new nation states.^{xxix} In any case, economic notions, trade relations and survival are the new parameters for nation formation even within European nations, which have had a longer history of nationhood. Now individuals within those nations have become transnational citizens moving without the restrictions of visas and other forms of invented identity markers.^{xxx} The collapse of the Berlin wall had given the lie to Stalin's straitjacketed concept of the nation state. In the next century, identity may as well become the subject of politics and pure convenience, or in some other cases, pure survival. David Laitin's observations are worth noting in some detail here:

Usually, people's identities change with the level of aggregation: within their community, they may identify themselves on the basis of socio-economic backgrounds; within their country, outside of their community, they may identify themselves with a brand of politics; and outside their country, they may identify themselves with their nation. All societies – perhaps especially today – have

cultural entrepreneurs who offer new identity categories (racial, sexual, and regional), hoping to find "buyers". If their product sells, these entrepreneurs become leaders of newly formed ethnic, cultural, religious, or other forms of identity groups.^{xxxii}

The long term implication of the above claims is that we are gradually getting into an era where communication is bringing the world closer in terms of cultural sharing; collaboration and awareness are becoming new factors of political evolution. Constructed boundaries are once again disappearing, as they were, before the colonial adventure. The era of primordial identities is giving way to constructed or invented identities. This will have its welcome as well as its unfavourable sides depending on the motives and choices involved. For instance, if prejudices and barriers were broken down, a new era of universal brotherhood will begin to emerge. But if identity peddlers and constructivists have their hidden agendas based on supremacy and hegemonies, then the stage is set for upheavals, and the constant preparations for new forms of alliances. Since human motives are often unpredictable, and bases for alliance often carry with them all manners of ideologies and values, a long-term equilibrium is difficult to guarantee.

What is left to explore is the extent to which colonized societies and their citizens will continue to have a neutral basis for the construction of identities because, as Ekeh argued earlier on, colonialism has created two incongruous publics instead of one. Worse still, in some of the post-colonial territories, there have been multiple colonial experiences. In West Africa, for example, there are nations, which were colonized first by Arabs and Islam before Europeanization and Christianity arrived on the scene. In East Africa, there are nations which have the triple yokes of being colonized by Arabs, Germans, and later, the British; though



Tour of arts and crafts curated by the Arts & Design Dept.



The DG NT/NTN, Prof. Ahmed Yerima in a chat with a dignitary at the event.

the two subsequent colonialisms can be conflated into one. But if we look closely, there are subtleties of psychological trauma and erosion of confidence that have taken place under such a tripartite heritage. Such subtleties are visible when certain aspects of culture are mutually compared. Whilst it might be intensely political to say it, the extra degree of intrusion visible in, say Tanzania, and to a lesser extent Kenya, is responsible for the reason that many of the nationalities in the region have lost their original ideas of the form and patterns of their national costumes; indigenous designs of fashion and forms of regalia. What they are left with is either residually Arab or entirely European.

The last point I shall like to discuss under this sub-heading is the extent to which the new constructivist tendencies impact upon the individual psyche, especially where formative years are concerned. It would seem that where identity codes are myriad and in fierce competition, the result might be less than salubrious on personality formation in a growing adolescent who is swamped with a montage of 'changing scenes' at every turn. This may, in turn, lead to multiple identity formations in the individual and the consequences of this on the larger society is predictable, especially where choices have to be made. An identical situation may also occur as a symptom in the adult who suddenly discovers that a radical reversal has occurred in his/her circumstances and fundamental changes need be accomplished. A classic case study is the one David Laitin gives of a certain Mrs. Liuba Grigor'ev who lives on the border of Estonia with Russia. When the Soviet Union crumbled and Estonia became a sovereign country, Russian, the erstwhile official language became a dud tender in Estonia. Her children speak Estonian and are now 'citizens of the new nation whilst she who speaks only Russian has to learn a new language or risk the loss of her citizenship. The consequences would be to live

apart from her family. In such a political anomie, a choice has to be made for and within the individual. This is how Laitin puts it:

Multiple identities, however, can coexist within a person only insofar as choice is not necessary. Yet when the actions or behaviours consistent with one identity conflict with those of another identity held by the same person, as they do when two identities represent antagonistic groups on the political stage, people are compelled to give priority to one identity over the other.^{xxxii}

IV. IDENTITY AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY.

Whenever the roll call of identity is taken, it is always convenient to exhume a certain 'memory', which brings to life a relationship, or bond irrespective of its diversity difference. It then means that there is no construction of identity or identity-shift without some kind of recourse to memory, to a notion of community and to whatever we relate or hold dear. In other words, there is a form of *re-membering*;^{xxxiii} re-construction; a mnemonic recall. The indices may be race, ethnicity or religion. Inter-connectedness is always thought out as a force, almost as a linguistic rallying point; a language spoken; a signifier understood and responded to. It becomes a manifested interior irrespective of any evanescent outwards. This kind of dialogic relationship between events and memory may appear somewhat, as a component of orality. A minor point from Walter Ong comes to mind here:

Because in its physical construction as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-

knit groups. When a speaker is addressing an audience, the members of the audience normally become a unity, with themselves and with the speaker... The interiorizing force of the oral word relates in a special way to the sacral, to the ultimate concerns of existence.^{xxxiv}

This identifies language, and beyond it, deep mnemonic communication as a factor of identity which moves human beings to choice and, of course, ultimately to action.

In meta-narratives fiction, an African writer who has exploited this means to the fullest is Ayi Kwei Armah in the historical novel, *Two Thousand Seasons*.^{xxxv} Emptied of its anger and outrage, the mythology constructed as narrative in the novel points to newer, stylistic dimensions of the resources of memory as a rallying point of identity construction or shift. A certain mythic journey is employed as a trope to invoke memory or *remembering* as a new way of life. The novel itself appears like one long interior monologue manipulated by an omniscient narrator for colour and tonal inflection as occasion demands. In this respect, the style and the dimensions are oral, performative and epic. Almost as in a dream, characters are forced to invoke, through memory, a history that helps them to make a conscious choice. Each decision is a point in a journey. It is thus a mythic as well as an existential parable to:

...renew the battered sense of who we are, who we intend to be, that we needed time to throw out the portions that welcomed rotteness into our people's soul, time to grow new parts to replace the lost.^{xxxvi}

In the same way that Ong remarks orality and memory, Armah relates memory to the sacral, describing them in prophetic terms. The mediums of communication he characteristically calls *utterers*

and *rememberers* who merely seek to communicate with the world and remain consistent.

In the light of the three models of identity construction and shift we have thus discussed, it would appear that there is no watertight identity formation pattern without the aggregation of a number of underlying political and survival-potential factors where choice is the motivation for identification. We must remember that there are varieties of choices; for the lack of an obvious choice is itself a form of choice especially as other forms of choice are covert rather than overt. We may therefore begin to reconstruct identity paradigms within an era of industrialization and trans-nationalism.

CONCLUSION: RESOURCE CONTROL AND CITIZENSHIP.

I cannot conclude this kind of lecture without casting asides on forms of sub-cultural identities that have emerged in the late 20th century as a corollary of economic regimes in post-colonial states and emergent nation states of Africa. This identity index is tied to landmass as an identity index or as a marker of the identity complex of persons and groups. It is true that in pre-colonial societies, land and littoral masses were owned jointly by clans, families and lineages. But the growth of the materialist ethic and colonialism had emphasized the concept of ownership as individualist rather than corporate. It also became clear that the sanctity of life degenerated with intense materialism and the need for conquests. It would appear that intense primordial instincts could only appear as a stabilizing factor for the individual when in actual fact it weakened the post-colonial concept of the civic public. The colonial authorities, in drawing

national boundaries, often fragmented identities and confounded the balance of self-confidence in their imposition of instruments of governance. For instance national boundaries often divided kith and kin and left some as Anglophone whilst others became Francophone. This does not detract from the fact that groups of different nationalities still spoke the same mother tongue but their civic rights underwent paradigm shifts. The inherited methods of adjudication also had greater preference for retribution rather than indigenous arbitration which emphasizes reconciliation. Hence it was obvious after the turbulence of first republic post independence Nigeria and the ensuing civil war that a new vocabulary crept into the primordial register of Nigerian monarchs; the suffix, **land**. A sure example is the rulership of the Nigerian metropolis I know better than others – Ibadan. The monarch of Ibadan erstwhile addressed as His Royal Highness, the Olubadan of Ibadan suddenly became known as the Olubadan of Ibadan(land). I can vouchsafe the information without the least fear of contradiction that the new identity of all the Royal Fathers in that domain thenceforth reflected the suffix, **land** in their titles. It has since become something of a national phenomenon.

But the point I seek to reinforce is that there would seem to be a 'return to source'. There emerged an unusual association with land, marshy ground, the creeks, the mangrove swamps and even the water once a collectively derived or group identity is threatened or destabilized. I shall like to observe that right at the very roots of our fratricidal civil war was a deep identity crisis, and the after-effect lingers to this very day.

For the purpose of illustration in cultural production and productivity, I shall like to cite, without in-depth textual analysis, the manner in which this renewed understanding of the land

and the earth as permanent indices of identity invention has permeated the consciousness of Nigerians, in particular, and Africans, in general. The two dramas I shall offer are Ebrahim Hussein's *At the Edge of Thim* (1995)^{xxxvii} and Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground*[2006]^{xxxviii} Hussein's play reveals what the enthralling web and the extremes of primordial loyalties could do. This is what I had, myself remarked of it elsewhere:

The play presents a rather entrapping façade. The play is deceptively simple, but it encapsulates deep ecological structures of the mind, of clan loyalty and broad social and ethical relationships. The 'Thim' in the title, the author informs us, is a Dholuo word meaning bush or virgin land; a no man's land; a free space. So it is the sharp edge of this arena for the clash of primordial forces that Hussein's play probes.^{xxxix}

The play, though written by a Tanzanian exhumes memories of what had been a celebrated event of yesteryears in the life of Kenyan elite. The question is this: which is the home of a man or woman, is it the place of his/her birth or the place of his/her livelihood where[s]he resides and works? I can complicate the advocacy by asking whether it is possible to find out when each of our ancestors arrived where they presently reside. If it is impossible to do so, can a Nigerian citizen take on a multiple identity like the case of the Russian woman David Laitin cited?

There is an even more interesting twist in the matter because in the play, a court of law ruled that in accordance with the wish of the immediate family at the death of Herbert, a hero of the play, his body could be buried in the city where he had lived, worked and died. But when the news got to his village, an old man dismissed the court ruling as such:



The High table congratulates the Honoured Lecturer after his lecture.



Questions, answers and contributions are key to the overall impact of the Lecture



The Hon. Minister, Chairman of event and others at the buffet to end the evening.



The Director, NCAC, Mr. M. M. Maidugu conducts other guests at the event buffet.

Ruled! Ruled! Ruled on what?

Where did they dig up that law? Very stupid. Stupid!

From where did they dig it up? (Stamps his foot)

You see this: this is our land. Our property since the days of Routh.

We got this land. It is our land.

We have redeemed it by Blood and glorified it with our culture.

Herbert will be buried here. (he stamps his foot). [pp. 20-21].

The notion of identity in a modernizing state like Nigeria is a vexed one. For instance, how long could one live in a state to become a citizen of the place? Even if the indigenes trusts and likes my face, does the Constitution guarantee it? Does the constitution have concrete plans on the resettlement and the rehabilitation of the displaced citizens of the Bakassi peninsular? How long might they have to remain in the local government areas of their choice to become citizens of the place?

Yerima's *Hard Ground* is a story of the contradictions in the Niger Delta of Nigeria on the equally vexed question of resource control. Beneath the marshlands and the creeks, the protagonists of a bloody primordial battle feel that there is some measure of hard ground beneath them. But the truth is that the characters only hit that ground when they fall from the violence of what turns out to be a fratricidal war of attrition. The irony of circumstance which the play dramatizes is that the true identity of a citizen in the battle for resource control can only be revealed in his death. The hard lesson of that art can, therefore, be summed up in the message that the real basis of identity is the same basis of brutal and unscrupulous exploitation which almost always leads to violence and death. It thus means that Nigeria's civil war persists in the guise of resource control. Culture purveys identity and the latter reinforces and validates culture. Where there is the slightest disconnect between them, there always will be the absence for that spirit of citizenship which constitutes the basis of nationhood.

- ⁱ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967)
- ⁱⁱ Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford UP 1997). Chapter 3 is particularly relevant.
- ⁱⁱⁱ A. C. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).
- ^{iv} Souleymane B. Diagne and Henri Ossebi, *The Cultural Question in Africa: Issues, Politics and Research Prospects* (Dakar: CODESRIA Working Paper 3/96) p. 7.
- ^v Jacques Maquet, *Africanity: The Cultural Unity of Black Africa*, trans. Joan R. Rayfield (New York: Oxford UP, 1975).
- ^{vi} *Ibid.*, pp. 8 – 9.
- ^{vii} This classification does not claim to be exhaustive since experiences change over time, place and epoch.
- ^{viii} Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (New York: Norton, 1969).
- ^{ix} Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition”, in Amy Gutman (ed), *Multi-Culturalism: Examining the politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) pp. 25 – 73.
- ^x Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton, 1980).
- ^{xi} Trilling, *op. cit.*
- ^{xii} Karl Hausser, “Identity – Some Suggestions for Sharpening the Outlines of the Concept in Psychological Perspective” in *Approaches to African Identity* ed. Eckard Breiting and Reinhard Sander, Bayreuth African Studies series 4, 1986, pp 21 – 34.
- ^{xiii} Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure* (London: Heinemann, 1963, 1972).
- ^{xiv} Basil Davidson, *The Black Man’s Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Random House, 1992).
- ^{xv} Gyekye, *op. cit.*
- ^{xvi} Peter P. Ekeh, “Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement” in *Contemporary Studies in Society and History*, vol. 17: 91 – 112, 1975.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*, pp. 106 – 7
- ^{xviii} *Ibid.*, p. 107
- ^{xix} Compare Davidson, *op. cit.* pp. 197 – 242.
- ^{xx} I owe this point first to Olufemi Taiwo of Philosophy Department, Loyola University of Chicago.

- xx Vremudia Diejomaoh and Wambui wa Karanja, "Identity and Socio-Economic Change in Nigeria: An Overview" in *Approaches to African Identity* ed. Eckard Breitingner and Reinhard Sander, Bayreuth African Studies 4: 51 – 74, 1986.
- xxi Mabogo P. More, "Outlawing Racism in Philosophy: On Racism and Philosophy" in *The African Philosophy Reader*, ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) pp. 364 – 73.
- xxii J.H. Abraham, *Technology, Politics and Value*, Inaugural Lecture Series, University of Ghana, Legon (Accra: Ghana UP.), p. 8.
- xxiii Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton, 1980), p. 21.
- xxiv Ibid, p. 109.
- xxv Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction" in Amy Gutman ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), pp. 149 – 163.
- xxvi Erikson, *ibid.*, p. 109.
- xxvii David Laitin, "A Theory of Political Identities" in *Identity in Formation: The Russian Speaking Population in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1998).
- xxviii Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996).
- xxix Soyinka, 1996, *ibid.*, Laitin, 1998, *op. cit.*
- xxx Laitin, 1998, p. 11.
- xxxi Laitin, *ibid.*, p. 23.
- xxxii This classic stylistic connotation is originally from Ayi Kwei Armah.
- xxxiii Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 74.
- xxxiv Ayi Kwei Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* (Dar Es Salaam: East African Publishing House, 1973).
- xxxv Ibid, p. 90.
- xxxvi Ebrahim Hussein, *At the Edge of Thim*, trans Kimani Njogu (Nairobi: Kenyatta University Press, 1995).
- xxxvii Ahmed Yerima, *Hard Ground* (Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2006).
- xxxviii Dele Layiwola, "African Drama and the Dilemma of Identities", *Iba: Essays on African Literature in Honour of Oyin Ogunba*, Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo UP, pp. 109.– 121.

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Professor Oladele Olatunde Layiwola is a scholar of international repute, who is engrossed in cultural researches in African and classical theatre forms and contemporary drama and theatre theories, in addition to a couple of other ongoing works. To date, Prof. Layiwola has fifteen books and book chapters to his credit. He has over thirty seven articles in learned journals and six more that have already been accepted for publication.

Professor Layiwola has invested his life in promoting ideas that enshrine hard work, versatility and a sense of patriotism.