

Yoruba Indigenous Religion and its Implications for the Restructuring of Nigeria

Isaac Kehinde Ojelabi[□] and Fatai Sulaimon^{**}

Abstract

The attitude of the political class in Nigeria, often lacking basic religious, moral values and principles essential for democracy, have led to widespread calls for restructuring to ensure peace, unity, and integration. This paper identifies moral laxity as the primary challenge facing Nigeria and explores Yoruba indigenous religion as a foundation for restructuring in pursuit of national cohesion and growth. Utilizing descriptive and historical phenomenological methodology, the paper highlights how Nigerians have abandoned their cherished traditional norms and moral values in the quest for power and supremacy, leading to corruption. The paper concludes that restructuring, involving indigenous religion and culture, can address these persistent agitations. It is recommended that, despite ethnic and cultural differences, Nigerians should appreciate and uphold the moral values of indigenous religions, such as love, respect for human life and dignity, trust, transparency and accountability, equity, and social justice, to ensure peace, unity, and national solidarity.

Key words: religion, restructuring, culture, *omoluabi*, government.

Introduction

This paper advocates for the integration of traditional religious and cultural values in the restructuring of the Nigeria’s governance system. Since Nigeria's independence, efforts to establish a stable democratic rule and good governance have been disrupted. The reasons for these disruptions are manifold, with a key issue being the political class's frequent neglect of fundamental religious, moral values and principles, which are crucial for a stable democracy and effective governance. As Akintola argues, these principles are indispensable for democracy and good governance to flourish, as seen in advanced democracies around the world (146).

Despite the widespread discourse on democracy and good governance in Nigeria, our collective understanding of these concepts remains limited. Orhungur asserts that a government cannot truly be democratic unless it produces genuine leadership that grants citizens the freedom to elect their leaders (15). When this freedom is denied, any nation aspiring to practice democracy must urgently revisit its religious moral values to align them with democratic principles. Without these values, the aspirations for free and fair elections, justice, and the rule of law will remain elusive (Ekpo 43).

Democratic culture is a vital component of political life worldwide, essential for good governance and the sustainability of democracy. For Nigeria to achieve sustainable democracy and reap the benefits of good governance, it is imperative to integrate indigenous religious values into the political framework. These

[□] Department of Religious Studies, College of Humanities, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State.
Email: ojelabiik@tasued.edu.ng ^{**}Department of Yoruba Studies, College of Humanities, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State

values can help translate democratic dividends and good governance to all citizens, fostering a more just and equitable society. Religion and politics are two significant variables that influence societies worldwide. Politics is the art or science of government, concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policy and maintaining control over a government (Merriam-Webster 18). It involves the structure of power for achieving articulated goals (Madu 24). Conversely, religion involves the recognition of a Supreme Being to whom individuals surrender through worship. Ekwunife defines religion as "man's awareness and recognition of his dependent relationship on a transcendent Being—the Wholly Other—expressible in human society through beliefs, worship, and ethical behavior" (53). In the context of this paper, politics and religion are integral features of human social existence and interaction.

The objective of this paper is to explore how traditional religious and cultural values can be harnessed to restructure Nigeria's political framework, thereby fostering sustainable democracy and good governance. This paper employs a descriptive and historical phenomenological methodology to analyse the impact of traditional values on political restructuring. By examining historical contexts and current practices, the paper identifies and discusses specific traditional religious and cultural values that can contribute to the development of moral leaders with the conscience to govern effectively.

The thesis of this paper is that integrating traditional religious and cultural values into the political restructuring of Nigeria is essential for creating a stable and just society. Such integration will nurture moral leaders and promote democratic principles, ultimately leading to national cohesion and growth.

What is Government?

Government is the agency or machinery through which the will of people are formulated expressed of realised. They are the elected group of people responsible to hold the supreme power in a country. Government exists for the common good of the people. The essence of a good democratic government is to make the citizens to live in seal freedom, provide an assured welfare that will benefit human dignity, and enhance the attainment of social justice and peace. For Amosun "accountability and transparency are the hallmark of governance" (45). Governance also involves the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say (Plumptre and Graham 65). In governance, there is respect for rule of law, equity, and fairness in the distribution of resources.

Nigerians are suffering from ineffective governance, which is one of the major causes of development challenges in Nigeria as a whole. These problems of ineffective governance include a situation where people observe democracy but do not receive the benefits of economic growth; the prevalence of violence or threat of violence and paucity of law and order in the country is a lack of opportunities, the continuance of multi-dimensional poverty and persistent marginalization and disempowerment of large sections of the population (Cubitt 14). This is the evidence that negative values have become so overt and covert in behaviour of contemporary rulers!

The system of governance in Nigeria is not transparent as people expected. The country is faced with the realities of corruption in every sector of the society. It is apparent that ethnic sentiments, unfair allocation of resources, inability to provide for its citizens the basic needs to make life enjoyable, tramping on people's fundamental rights and insurgencies, among others are the reasons why poverty and inequality has remained unabated in Nigeria. In different sectors of Nigerian government, those occupying strategic positions are only interested in their individual pockets at the detriment of the poor masses. All these encourage increase in crime and violence in the society, which affects the peace, unity, social cohesion, and structural stability of Nigeria. These also show the absence of appropriate moral values. These problems facing Nigeria in this contemporary time, if not properly handled, can lead to disintegration. In other to

save the situation, many enlightened citizens are calling on the Federal government to restructure the country.

Traditionally, before the colonisation and unification of the protectorates to form Nigeria, there were many societies with their ethnic identifications. Enebe postulates that, "each of these societies such as those of the Oyo Empire, the Benin Empire, Sokoto Caliphate, Kanem Borno Empire, the Igbo and other South Eastern City States, tried to forge their own systems of living based on their own knowledge and experience" (45). The advent of European colonialism brought about the unification known as "the Amalgamation of 1914". This amalgamation as viewed by Enebe has the "complex mix of nationalities that were forced into the 'contraption' or geographical expression' called Nigeria" (45). As a result of amalgamation, the functioning of the traditional societies was distorted as the British introduced the Indirect Rule system that enabled them to use the leaders against the people. Consequently, the initial trust, which the people had built in their leaders were destroyed (Enebe 42). Tamuno keenly observes that, "the British rule in Nigeria was in the final analysis buttressed by force or by the threat of using it (393).

Based on the above account, colonization brought a set-back to the traditional societies in developing their own systems fully. The societies were compelled to adopt European values, which they did not fully understand in the act of governance. Thus, those who were expected to make laws for better societal living could not easily identify their priorities and address to themselves to the Europeans. Instead, they aimed firstly at the acquisition of property and wealth (Enebe 42). Restructuring anchors on idea that the country might be run in a different way that is transparent, and even smoother than the way it is being run before. By this idea, it is pertinent for power to move to regions by decentralizing the federal government. This would help to move the country forward both economically and socially. But it takes morally sound persons to carry out these functions successfully. A morally depraved person cannot take Nigerians to the next level of growth, development, and progress. It requires the right values assimilation for moral transformation to take place.

Indigenous Cultural Values

Cultural Values are those attitudes one appreciates that influence the behaviour. It is those beliefs that influence a person's action. Values can be seen as the important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. Values have major influence on a person's behaviour and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations (Business Dictionary 118). Value can be defined as the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something. Ilogu states that, "value is the quality of a thing that makes it more or less desirable or useful" (74). Value further expresses the significance, which is ascribed to a particular experience, activity, or life in general. This significance gives the guidance and decisions man makes in daily life and behavioural traits. Value can be objective when it is guided by laws and customs; and subjective when it is guided by individual whim and caprices (Ilogu 74). Value from the above definitions refers to what someone cherishes, which could be good or bad. Values are important because they influence human perception. The traditional religion is embedded with values that are cultural accepted to guide the behaviour of the members of a given society. Before going into these values, it is pertinent to have an insight into Yoruba Indigenous Religion.

Traditional Religion

Nigeria in pre-colonial era was made up of ethnic groups that were independent of one another; and as well related well with each other (Oloidi 58). They also had their traditional belief systems known as African Indigenous Religion. Madu defines AIR as the indigenous religion of the Africans and thus described it as, a way of practicing religion by Africans before the advent of the missionaries (97). In other words, it is the indigenous African way of worship and life; arrived at from undergirding African normative norms, values,

ethos and customs" (132). For Awolalu and Dopamu "it is the religion that has been handed down from generation to generation by the forbearers of the present generation of Africans (26). This religion has been in existence before the coming of other religions like Christianity and Islam.

The traditional religion is encoded in the people's lifestyle. It is a religion of love and tolerance. Being the traditional religion of the people, it is rooted in the people's worldview and its values are incorporated in the people's culture. The traditional religion is embedded in the system the beliefs, values and cultural practices that are very helpful in sanitizing moulding the moral life of the people.

In the pre-colonial traditional society, these selfish and greedy behaviours are not so common. The advent of colonialism brought about these changes in the society today. The traditional family system starts from the cradle to teach the children etiquette, discipline, and morals of the society. Any deviation from the morals attracts discipline. Parents too are living an exemplary life. The change brought by colonialism alters the traditional lifestyle. This is because the laws of the land, the traditional social structure, the norms, and values that regulate the conduct of the people are replaced with the new values brought by colonialism; thereby keeping the traditional values aside. The value traits of kinship and communalism that is replaced with individualism brought by colonialism, gave room for greed and self-centeredness. This also affected other areas of the traditional social structure; meanwhile, the ideal moral principle that is rooted in selflessness has been abandoned. Collier postulates that:

In honest societies each generation hands on to the next generation the valuable assets of a reputation for honesty, whereas in corrupt societies each new generation inherits an initially undeserved expectation that it will behave corruptly. These expectations tend to be self-fulfilling (198-199).

In the wider society, individualism leads to ethnic sentiment, nepotism, favouritism, intolerance, lack of fairness, equity, and social injustice. These are wrong ethical values that destroy the fabric of peace and unity of the society. Apparently, they are the major causes of crises, violence and seeking to disintegrate Nigeria today. The leaders are not sufficiently groomed to take up the challenges facing Nigeria as a country. This is because of inadequate mastery of the application of traditional values. Moreover, in a society with norms, moral customs, and tradition, it is not everything you want to do that you are allowed to do. It is important to embrace the religious and cultural values of the traditional people since it is the basis for moral foundation. This will serve as an indispensable factor towards actualising the restructuring agenda for a better Nigeria.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and the Restructuring of Nigeria There are several traditional and cultural values that are very important in bringing out the potential in the life of every person in Nigerian society. These values are core to the traditional societies, as they are the acceptable moral values that govern the people of different ethnic groups preceding colonial rule. These values are the light that radiates the life of the society and enhances social cohesion and as well determine the individual conducts and their general world view. These values are discussed under the following headings.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values for Human Life: Human life is very important in the traditional cultures of Nigerian people. Life is the foundation of existence. For the traditionalists, God is the source of life. Life for them is precious and sacred and should not be wasted at will. Human life is highly appreciated and respected in the traditional society. No one should be deprived of his life intentionally. Taking human life in the case of homicide is regarded as a grievous offence not only against the society but also a violation of divine law (Oraegbunam 20).

In this contemporary time, Nigeria suffers cases of incessant killings from Boko Haram insurgency (Ogundipe 58), herdsman and farmers clashes (Marama and Okolie 48), and force men brutality (Human

Right Watch 10). All these are because of cruelty and human wickedness brought by moral laxity. Proper inculcation of the value of respect for human life in restructuring Nigeria will transform the killings and change Nigeria to nation.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values for Human Dignity: Man as a living being has individual sense of self-worth, respect and integrity. All these make up the dignity of man, which is inherent. Human beings in the traditional culture are seen as valuable members of a given community, therefore has right to life. Human dignity denotes the special elevation of human species, the special potentiality associated with rational humanity, or the basic entitlements of everyone (Riley and Gerhard). The concept of human dignity has been developed along the line of religious and ethical perspective, in the sense that it is in line with the accepted norms and values of the traditional society.

Human beings should not in any way maltreat their fellow human beings. Respect for human dignity is the foundation of human morality because no traditional society norms encourage killing of a fellow human being unless for justice according to the societal norms and accepted principles. Abuse of human dignity in any form should be discouraged because human deserve dignity by the fact that they are already human beings (Ruud 29). Dehumanization of human dignity is a negative value, which is very prevalent in Nigerian society of today. This retards a country's progress and growth. It is pertinent to involve the value of human dignity in restructuring Nigeria. This will help to put in place any violence, threat, humiliation and retaliation of any kind in Nigerian society.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Sense of Good Human Relation: It is the social relationship between individuals, how they interact and cooperate with each other for growth and development. The guiding principle of human relation in African traditional community is "live and let live". This principle presupposes inter-personal and inter-community relationship realized in the interaction between individuals in the same community and different community (Kanu 26). Good human relation is all about recognizing, respecting, and safeguarding the dignity of every individual and caring for each other's welfare. But today reverse is the case. Discrimination has eroded the value of good human relation, which gave rise to ethnic sentiment, favouritism, and nepotism, among others.

Human relations from the traditional perspective evolve around interactions between human persons, individual dignity of those involved in the interaction, and individual's efforts and valued contributions. All these dealings and interactions in human relations are recognized; human feelings and sentiments are also accommodated and are given due respect. By involving the value of good human relation in restructuring Nigeria, those conflicts that come up because of human interactions are avoided or resolved amicably. This will help the country maintain, improve, and enhance a healthy relationship within, and make a better nation.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Sense of Community: The traditional African society believes in communal life. Every human person is a member of a particular community. In a communal system of living, it is guided by the principle of "be your brother's keeper". No human is an island; therefore, no individual is self-sufficient. In community life, there is nothing like individualism. Everybody works together for the betterment of members of the community, and to enhance the welfare and growth of the community. Sense of community makes one to know the neighbours, interact with them and do things in common. That is why the African idea of Security and its value depend on personal identification with the community as well as within the community (Onwubiko as cited in Kanu, 27).

Presently, the communal life has been replaced with individualism. For instance, those in corridor of power are solely concerned in their selfish interest. With their position, they exploit and maltreat the poor.

Therefore, absorbing the true spirit of communalism in restructuring Nigeria will eliminate individualism and give every citizen sense of belonging.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Sense of Hospitality and Generosity: The sense of hospitality is one of the traditional and cultural values that are still intact. It can be seen as that extension of generosity without holding strings. It is the spirit of selfless service, friendly reception and entertainment of invited or uninvited guests. This also explains the African sense of communality, which is the sense of brotherhood. Hospitality in the traditional society consists of treating people in most appropriate way depending on the situation, which could be ethical, cultural, and religious. In the traditional culture, there is always spontaneous welcome and accommodation for visitors.

The traditional society also shows love in sharing with their needy brothers or and strangers neighbours who seek for their assistance. For instance, the Igbo people help themselves virtually in all aspects of life. The wealthy ones among them help to incorporate the poor ones who are able in apprenticeship to learn and engage in one form of trade, work or the other. Currently, it is unfortunate that the values of hospitality and generosity are no longer what they were some decades ago because of crooked mind and selfish desire of people. Those accommodated encroach on the land that was not given to them, which results to clashes as one can see in most cases of the farmers and herdsmen. Inculcating a good spirit of hospitality in restructuring Nigeria will ensure a good sense of nationhood.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Sense of Respect for the Elders and those in Authority: Respect is the hallmark of the traditional culture. Respect for elders and those in constituted authority are positive moral values. Elders are seen as repositories of communal wisdom, because of their long years of experience. The wisdom of Nigerian forefathers is enshrined in the utterances of the elders since there are no written books on that. It is preserved and handed over to the present generation through oral traditions. The elders are the custodians of culture; therefore, the young ones can tap from the experience of the elders. The words of the elders and their instructions if heeded to are very helpful for promotion of good behaviour among the youths.

Respecting those in constituted authority is also the ethos of the traditional society. Those in authority are held in high esteem in the traditional society because they are tied to the tradition and custom and are seen as the embodiment of the authority as well as rulers. Therefore, they are the custodians of positive values, norms, and traditions. It is too appalling that some of those in authority are living a life devoid of good values. Their lives are filled with greed and corruption; leaving the younger generation with negative lifestyle to copy. On the other hand, some of the youths abuse their elders and disrespect those in authority, because they are morally bankrupt. There is need for proper cultivation of the value of respect for the elders and those in authority by the corrupt leaders and the disrespectful youth. Involving this value in restructuring Nigeria will help to create a peaceful nation.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Honesty: Honesty is fairness and straightforwardness of conduct (Merriam Webster 78). It is an aspect of moral character that is highly valued in many ethnic and religious cultures (Van Lange and Kuhlman 54). It is also one of the most cherished values among human beings. Honesty manifests in virtuous attributes like trustworthiness, truthfulness, integrity, sincerity, and fairness. It means the absence of falsehood and deceit; cheating, lying and theft. Honesty is exposing one's true self therefore producing trust.

Honesty is very important in solidifying the foundation of any relationship, be it family or friends. It is seen as that aspect of value that glue or bind people together. Trust manifests because of honesty. The Nigerian leadership of today has shifted from honesty to dishonesty and deceit. Dishonesty threatens one's

relationship with others, creates no room for connivance and encourages corruption. It is hard for the dishonesty person to seek help him. To excel in life, one needs trusted persons around him who would help him to handle problems and overcome challenges. Trust also attracts credibility, which is at the core of being able to influence people and provide strong leadership. It is important to absorb the true value of honesty in restructuring Nigeria. This is because honesty incorporates sense of duty and dedication, which gives no room for corruption. Honesty helps to build trust, strengthening relationships and developing societies.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and the administration of justice in Nigeria

The administration of justice in Indigenous African society was through unbiased adjudicatory mechanism that protected and promoted human rights and needs of both individuals and society on the one hand, and those of the gods on the other hand. The agents of judicial system in Yorubaland included chiefs and elders (Ojelabi 43). Criminal cases such as homicide, treason, felony, manslaughter, and rape were usually handled by the *Oba's* (King) court or *olóri àdúgbò* for arbitration. The *baálé* in the rural areas preside over civil cases involving quarrel, insult, debt, and other minor offences and their judgments could include counseling, reprimanding, and imposing fines, or apology on the guilty. Cases that could not be handled by the *baálé* is transferred to the *Olóri ebí* or the *Mogaji* as the case may be, who is in charge of lineages (Faleti 28). His judicial pronouncement sometimes extends before a quarter to cover all places where members of the extended family can be found. The lowest court is the one constituted by the male head of a family (*baálé*). Next is the court of the *Olóri àdúgbò* (head of quarters) who owes his appointment to the *Oba*. The traditional Yoruba courts are organized hierarchically according to the units of the society (Onadeko 52). In most cases, the disputants drag themselves before adjudicators. In other cases, the elders or chiefs asked for the disputants to be brought before them. Before the process starts, the adjudicators would lecture the disputants on the need for peace and solicit their support to say the truth and accept whatever verdict that is passed. After this, the two sides are listened to alongside their witnesses. Where the panel is in doubt of the veracity of a claim, *Olaoba*, suggested oath-taking which was always recommended and done and then the judgment is passed (22).

Furthermore, justice is the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishment (Merriam-Webster, 78). Justice is fairness in protection of rights and punishment of the Wrong (Business Dictionary 186). On the other hand, Justice is what the society regards as "Tight" based on the moral concepts of ethics, rationality, law, religion, equity and fairness, which needs to be in the light of the democratic principle of the 'rule of law' (Civic Academy 18). Justice is an essential virtue in the traditional society. The social order and peace are the principle of justice.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Cross Examination in Judicial System

Cross-examination was the most crucial aspect of the judicial roles of adjudicators in Yoruba legal tradition. This was done to ensure equitable distribution of justice to the parties involved in a conflict. In Yorubaland, cross-examiners, included the adjudicators, respectable elders, the ancestors, and the parties to the conflict. *Olaoba* saw cross-examination as the crux of fair play and justice which was considered as basically construed as the nucleus of adjudication. Cross examination is a process which requires rare display of wisdom, bravado and ancestral" support among the Yoruba (34). According to him, cross-examination was a means of weighing evidence in Yoruba juristic traditions. It has a symbolic means of usage which is replete in cross-checking and corroborating facts and evidence through sufficient interrogation. In Yorubaland, cross-examination was done by inviting the parties to a conflict, the eyewitness to narrate their own version of the story (Ojelabi 73). The parties to the conflict would give all the evidence corroborated by the eyewitness without let or hindrance.

Before administering judgment in the traditional system, the panel of the elders must hear from the two parties. Justice in this traditional system includes consultations, discussions, and deliberations on the matter. After the deliberations, the panel will arrive at consensus and then deliver judgment. At this level, the justice must ensure conformity with the social order and ethical standard for societal good. With the above order, there is nothing like denial of Justice, this is because justice is given out by measure of appropriate sanction or punishment as well as the reward according to the laid down rules.

After all the evidence had been given, the king and his chiefs would cross-examine the parties to the conflict. Since they had a good knowledge of all parts of the city, the local traditions of Yorubaland and most of the leading personalities in the different wards, it was not difficult for them to bring out the truth from the parties to the conflict. A person who tried to quote a false tradition to support his case was quickly challenged. This helped to narrow down areas of disagreement between the parties to the conflict, so that when the conflict was to be finally resolved, the truth was upheld (Albert 15). After cross-examining the matter and eventually the conflict was settled, by *Mogaji*, *Baale*, chiefs or the King, no formal fees were charged. However, the parties to the conflict usually provided drinks, food or gifts to the elders with a view to permanently seal the bond of reconciliation.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Reconciliation

In Yorubaland, reconciliation was the basic objective of indigenous judicial procedure. The restoration of peace and harmony, through effective adjudication, was joyously celebrated through provisions of food and drinks by the parties to the conflict. Hugging and embracing normally followed once the issues involved in the conflict had been resolved. Conversely, in conflict resolution, there was "no victor, no vanquished" in Yorubaland. This was so because of the people's belief in collectivist responsibility to justice. Hence, the parties to the conflict began a new phase of mutual tolerance, understanding and cooperation.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and Extra-Judicial Devices

In Yorubaland, extrajudicial devices form was another process upon which law and order thrived. The extra judicial processes were such methods that were socially accepted and endorsed by members of the society. Thus, the process was carried out through the influence and activities of secret sanctions. The use of ordeals was another aspect of extra-judicial method because the process evolved the belief in the supernatural. These ordeals unravelled whatever mystery or doubt that might enshroud offenders and culprits. For example, in most villages or community in Yorubaland, anybody accused of witchcraft was made to undergo the sasswood poison ordeal. According to Fadipe, *Sango* (god of thunder) and *ogun* (god of iron) had great force on the administration of justice (47). *Sango* and *Ogun* were sought to expose cases of theft and lying. Lightning would strike the offender dead. The emblem of *ogun* (iron) was always given to a witness to kiss as a means of administering oath, Lucas (48). Olaoba also emphasised the use of oathing in the extra-judicial method of conflict resolution as a process of maintaining law and order (17). Also, the use of excommunication was another aspect of extra-judicial device.

Yoruba Indigenous Religious Values and the Concept of *Omoluabi*

The concept of *Omoluabi* refers to someone born with good character. Good character is an essential virtue in human life and defines the true selves. Character comprises individual traits or qualities unique to each person and is shaped by nature, environment, and training. Humans are endowed with the ability to reason and initiative, and the inculcation of right and wrong forms our character. By exercising reasoning according to these ideas, one develops a good or bad character. Therefore, Fawenu and Abodunrin assert that *Omoluabi* emphasizes the Yoruba perception of certain characteristics that make up a person and defines his or her social worth (120).

Character formation begins in childhood, with society imparting moral values and principles of good

conduct through oral traditions. This helps young people internalize societal virtues, such as honesty, respect, tolerance, self-control, and purity. Children rely on imitation to form habits since their sense of reasoning is not fully developed. These habits ultimately shape their character. A well-formed character produces wise and worthy citizens, making character the foundation of one's actions, whether good or bad.

In traditional societies, people's conduct is guided by societal principles, norms, and social rules, aligned with beliefs about right and wrong. These beliefs shape one's character. Living a good life in a traditional society means living a moral life, with a person's character being central to moral evaluation.

In Yoruba traditional society, *iwa* (character) is perhaps the most important moral concept. Gbadegesin states, "A person is morally evaluated according to his or her *iwa*—whether good or bad" (79). Good character is both a virtue and a value that people should cultivate. Integrating the value of good character into the restructuring of Nigeria would greatly benefit the nation, promoting its global reputation (Ojelabi 43).

Incorporating these traditional values into Nigeria's restructuring process will foster peaceful coexistence and integration. Nigeria needs leaders with strong, well-formed mindsets. This can be achieved by embedding these traditional religious and cultural values into daily life and all endeavours. By doing so, Nigeria can harness the strengths of all ethnic groups to build a strong nation anchored in healthy cultural, social, political, and economic practices, serving as a viable ideology and practical framework for governing a diverse cultural society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Nigeria is in urgent need of positive change. Many Nigerian elites believe that decentralizing power through restructuring is essential, and incorporating traditional religious and cultural values into this process is crucial. Building a disciplined society requires leaders who lead by example and embody the moral values of good character, communitarian spirit, and a high sense of responsibility, honesty, and integrity. Achieving this necessitates a moral and value re-orientation of leaders across all sectors. By embracing values such as love, respect for human life and dignity, trust, transparency, accountability, equity, and social justice, Nigeria can achieve peaceful coexistence, unity, and integration despite religious, cultural, ethnic, and ideological differences. This will foster growth, development, and progress for the nation.

Recommendations

The context in which Nigerian citizens operate necessitates a value re-orientation across all sectors. Individually, people need to embrace and internalize core values such as love and selflessness. The value of hard work should be instilled in society from an early age. Positive values, like respect for human life and dignity, should be cherished, while negative values like greed, selfishness, and materialism must be avoided. Embracing a spirit of concern for one another and hospitality will foster tolerance and accommodation.

Leaders of every religious sect should encourage their members to uphold positive values such as love, peace, unity, tolerance, and forgiveness. Church and community leaders should refrain from honouring individuals who have gained wealth through dubious means. The government should ensure the equal distribution of resources and uphold the rule of law. A clear separation of powers is essential to ensure checks and balances, and the enforcement of laws must be uncompromising.

Works cited

- Akintola D.A. "Reconstruction." *Journal of African Election Special Issue: Nigeria's 2007 General Election*, pp. 145-147.
- Amosun, D. R. President Goodluck's claim to unequalled success in highway construction and reconstruction, in *The Punch Newspaper*, 13 Oct. 2014, p.29.
- Awolalu, J. O. and Dopamu, P. A. *West African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan, Onibonoje Press. 1979.
- Business Dictionary "Justice." *Business Dictionary*. Retrieved from www.bussinessdictionary.com on 10 May 2023.
- Collier, P. "How to Reduce Corruption." *African Development Review*. vol. 12 no. 2, 2000, pp. 85-92.
- Cubit, C. "An Introduction to Governance in Africa." *Governance in Africa*, vol. 1 no.1, 2014, pp. 1-9.
- Edema, A. "Christian and Politics in Nigeria. Ibadan, Nigeria." *The Sketch Press*, 1988.
- Ekwunife, A. N. O. Politics and Religious Intolerance: The Nigerian Experience. Snaap Press, 1992.
- Ekpo, A. S. *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, vol.10, no.1, 2021, pp. 9-32.
- Emezie, C. "Corruption as a Constraint on Local Government Effectiveness: The Case of Jemaa Local Authority in Nigeria." *Nigeria Journal of Public Administration and Local Government*. vol. 9 no.1, 1998, pp. 24-27.
- Enebe, G. "The Emerging of Nigerian Nation and Moral and Socio-Political Degeneration a Historical Insight." *A stride, memory and desire peoples, cultures and development in Nigeria*. Enugu, Nigeria, C. edited by KrydzIkwuemesi ABIC Books, 2012, pp. 42-48.
- Faleti, A. "Eto Ofin ati idajo ni Ile Yoruba laye atijo," *Colloquium for the J. F. Odunjo Memorial Lectures*. Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. 2000.
- Fawenu, Bamidele Olusegun and Michael O Abodunrin. "Engaging Σωφροσύνη in Titus 2 and Yoruba Ideology of Omoluwabi towards Curbing Insecurity in Nigeria." *The Mighty Temple of the Gods: A Festschrift for Professor (Bishop Theologian) Dapo F Asaju*, edited by Benson O. Igboin and Adepeju Johnson-Bashua, Adekunle Ajasin University Press, 2021, pp 116-131.
- Gbadegesin, S. *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*. Peter Lang, 1991.
- Human Right Watch Nigeria: Corruption Fuelling Police Abuse Government should Rein in Extortion, Embezzlement and Related Abuses. Accessed from <https://www.hrw.org/2024/03/1>.
- Ilogu, E. *Christianity and Igbe Culture*. Onitsha, Nigeria: University Press.1974.
- Kanu, M. A. "The Indispensability of Basic Social Values in African Tradition: A Philosophical

- Appraisal.” *Ogirisi: A new Journal of African Studies*. vol.7, pp. 149-161, 2010.
- Madu J. E. *Honest to African Cultural Heritage*. Coskan Associates, Printers and Publishers, 2004.
- Madu, J. E. *Fundamentals of Religious Studies*. Franedoh Publishers, 1997.
- Marama, N. and I. Okolie. Herdsmen-Farmers' Clashes now Deadlier, says UN.” *Vanguard* 19 July 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com> on 19 July 2023.
- Nwakanma, O. “What is Restructuring? *Vanguard*, 29 July 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com> on 12 June 2023.
- Ogundipe, S. “Boko Haram: Police Deployed Additional 2,000 Combat Officers for Counter-Insurgency Duties.” *Premium Times*, 2 Dec 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com> on 2 April 2023.
- Ojelabi, I. K. “Assessment of Indigenous method of Arbitration and Administration of Justice in Ibadanland,” Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2013.
- Olaoba, O.B. *The Significance of Cross-examination in Yoruba Traditional Jurisprudence*. John Archers Publishers Ltd., 2001.
- Olaoba, O. B. *An Introduction to African Legal Culture*. Hope Publications, 2002.
- Olaoba, O. B. “Ancestral Focus and the process of conflict resolution in Traditional African societies.” *Perspectives on Peace and Conflict in Africa in Essays in Honour of General (Dr) Abdul Salam A, Abubakar*, edited by Albert, A. O. John Archers Ltd, 2005, pp. 86-93.
- Oloidi, J. F. “Major Cultural Characteristics of the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa/Fulani in Pre-colonial and Colonial Periods.” *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures, 5th Edition*, edited by Jumoke F. Oloidi. Computer Edge, 2018, pp.269-278.
- Oraegbunam, I. K. E., “Crime and Punishment in Igbo Customary Court: The Challenge of Nigerian Criminal Jurisprudence.” *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African Studies*. Vol.7. 2010, pp. 1-23.
- Orhungor, K. A. “Post-War Reintegration, Reconstruction and Reconciliation Among the Anioma People of Nigeria.” *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, vol. 42, no.1, 2020. 15-18.
- Oxford Dictionaries. “Definition of Values in English.” *Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved from <https://en.oxford> on 1 March 2024.
- Plumptre, T. and Graham, J. “Governance and Good Governance.” *International and Aboriginal Perspectives*. Institute of Governance, 1999.
- Riley, Stephen and Gerhard Bos. “Human Dignity.” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://iep.utm.edu/human-dignity/> Retrieved on 1 March 2024.
- Tamuno, T. N. “British Colonial Administration in Nigeria, in the Twentieth Century.” *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, edited by ObaroIkime, Heinemann, 1980.

- Ruud, T. "Dignity, Posthumanism, and the Community of Values." *The American Journal Bioethics*, vol. 10, no.7, 2010, pp. 69-70.
- Van Lange, P. A. M. and Kuhlman, D. M. "Social Value Orientations and Impressions of Partner's Honesty and Intelligence: A Test of the Might versus Morality Effect." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 67 no.1, 1994, pp.126-141.
- Webster, Merriam. "Definition of Honesty." *Merriam Webster*. Retrieved from- <https://www.merriam-webster.com>. 13/10/23.
- Webster, Merriam. "Definition of Justice." *Merriam Webster*. Retrieved from- <https://www.merriam-webster.com>. 13/10/2023.
- Webster, Merriam. "Definition of Politics." *Merriam Webster. Definition of Politics*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com>. 13/10/23