

SEVEN YEARS OF IBB

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VOLUME FOUR

ARTS AND CULTURE

Edited By Dr. G. G. Darah



Seven Years of IBB

Volume 4

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Arts & Culture

Edited by
Dr. G. G. Darah
General Editor.: Prof. Ade Adefuye

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FOREWORD

Seven years of IBB is to my mind a most commendable attempt to undertake a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the work and achievements of an incumbent head of state and government. The seven volume work with a picturesque compendium analyses virtually every initiative undertaken by the Babangida administration since coming to power in August 1985.

The contributors to the work have presented a well researched and analytical appreciation of the regime's bold effort at restructuring of the economy; its imaginative political initiatives designed to usher in lasting democracy and the administration's creative reorientation programmes intended to inculcate a new political culture conducive to the survival of democracy, and to the democratic way of life. They have also proffered suggestions on how to remedy the lapses they observed and identified.

The volumes cover Politics and the Transition, The Economy, Foreign Policy, Labour and Social Development, Arts and Culture, Education and Rural Development, and New Political Culture.

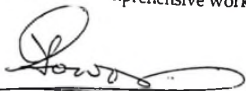
The editors have rightly observed that the Babangida Administration more than most embarked on a number of radical reforms in its seven years of existence. Each of the reforms embarked on by the Babangida administration, for example, the Structural Adjustment Programme, or the Transition Programme is major enough to occupy the full time of any administration. Yet the administration had made commendable efforts in realising the objectives of the reforms. The reforms became necessary as a result of the down- turn of the economy since the late seventies and due to the changing political landscape during that time. What must be remembered is that the political environment in the early 1960's soon after independence, was a period of consolidating Nigeria's independence politically and economically rather than indulging in any reform exercise at the time which would not have been acceptable. That is why, understandably, the first civilian political leadership was too preoccupied with maintaining a fragile political system to contemplate introducing anything radically different from what was bequeathed to it by

the colonial regime. Inevitably, the unstable condition brought about a political change early in the life of the nation through military intervention for the first time.

Successive governments, especially our government after the civil war, did try to embark on reforms aimed at building a more united and economically strong and less dependent Nigeria where our economy is controlled by our nationals. The Economic Development Plan, the series of projects we executed and reforms we introduced in the early 1970's for example, our immediate post-war initiative at reconciliation and reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction, the 3R's, the Universal Free Primary Education and the Economic Enterprises Indigenization Policy were all attempts to address some of the questions that the Babangida administration, to his credit, took up with so much courage and decisiveness than his predecessors. Other governments too did recognize the need for reforms and in fact pursued policies meant to realize the objectives of the reforms. Little, however, has been recorded about the contribution of these governments other than what government-sponsored publications have done.

It is in this regard that I find the initiative of the publishers of this very comprehensive study very encouraging. It is an acknowledgement of the great contribution made by a leader to the socio-economic and political development of our fatherland. I hope that similar studies will be undertaken on the tenure of our leaders so that our future leaders will be encouraged to strive to do their very best being conscious of the fact that history is recording them even as they are still on the saddle.

Seven Years of IBB is an essential reading for any understanding of where Nigeria is today and from the foundation laid, what we hope it will be in the 21st Century. My congratulations to the Authors / Editors for a comprehensive work well done.



(Gen. Dr. Chief F. Gowon)
The Rare Ajagunda of Life

AWAITING THE VERDICT OF HISTORY

History is a product of continuous interaction between man and environment. Seven years is nothing much in the life of a nation particularly one with the size and complexity of Nigeria. But a seven year period during which fundamental assumptions were challenged and modified, when phenomenal changes were effected in Nigeria's social, economic and political scene, and during which issues hitherto reserved for the esoteric class, corporate bodies, and campus egg heads became subjected to public debate and reactions deserve to be carefully documented and rationally analysed. The 1985-92 period is one that will be a fascinating subject in Nigeria's history books. Historians and social scientists will find the sheer weight and volume of decisions taken, their immediate and lasting effect on the country's outlook, economy and body politic too attractive to ignore. Even before the Babangida regime signs off, the men who captained the ship of state the policies they enunciated, the manner of implementation, the intended and accidental consequences are already being studied.

There has so far been a tendency towards an approach that is essentially biographical; one that seeks to explain the actions of the regime in the light of the vision of the leader. In the *Prince of the Niger*; Chidi Amuta analysed the 1985-92 period from the background of the knowledge of General Babangida's biographical condition because according to Chidi it is by so doing that we may be able to appreciate the deeper roots of the decisions that he had to make and policies he had to pursue. The Orphan at fourteen who through dint of hard work and perseverance came to occupy for seven years the highest position in the country's political hierarchy knows the difference between poverty and wealth, ignorance and knowledge, opportunity and the lack of it. Babangida was said to have for a long time been deeply concerned with the problems of Nigeria out of a patriotic commitment and consulted widely even before coming to power with those who ought to know about the

multidimensional nature of Nigeria's socio-economic and political problems. These along with his personal experience must have influenced his attitude and policies. Events in the life of a nation are no doubt shaped by the perception of the leaders. These perceptions are in themselves influenced by personal experiences.

But it will be misleading to assume that the Babangida factor was the sole determinant of events in the 1985-92 period. Admittedly the regimented command structure of the armed forces compel instant obedience and does not leave much room for arguments and counter arguments particularly with superiors. But Babangida realised that the office of the Chief of Army Staff is not exactly like that of the President. In his maiden address Babangida denounced the Buhari-Idiagbon duo for disregarding the principle of discussion, consultation and cooperation. There was the Armed Forces Ruling Council, the Council of States, the Council of Ministers and the Presidential Advisory Council all of which were consultative bodies at different levels. Even though Babangida left no one in doubt as to who was in charge, the occasional change in aspects of policy formulation and implementation were clearly the result of inputs of individuals and groups to whose opinion Babangida deferred.

There were frequent changes in key personnel of government during the seven year period. But there were a few individuals such as Abacha, Aikhomu, Akilu, Chu Okongwu, Olikoye Kuti, Olagunju and to a lesser extent Jubril Aminu, Alhaji Alhaji, and Bola Ajibola who made inputs into policy formulation and who have clearly influenced events to some degree. Thus if a biographical approach were to be adopted to the study of the 1985-92 period, it will certainly not be complete without a biographical study at least of Vice President Aikhomu and General Sani Abacha. These two individuals will share with Babangida the praise and blame for the successes and failures of the regime.

But whatever judgement is pronounced must be against the background of the circumstances in which Babangida and his team found Nigeria. It is the environment and circumstances that make the man

and the government. It needed a defeated Germany suffering from the implementation of the Versailles treaty to produce a Hitler. Without a regimented and classless society which existed in the Soviet Union, there would not have been any need for Gorbachev to bring about Glamost or Perestroika. The Babangida era would not have had a "raison detre" had the massive corruption and prostitution of democratic values of the Shagari era not been succeeded by the authoritarianism and lack of proper economic focus of Buhari.

The seven books on seven years of IBB seek to record and analyse the interaction between men, ideas, circumstances and environment in the effort to make Nigeria a better place. The approach here is factual and analytical. It is an attempt to document and interpret actions taken by individuals who believed that the objectives suitable to be pursued in the Nigeria of August 1985 are those economic reconstruction, social justice and self reliance. The emphasis on the Nigerian situation before Babangida is one of the central issues being stressed by the editors and contributors of this series. We believe that any attempt to interpret and analyse contemporary situations should begin with an insight into the past. The present is a product of the past. Any balanced analysis of the Babangida era must take cognisance of the Nigerian situation before August, 1985. We need to know where we are coming from in order to appreciate where we are. Some of the critics of Babangida regime conveniently ignore the fact that by August 1985, a combination of the fall in world oil prices, inadequate policies of the past, and rising debt obligation produced a difficult economic situation which adversely affected both external and fiscal balance, they demonstrate a lack of awareness of the fundamental flaw in the structure of the economy which although made worse by the corruption and incompetence of the 1979-83 era needed much more than the "tough-guy posture of Buhari-Idiagbon". The situation called for a fundamental restructuring of the one legged economy operating within the parameters designed by the Breton Woods institutions as a result of which by 1985 44% of the revenue had to be spent on debt servicing.

The Structural Adjustment Programme was adopted by the regime following public rejection of the proposed IMF loan. The programme

was aimed at solving Nigeria's economic problem at its roots. The administration was of course aware that the positive results of SAP might be long in coming while the immediate effect would bring pains to the populace thus making the government somehow unpopular. But the regime realised that it was necessary to plan for Nigeria's long term future beyond the usual four to five year term after which the "buck is passed on". The situation called for courage to take on the established class who benefitted from the existing flaws in the economic structure e.g. import license and even some elements of the lower and middle class who had been accustomed to the usual government by patronage and subvention'.

Babangida's worst critics will find it difficult to accuse him of lack of courage to take decisions "Posterity will forgive us for taking wring decisions but will not forgive us if we fail to take decisions". SAP had not been very popular with the populace. The regime however sees it as central to our national economic and political recovery on the long run. It was prepared to be unpopular in order to bequeath an enduring foundation to the future generation of Nigerians.

The manner of implementation of certain aspects of SAP has been a source of concern. Some of the unavoidable extra budgetary expenses have tended to limit the gains of the programme. The long term nature of the measures taken are such that the positive effects cannot be that much visible as of now. But it will be hard to deny the fact that there is already evidence of a radical change in our consumption habits, an inculcation of maintenance culture, an acceptance of the idea of self employment, an increase in food production, the increase in local sourcing of raw materials, and of fundamental reorientation in the psyche of the Nigerian citizenry.

The domestic and international environment during the end of 80's was such that the only realistic approach to the problems of Nigeria was the adoption of SAP. The state of the Nigerian economy in 1985 was similar to those of many African and third world countries. Between 1985, Africa's economic performance recorded an average annual growth rate of GDP of only 0.4 percent capital income which was already low at the end of the 1970 had steadily declined by about

2.6%. Social services and welfare especially education, public health and sanitation rapidly deteriorated. This is why by 1988 about 30 Africa countries had to adopt structural Adjustment Programmes with the support of the IMF and the World Bank. Moreover the mid 80's coincided with the global resurgence of conservative economic and political philosophy and the final act of communism; a period dominated by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The slogan then was and still is less government in business. What this means is privatisation of many government economic establishments which as has been rightly argued, are best left to the business class. If the former Soviet Union can now be talking of practising a free market economy, the Babangida regime must have right in refusing to get involved with unsequential commercial ventures. It was correct to see its role as that of maintaining law and order and thereby create an enabling environment that would protect investment and encourage productive planning on a sustained basis.

One of the unavoidable consequences of SAP is the economic strain it brought on the middle and lower classes who had to pay higher rates and utility prices arising first from the liberalisation of foreign exchange which devalued the Naira, and secondly the commercialisation of some public parastatals. The government realised the human dimension and the need not to marginalize the greater majority of the population. Babangida was aware that weaker segments of our populace could perish under the yoke of the emergence of a free market regime hence the various ameliorative policies and programmes that they pursued. The President promised that deliberate efforts will be made to ensure that those reform measures that have been put in place to cushion the difficulties at both the urban and rural communities are fully implemented. It was this concern for the welfare of the masses that brought about the establishment of programmes such as the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructures DFFRI, People's Bank, Community Bank, National Directorate of Employment and Better Life. Details of the manner of operation and effects of these establishments which have now become established aspects of our national life will be found in the volumes of this project. They constitute what can be described as the "Human Face of SAP" and to a considerable extent

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an unconscious implementation of African alternative framework to structural adjustment programmes for socio-economic recovery and transformation as advocated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa ECA.

The manner and style of Foreign policy implementation is one area in which the Babangida regime distinguished itself from its predecessors. While still retaining the essentially Afrocentric focus there has been a clear emphasis on the need to relate foreign policy to the domestic economic situation. The adoption of Economic diplomacy as the policy thrust meant that issues related to trade and investment came into sharp focus. While still placing emphasis on block unity, efforts were made to strengthen economic links with Africa and the diaspora. The volume on foreign policy will show that foreign policy is one area in which it will be extremely difficult to contest Babangida's claim to success. His performance and achievement as ECOWAS and OAU Chairman, and elections into the top positions at both the Commonwealth and United Nations are among the visible proofs. The technical aid corp programme (TAC) Introduced by the regime has brought so much goodwill to Nigeria in the receiving countries. There is virtually no programme that has ever positively projected Nigeria among the ordinary people in foreign countries. The positive contribution of TAC to the economic and social life of the receiving countries has reinforced Nigeria's image as the mecca for all black people and a country which means for all the black people what Israel means to the Jews.

The elaborate political transition programme is predicated on the belief that the Nigerian situation as at August 1985 was directly attributable accountability. Democracy as practised by absence of politicians of the first and second republics could not be described as the government the people, for the people. The administration pledged itself to the establishment of a new political order in which not only the letter but also the spirit of the constitution would be adhered to. There was the realisation that for the dreams of SAP to be realised, a stable political order was a necessity, "Our strategy" said General Babangida "has been to pursue a co-ordinated and multi pronged approach to our developmental problems. On

economic problems also have their political under currents. You cannot solve one without the other".

In seeking to create the new political order, there was a clear obsession with getting the system rooted with the majority of Nigerians. Right from the establishment of the political bureau to the inauguration of the constituent assembly, the creation of new local governments and the elections held into the local governments, state and national assemblies, there was this apparent preference for power to be seen to be derived from the people. It was in reaction to the often repeated allegation that the essence of people's power was often lost in the irregularities that feature in the manner in which electoral votes were cast and counted, that the regime opted for the controversial open ballot system. It was also the desire, to ensure that there is no return to the ethnic politics of the past that the regime decreed the formation of two grass root based political parties after dissolving the 13 political associations formed because they were mere recreations of the first and second republics. With the two parties controlling an almost equal number of states and with neither of both parties having a two thirds majority at the national assembly. it is reasonable to expect that the politics of the third republic will be one of consensus and compromise since no side would be able to go it alone.

It is tempting to regard a publication of 7 years of IBB by the DAILY Times as a mere government propaganda. Such an attitude is understandable given the fact of the government's control of majority shares in the company. The editors and contributors of the present volume are aware of the fact that the sheer weight and volume of activities that took place within the past seven years are such that would normally attract observation and comments particularly after the regime might have handed over. This is not an attempt to whitewash the Babangida era.

What we have tried to do has been to present the facts and analyse them as rationally as possible. We believe that whatever criticisms one may have against the regime will have more to do with implementation than the formulation of policies.

It will be difficult to fault the objectives of SAP. It was the only rational option considering the state of Nigeria's economy in 1985. The fact that 30 African and third world countries are implementing structural adjustment policies attest to the inevitability of the programme given our circumstance. The human face of SAP were the ameliorative programmes such as DFFRI, Better Life, NDE. People's Bank, Community Bank. Like all other aspects of SAP the manner of operation of some of these projects could have been better if not for the inconsiderate ambition and greed on the part of some Nigerians. The reckless manner in which loans were dispensed at the People's Bank, the unsubstantiated claims of DFFRI, the general attitude that government money is there for the taking limited the success of the implementation of some of these otherwise well-conceived programmes.

The chapter on DFFRI, while emphasising the revolutionary nature of the concept in articulating a national programme of rural transformation acknowledged the fact that actual implementation of the programmes had been flawed on several fronts and plagued by several implementation failure. But this, does not rule out the fact that DFFRI, established 25,000 ton storage facilities in selected urban locations, facilitated the procurement and distribution of fertilisers, constructed hundreds of thousand of feeder roads, and executed water supply projects. Despite its shortcomings DFFRI brought some of the good things of life to some elements of the rural community. The same goes for the much criticised Better Lifer for Rural Women Programme. The proposal to get it incorporated within the ambit of the National Commission for Women has the potential of depersonalising the programme and detaching it from the families of state and national political leaders. Whatever might be its shortcomings, the programme has launched 7,635 cooperatives, 997 cottage industries, 1,751 new farms and gardens, 1187 new shops and markets, 419 women's centres and 163 social welfare programmes. Perhaps of more importance is its success in arousing the social and political consciousness of Nigeria's womenfolk. The award of the prize for the sustainable end of hunger to the first lady in August, 1991 accorded the programme the international recogni-

tion and justification that it deserves.

It is obvious that the downturn in the economy which is a world wide phenomenon has resulted in the decline of the quality of social services e.g health and education. Teaching hospitals despite some of them having been designated centres of excellence lack necessary equipments. Some Nigerians have since been in the habit of going abroad to receive medical treatment, Critics of the Babangida administration are inclined to emphasis only this aspect of health sector but will carefully ignore or refuse to mention the fact that the government has been quite successful in its primary health care programme which emphasises the provision of essential medical and health facilities to the community. The primary health care programme deals with diseases and ailments that afflict the majority of Nigerians who live in the rural communities. The teaching hospitals deal mainly with the diseases of the affluence. One is not attempting to justify or rationalise the decline in the quality of health care. What is being said is that the government had tired to focus more on the requirements on the wider populace within the limits of resources available.

The chapter on education makes it clear that the sector took some beating during the Babangida era. But as the editors and contributions of these volumes have pointed out, some the problems which the regime faced and which tended to ignite negative feelings were inherited. The politicisation of university education by which every State Governor wanted to be Visitor started during Shagari era. The Babangida regime regrettably did not arrest the trend. Even State governments that have Federal Universities located in their territories did not feel satisfied until they had their own. Then there came universities of technology and agriculture despite the existence of faculties of engineering and agriculture in the existing ones. Meanwhile the decline in the value of the Naira coupled with the army of competing demands made it difficult for the government to meet its obligation to the universities with regards to funding. Nigeria's best brains left their natural habitat (campuses) either for the private sector or "checked out" to other countries.

With the proliferation of merchant banks and the ease with which less educated Nigerians made money, the value and virtues in reading took a drive. It took a spirited and most constructive industrial action by Dr. Jegale Academic Staff Union of Universities to get the government agree to improve conditions of service of teachers and fund universities adequately.

The important thing is that by agreeing eventually to ASUU demands, the Babangida regime has laid a foundation for the survival of the country's university system. The drift from the country's universities to the other sectors is beginning to cease. As the opportunities for easy money begins to decline, the educated man is likely to get the appreciation that he deserves from the society. It may take some time before the impact of the agreement reached between ASUU and government is felt. This may perhaps be one of the positive effects of the Babangida administration that will take some time to manifest itself on the society.

The Babangida regime had its shortcomings. The situation in the mid 80's till now is such that no regime could do without. In confronting the situations that it met the regime exercised sound judgement particularly in the selection of personnel to face the challenges. With Olikoye Kuti in Health, Jubril Aminu in Education, Ajibola at the Justice Ministry, Kalu Idika Kalu in Finance, Babangida picked those who on paper seemed most qualified for the job. This is not to say that this attitude permeated every section of the public service. But with ministerial appointments Babangida seemed to have been a stickler for quality. As a systemsman, he left most of the implementation to his ministers who on some occasions even initiated policies. Some of the confusions that occurred in some national sectors such as the changing of school calendar, implementation of second tier and fuel distribution are more attributable to the ministers even though as President Babangida takes all the praises and blame.

It has not been an easy seven year period. The problem inherited were formidable. But equally formidable were the determination and resolve not only to overcome the problems but also to lay the

foundation for a greater tomorrow. The editors and contributors have attempted to present the problems and analyse efforts made to confront them. Whatever may be one's individual attitude to the personalities, it will be necessary to remember the magnitude of the problems which were largely inherited before one can be in a position to estimate the success of the efforts made to combat them. There is also the fact that because the regime chose to act with an eye for the distant future and plan for generations yet unborn, the effects of some of the measures it took are not yet discernible. The regime like all others before it will have to wait for the judgement of history.

Prof Ade Adefuye
Nigerian High Commission
London . 1993.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It was ambitious in conception. Seven Books on Seven Years of President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, each having seven chapters, looked like an impossible order, especially when then Managing Director Chief Tola Adeniyi also directed that it be completed within four months.

The idea of the books had occurred to Chief Adeniyi, in London, early in 1992. Before he returned from that trip, his first as "Sole Administrator" of the Daily Times of Nigeria PLC, he had discussed the idea extensively with Professor Ade Adefuye, Deputy Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. Extensive notes had been made, suggesting book subjects and chapters, as well as book editors and chapter writers. Professor Adefuye was, naturally appointed General Editor of the series. The first announcement of the project was made in the *Sunday Times* on March 1992.

I became involved in the project, when Chief Adeniyi, in a memo, asked me to take charge of the project. After discussions with our then Books Editor, Mr. Paul Akegware, it was agreed that we needed to mobilise more fully the considerable intellectual power that resides in our Editorial Department, if the task was to be accomplished. A committee that included the Editor, *Daily Times* and most members of the Editorial Board, as well as the Books Editor and the Editor Times Home Studies, was set-up.

Then followed, in consultation with the General Editor, a somewhat drastic revision of book chapters, to cover more areas of the Babangida Revolution, and of Editors and writers on the basis of interest and ability to deliver. Then commissioning and re-commissioning, when some who had accepted failed to deliver. The Managing Director's fascination with the figure 7 was to prove somewhat problematic. But the committee persisted, cajoling contributors and Editors to submit copies, and looking for, and persuading new contributors, on the many occasions we had cause to re-commission chapters.

Co-ordinating this project has been a most educative experience for me. For that, I want to thank Chief Tola Adeniyi, Chairman/Chief Executive of Daily Times of Nigeria PLC for the opportunity. I should also thank our General Editor, Professor Adefuye for his keen interest and advice at every stage of the project. My thanks too to our contrib-

utors, and especially our Editors who had to attend several meetings in Lagos in the process of producing this series. His Excellency General Yakubu Gowon, at our request, wrote the Foreword. I thank him.

But perhaps this project might have been as impossible as it looked at the beginning without the exemplary commitment of members of the committee. Their enthusiasm was touching. So I must thank specially: Gbenga Odusanya and Dayo Alao who oversaw the production of the books; G. G. Darah, Omar F. Ibrahim, Ayo Olukotun, who wrote, edited and constantly revised theirs, and other contributors' copies; Tunji Okegbola, our brilliant and indefatigable Librarian who not only compiled the compendium, but also the indexes of all the books; Mallam Kabir for the cover design, staff of the Times Books & Periodicals Department, for industry and the numerous other colleagues who offered advice, suggestions and sometimes, sympathy.

For all of us who have participated in this project, this has been, I believe, a worthwhile experience. Believing that a good deal of the truly revolutionary programmes of the Babangida administration were either misunderstood or under-appreciated, we had set out to record and analyse the achievements of this period, in an attempt to place them in their proper perspective. It is perhaps indicative of the enthusiasm which developed, that we ended up with eight Books — The Seven Books, plus a Compendium.

It should, however, be stressed here that this is not a government information project. Although government officials, like many other citizens, knew about what we were doing, no government official asked for, or read any part of the series before they were published. Fully conscious that the debate about Babangida's place in history will rage for many years after the man has gone, we made efforts to invite contributors to write on subjects about which they are knowledgeable. What the contributors and the Editors have written represent, I believe, their observations and objective assessment of a period in Nigerian history, about which no patriot can be indifferent. This is our contribution to the prospective debate. I am assured by the General Editor, that Editors and contributors are prepared to bear sole responsibility for all errors of fact and judgement in this publication.

Onyema Ugochukwu,

Chairman,

Co-ordinating Committee.

CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1

Cultural Heritage and National Self-Reliance	2
--	---

Chapter 2

Nigeria's Religious and Cultural destiny	20
--	----

Chapter 3

National Communication Policy: the Babangida era	44
--	----

Chapter 4

Literary and performing Arts	68
------------------------------------	----

Chapter 5

Visual Arts and Film	92
----------------------------	----

Chapter 6

IBB and the Media	104
-------------------------	-----

Chapter 7

Book Publishing under IBB	124
---------------------------------	-----

Index	139
-------------	-----

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

This volume attempts a broad survey of developments in the arts and culture during the seven years under review. These developments are examined in the context of institutional and policy changes that were made to facilitate the implementation of various programmes introduced as part of economic and political reforms. These reforms were formulated with the central objective of stimulating a more creative approach to national development. The economic ones sought to enhance the drive for self-reliance through more private initiative and disengagement of the state from the certain areas of economic activity. The political reforms were aimed at encouraging the emergence of a new value system capable of sustaining a durable democratic order envisaged for the Third Republic. These endeavours had profound implications for Nigeria cultural life.

As far as policy- formulation goes, the most significant instrument introduced was the launching in August 1988 of the **Cultural Policy for Nigeria**. It is a 20-page document which embodies the exploration of a cultural heritage to guide the development process. The **Policy** acknowledges the primacy of culture in this process by assigning to it the status of the science that guides the production and reproduction of life as individuals and groups interact with their environment. The holistic approach is evident in the definition of culture provided in the **Policy**, to wit:

the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours.

This section of the **Policy** lists four aspects of culture as material, institutional, philosophical and creative. The material aspect refers to things like tools, clothing, food, medicine, housing, etc. The institutions of culture include political, social, legal and economic structures erected to help achieve material and spiritual objectives; while the philosophical is concerned with ideas, beliefs, and values.

The creative aspects refer to literature, visual and performing arts. It is clear from this comprehensive definition that Nigeria's cultural heritage encompasses everything that takes place in the environment through the agency of human beings. The volume does not cover all the aspects, nor is that necessary. The themes dealt with relate to critical areas of ideology, communication, the arts and books. The themes are selected to illustrate the prospects and paradoxes of cultural change during the period. Except that by Dr. Yaro Gella, all the chapters were specifically commissioned for this volume.

The seven chapters fall into two broad areas. In the first three chapters attempt is made to situate the issues within the overall context of the Nigerian nation as a geo-cultural entity. The aim here is to offer a general background against which to evaluate the ethno-national attributes and world views that define the Nigerian society. The other four contributions focus on specific manifestations of culture and the arts in an environment of the reforms referred to earlier. It is hoped that by moving from the general to the specific, the reader will be able to discern the stable as well as variable elements that give meaning and identity to the Nigerian people.

In "Culture Heritage and National Self-Reliance" Dr Yaro Gella reiterates the thesis of primacy of culture embodied in the **Cultural Policy**. His Afrocentric thesis opens with invocation to ancient Egypt from which the rest of the world learned. Gella disagrees with those who misconstrue the focus on cultural roots to mean a return to the "primitive past." Leaning on Amilcar Cabral's seminal-essay on the subject, Gella argues strongly that it is culture that nurtures the national consciousness which, in turn, inspires people to conceive, design and produce the necessities of life. He recognizes the limits of the colonial education given to our elite which so mentally enfeebles them that they cannot be relied upon to be the vanguard of self-reliant development.

In the manner of dialecticians, Gella draws attention to the contradictory nature of culture and cautions us to recognize "the essential and the secondary elements, strengths and weaknesses, virtues and failings, the factors of progress and stagnation." In his view, we

"have to know all these aspects of culture so that through a careful process of selection and rejection we can arrive at the identification of those aspects of our past that are relevant to the contemporary needs of our society." This leads to the quest for what he calls national consciousness or "national spirit" because, in his own words, "it is not possible to build a nation without having a cultural consciousness..." In a sense government programmes such as the National Orientation Movement (NOM) were intended to achieve this resocialisation of the educated elite, but the project did not make much impact even at the propaganda level. Its companion project, MAMSER, concentrated too much on political issues and so could not meet the demands for cultural rejuvenation. Gella also advocates the development of a common national language as a vehicle for transmitting ideas and experiences. Without this common medium, national development is hard to attain.

Dr. C.S. Momoh's "Nigeria's Religious and Cultural Destiny" is a bold attempt to grapple with the perplexities and dilemmas often encountered in the discussion of ethnicity, religion and national question. The twin issues of ethnicity and religion have had profound effect on the formulation and reformulation of policies and institutions for the Nigerian federation. Neither of the two issues is new, nor indeed, peculiar to Nigeria. The fact of the ethno-linguistic and religious pluralism of the country has long been recognised by politicians and scholars alike. As Professor Onigu Otite has pointed out, in his *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria* (1990) it is the manipulation of the factor of ethnic pluralism rather than the number that constitutes a threat to the unity of the country.

Like Gella, Momoh argues that the cultural diversity of Nigeria is indeed its source of strength. He summons ethnographic and anthropological evidence to support this. But by claiming that all the cultures of the country had their ancestry in the region of the Niger-Benue confluence, Momoh does raise a controversy that will take quite a while to settle.

His views on religion is no less contentious. The thrust of the chapter is on tolerance and harmony. He asserts that these are the essential

tenets of all religions. Although he gives only scant attention to the religion-based crisis in the past seven years, his case for an attitude of mutual tolerance is persuasively made and copiously demonstrated. There is some passionate partisanship in Momoh's assessment of the relevance of the National Association for Religious and Ethnic Tolerance (NARETO) which he helped to found. But there is no doubt that organisations like this which are independent of government have great potential in promoting rationality in inter-religious discourse and relations.

The crisis of intolerance and ethical parochialism treated by Momoh arises partly because of the inadequacy of the media through which Nigerians transact their relations. Dr. Adefemi Sonaike's "National Communication Policy: the Babangida Era" is an original and perceptive analysis of the policy instruments introduced to, in his own words, "decolonise" and "democratise" communication practice. There is a review of two crucial seminars that laid the background for the National Communication Policy.

Sonaike's academic and professional facilities are brought into full play in the critique of eight decrees promulgated from 1987 to 1992. Both the number and amplitude of these legislations give concrete proof of the administration's commitment to the building of a strong foundation for the development of communication in all its ramifications. Sonaike also examines the dialectical links between the laws and the fundamental principles of democracy and social justice enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution. The reader will find good material to mine especially in the comments on the Media Council Decree.

Even more rewarding is Sonaike's recognition of the pivotal role played by former Information and Culture Minister, Prince Tony Momoh, in the enactment of the progressive and liberal legislation. As Sonaike observes, the Communication Policy is still evolving. The National Broadcasting Decree of 1992 permits private ownership of the electronic media. Already Nigeria has the freest press in Africa. When the full impact of the private electronic media begins to show, historians will remember Babangida and his team of information and communication ministers.

Darah's "Literary and Performing Arts" is an ambitious attempt to survey developments in the verbal arts, drama and music. The chapter opens with a recap of the situation of the arts in 1985, a period dominated by the spirit of radical criticism of the failure of governments to deal satisfactorily with pressing issues of development. This retrospective review brings into full relief the issue of how the optimism and ebullience of the 1970s turned into anomie and anger by the end of the 1980s. Darah relates the fate of the arts to developments in political economy because the latter provided the *backcloth* against which to measure intellectual and artistic changes.

In 1984, the Buhari government attempted to deal with economic saboteurs by ordering a change in the national currency. The exercise turned to be extreme hardship for ordinary folks who are structurally disabled from corrupt deals. Two Urhobo poet-musicians, Sir Juju and Udjabo of Aladja, produced a song to lament the harsh experience of the masses. The title was IKORIKO, meaning "crisis and confusion". This theme prefigured much of what happened to the arts in general in the seven years under review. The chapter highlights the areas of crisis, pointing out the difficulties encountered by creators and patrons of the arts. Literary historians will find useful material in the number and titles of literary works mentioned in Darah's survey.

The sections dealing with drama and music are not as fulsomely documented as that on the heritage of letters. The national spread of information is rather limited. The coverage of musical culture is even more so. Indeed, there ought to have been a separate chapter on music because music-related behaviour is the most developed aspect of Nigerian culture. One fascinating feature of the period is the increased popularisation and secularisation of the musical medium by religious organisations to spread their message, a tendency that underscores the link between culture, ideology and business.

The emphasis on business is also very manifest in "The Visual Arts and Film" by Toyin Akinosho and Dayo Komolafe. The chapter is a synthesis of two contributed independently on the topic. I found it necessary to exercise editorial liberty of joining them into one

because this was the most convenient way of benefiting from the two. The first part of the chapter examines the phenomenon of commercialised art, a kind of a "cash and carry" syndrome which dominated the visual art scene in the seven years. Dele Jegede who is current President of the Nigerian Society of Artists described the tendency as a mercenary syndrome. The chapter also looks at the rise in the number of display galleries, especially in Lagos. The establishment of private art galleries and the multitudes that visited exhibitions are indices of a growing awareness about the fine and creative arts. But these developments carry with them the seeds of decline in aesthetic taste and quality. Here, indeed, is a paradox. In the seven years, the great tradition of Nigerian art came into fruition. Ben Enwonwu marked his 70th birthday and nearly 50 years of creativity. Bruce Onobrakpeya, Irein Wangboje and Uche Okeke and others of the famous Zaria School reached the peak of creative excellence. Behind them, there seems to be emerging a tradition which is inspired more by material gains than by genius and commitment to professionalism.

The development of the cinema encountered great difficulties owing to technical problem as well as the heavy financial demands occasioned by economic reforms. The endeavours of independent film makers is acknowledged as well as the attempts to revitalise the Nigerian Film Corporation. The hopeful signs indicated by the establishment of a colour laboratory in Jos are complemented by the first national film festival held in December, 1992.

Dayo Alao's "IBB and the Media" is an attempt to problematise the personality and style of President Babangida. Alao takes the reader through a maze of information and dramatic events which defined the perceptions of the media. The contrast between the stern-faced duo of Buhari and Idiagbon with Babangida's warm and affable appearance is one major issue examined by Alao. Babangida's dexterous moves to woo the press are highlighted, so are the ways the press expressed support for various programmes of the government. But the relationship got soured rather too frequently by acts of omission and commission by state functionaries and other operatives. Considerable space is devoted to the negative imaging of

Babangida and Nigeria in the foreign press. Alao's experience as an editor of an international weekly comes in handy here. He is able to expose the traditional Western bias against Third World leaders. In the end Alao is able to say that notwithstanding "the strained relations and unpleasant encounters.... Babangida enjoyed a fairly good media coverage. His personality, ability to surprise as well as his capacity to generate controversy made Babangida's administration the biggest media event in Africa, except perhaps South Africa."

Dupe Adeogun's survey of the publishing scene reiterates some of the points made in previous chapters concerning the crisis of ideological and technical limitations. The kernel of her analysis is that central "to the intellectual development of any country is the publishing process through which information is disseminated in a formal manner for public consumption". The essay goes on to examine incentives provided by government to bring vitality to an industry that was, in Adeogun's words, close to a state of paralysis by 1985. Particularly significant is the enactment of new copyright legislation by Decree 48: Adeogun also pays tribute to the endeavours of professional bodies such as the Nigeria Publishers' Association for promoting the book business.

Emphasis is laid on the problems faced by writers and publishers. Among these are those of inadequate finance and undercapitalisation, dependence on imported input for virtually every area of publishing, and low technical skills. Others are poor marketing strategy compounded by underdeveloped communication infrastructure. Taking all these factors into consideration, Adeogun ends on a note of cautious optimism that "the book situation has only marginally improved in the last few years."

Dynamism and stress were the two most dominant forces that animated our cultural life in the seven years. The policies of self-reliance embodied in the structural adjustment programme inadvertently intensified the material distress of the bulk of the population. But this contradiction engendered new forms of creativity and resourcefulness that expanded the frontiers of our culture. While we may lament the general decline in morals and ethics, we can celebrate

the emergence of young entrepreneurs in virtually every sphere of economic activity. The seven years witnessed a boom in small-scale enterprises such as fashion designing and dress-making, barbing and cosmetology salons and a host of other one-person businesses. Great strides were made in crafts and other folk industries such as furniture making, photography, printing, newspaper and magazines publishing as well as interior decoration. In games and other areas of athletic culture, Nigeria became established as a leader of Africa and the world. All these changes were made possible because of a new spirit of daring and industry that came to define the Babangida years. The full impact of these developments will begin to show in the country's life in the next decade.

*Dr. G.G. Darah, Lagos,
1992.*

Chapter I

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND NATIONAL SELF-RELIANCE

By

Dr. Yaro Gella

The universal value of African Culture is no longer a contestable fact, for history has amply revealed that it was the African man whose hands placed the foundations of the world civilization. From the valleys of Nile to the Niger, from Merse to Nwene Mutapa, from the Chad Basin to the Savannah belts of Hausaland, from Ife, Owo, Benin, Nok, Tada, Igboland etc. issued great civilizations that are the pride of the Blackman the world over. The cultures that gave birth to these epic civilizations had emerged in and had constantly been influenced by adverse environmental conditions, from deserts to equatorial forests, from coastal marshes to the banks of great rivers subject to frequent floodings. But as Basil Davidson and other researchers into African history and cultures have observed, the accomplishments of the African genius in economic, political and socio-cultural domains are epic in dimension and comparable to the major historical examples of the greatness of man elsewhere in the world. However, it seems this is now history, for Africa which had been once a major source of inspiration for other cultures of the world now faces the bleak prospect of taking the first position from the rear in the scheme of today's international system. The reasons for this are now common knowledge and as such no longer constitute an important subject of debate.

Students of Ibn Khaldun's theory of history, which emphasizes the cyclical nature of human development in which nations emerge, develop, reach their heights and then decline, may take solace in the fate of African nations. Such students would then argue that since Africa had immensely contributed to what the world now boasts of as modern civilization, we should now look at our past with understandable pride. It is further pointed out that as a consequence of this reality, the cultures that gave birth to this civilization should also serve as stimulus to those who struggle for the emancipation and progress of the Blackman.

Nigeria, as the greatest and largest Black nation in the world, has the singular responsibility placed on it, by circumstances of history, both now and in the past, to champion this struggle. But to discharge this onerous responsibility, Nigeria has to develop to such a level that its place among the comity of nations is assured and respected. This calls for a respectable identity through the harnessing of its material and human resources that will guarantee a stable polity and a viable economy that would ensure its survival as a nation in a rapidly changing and highly competitive world.

The launching pad for this development should, of necessity, be the development of a strong nation. It is clear that the choice of this topic for discussion arose from a strong belief that a recourse to the cultural heritage as source of inspiration is an imperative for any developing nation that aspires to chart a genuine path of progress. That is what it should be. But that has not been the case with most African countries, including Nigeria.

Observers of the cultural sector have watched, with utter helplessness, how our rich cultural heritage has been relegated to a point of inferiority and how pitifully our youths have been encouraged, and sometimes pushed, to acquire ill-digested foreign culture. This, we are made to understand, is in line with the desire for modernization and the attendant quest for technological development which is said to be the single most important index of modernisation in the current international system. The cultural dimension of national planning seems to have either been ignored or at best allocated a subordinate role and place. As a former Minister of Culture has rightly observed, the absence of culturally relevant planning, and following directly from this the subservient role to which culture has been relegated in the considered priorities of national planning in the past "created ugliness both to the physical and psychological existence of our citizens" on the one hand and on the other, seriously impaired "the potential for political unification and social stabilization of this country".

It is a fact that culture has not been accorded a significant place in the national planning strategy of this country. That self-reliance, self-

sufficiency and national identity as the core areas of our national development objectives hinge on the recognition of culture as the spring board of policies had hardly dawned on our policy makers in the past. This arose either from an improper grasp of the significance and centrality of culture as the basis of national planning and policy implementation or from a wrong notion of what culture is, for people often fail to distinguish between the real essence of culture and its form. Whenever, culture is mentioned, people usually associate it with music, dance, festival, fetishes, clothes, initiations, etc. These are the expressive forms of culture. The 'material' components of culture, such as ideas, techniques and technologies as well as the chores and mores of doing things, the values and value system, etc, which are the essence of culture, are easily ignored.

The neglect also arises from the misconception that culture is 'tradition' and tradition is "ancient" as opposed to modern and therefore irrelevant to the needs of modern Nigerian. It is partly to correct these misconceptions of what culture is and partly because of the realization of the significant role culture plays in human development that UNESCO has declared the period 1988 - 1997 as the decade for cultural development. The essence of UNESCO's cultural reorientation is to draw attention to the necessity to search for solutions to various national issues by looking inwards to the indigenous cultures and traditions of the various peoples of the world. It is gratifying to note that Nigeria has fully embraced this call and launched its **cultural policy for Nigeria** in 1988. It is a very comprehensive document defining its scope, goals and forms of implementation as well as the means through which the policy can be realised. But the document has as yet to receive the necessary and utmost attention that it deserves by way of putting its declarations into actual practice. That is why we draw attention to the document so that policy-makers as well as policy implementers would liberate the document from the shelves where it is held hostage and join the crusade for cultural reorientation. We shall therefore emphasize the need to comprehend the concept "culture" because you only appreciate and attach value to something that you understand.

COMPREHENDING THE CONCEPT "CULTURE"

Implicit in the topic under consideration are several assumptions, the two most important for our purpose being:

- (1) that Nigeria is a nation; and
- (2) that the nation is made up of a multiplicity of cultures in which the source of strength for the nation can be located.

The issue of whether Nigeria is a nation or not is no longer a subject of debate. Gone are the days when professors of political science used our cultural pluralism to support a thesis of the inevitable instability in the post-colonial states of Africa which explained its failure to "catch up" with the West. That Nigeria as a country made up of "tribes" with different cultures, beliefs and values does not provide sufficient basis to distinguish it from the United States of America, Britain or Australia. One of the great and most powerful nations in the world today, the United States of America is made up of not only tribes but also of most of the races on earth. There are therefore more fundamental factors of meaning to a national feeling. One of such important factors in history. Our historical experience in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods have served to bring together the people of this country in the unitary state of Nigeria. Whatever, therefore, the definition of a nation may be, far from that of a state, the objective reality of our situation in Nigeria today is that we are a nation, but a multiplicity of cultures.

The concept of culture is one that is and has easily been misapplied. And if we must appreciate the full implications of an important and yet elusive concept, it is important for us to go beyond the superficial meaning that is often attached to the concept. For unless we can go beyond the superficial and get to the level of the applicability of the concept, our discussion is bound to be in the promotion of the nation's cultural feelings.

The general and most popular definition of culture is that it is the way of life of a given society or people. Others regard culture as the natural inheritance of man consisting of the natural things around him and what he has made of it in terms of tangible objects which are expressions of man's ideas, his arts and sciences and philosophy of life. A more dynamic definition which brings out motion and dynamism in culture is the one contained in **The Cultural Policy for Nigeria**. It describes culture as

"the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours."²

The document goes on to elaborate the content and characteristics of culture as comprising

"material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects. The material aspects have to do with artefacts in its broadest form (namely, tools, clothing, food, medicine, utensils, housing, etc); the institutional deals with the political, social, legal and economic structure erected to help achieve material and spiritual objectives, while the philosophical is concerned with ideas, beliefs and values; the creative concerns people's literature (oral or written) as well as their visual and performing arts which are normally moulded by, as well as help to mould other aspects of culture".³

Culture, as the policy further emphasizes, embodies the attitudes of a people to the future of the traditional values faced with the demands of modern technology which is an essential factor of development and progress. Culture in essence is the expression of people's national consciousness, and national aspirations. It is this consciousness which culture engenders in a people, not the forms cultural expressions take, although these too are relevant, that lies at

the root of a proud and self-reliant nation. When we therefore talk of self-reliance, self-sufficiency and national identity as the core of our national development objective, we are emphasizing the role of culture "as the fountain spring of all policies whether educational, social, political or economic".⁴

Culture is the life of a society, the more or less conscious result of the economic and political activities of that society, the more or less dynamic expression of the kinds of relationships which prevail in that society on the one hand between man (individually or collectively) and nature, and on the other, among individuals, groups, social strata or classes. It is the vigorous manifestation on ideological plane of the physical and historical reality of the society. Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationship between man and his environment, among man within a society, and among different societies over time.⁵ Culture the fruit of history reflects, at every moment, the material and spiritual reality of society of man- the-social being.

CULTURE, PROGRESS OR RETROGRESSION

The question of whether a return to source constitutes progress must actually be one of informed choice. This choice is left for the policy makers and those who influence the policy making process. It is, however, clear that there is a strong, dependent and reciprocal relationship existing between the cultural situation and the economic and political situation in the behaviour of human societies. Ignorance of this fact may partly explain our inability to find answers to the problems of economic self-reliance, the development of a national identity and the emergence of a truly Nigerian political system that protects and guarantees the right of the individual and provides the ideal environment for the expression of ones capacity in the process of fulfilling aspirations. Our current search for a viable political system and a virile economic alternative may continue to elude us unless it is concretely located in our historical environment.

Where do we begin? It is obvious that our starting point is the liberation of the historical process, for our inferiority complex derives fundamentally from the indirect liquidation of the essential elements of our culture and history during the colonial and post-colonial periods. We have to reclaim the right usurped by imperialism, by liberating the process of development of national productive forces. It is to be noted that national liberation takes place when and only when national productive forces are completely liberated from external domination thereby returning to that particular society all its capacity to create progress⁶. We can realize this only through a conscious re-evaluation of the concept of our society and knowledge of ourselves through the study of our history and culture. For while history allows us to know the nature and extent of the imbalances and conflicts (economic, political and social) which characterize the evolution of Nigerian societies, culture allows us to know the dynamic syntheses which have been developed and established to resolve these conflicts at every stage of its evolution in the search for survival and progress. Culture is thus comprised of essential and secondary elements, of strengths and weaknesses, of virtues and failings, of factors of progress and of factors of stagnation and regression. We have to know all these aspects of culture so that through a careful process of selection and rejection we can arrive at the identification of those aspects of our past that are relevant to the contemporary needs of our society. This calls for re-thinking about the purpose and contents of our educational system and the urgent need for re-education at all levels of our society.

It is really sad that three decades after independence our educational system has continued to have no clear direction and it is detached from our historical environment. It is, therefore, important that the contents of our education is re-ordered so as to emphasize the value of Nigerian culture within the framework of African and universal civilization so as to bring out what contributions our heritage has made and can make to the rapid development of the country. A recourse to our past is thus inevitable.

I am not oblivious of the instant condemnation the call of return to our past elicits from some intellectuals who regard it as retrogression. They would suggest that instead of going back, we should aspire to "catch up" with the developed and modern world. One cannot fault their desire to "catch up" with modern societies. However, their prognosis for the catching up is usually the race to acquire new skills and techniques through technological "transfer". One can say that technology has its basis in the culture of a people; for any transfer to succeed it must have the necessary conditions firmly embedded in the environment of the recipient. In fact, technology transfer, as presently pursued, is a euphemism for technology dependence. It is simply a method through which the centres of world capitalist system extract surplus from and influence major economic policies in underdeveloped countries. What happens under the guise of technology transfer is the dumping of obsolete equipment in third world countries like Nigeria. What is transferred in the end is the economic resources of the developing countries to the developed, and the cycle of under-development continues unabated.

It is important also that we make a distinction between technology and civilization. While civilization is subjective and can be located in and confined to a specific society and environment, science and technology are universal and common heritage since they are products of collective endeavours of mankind. It can be appropriated by a particular society at a given time in space but this does not remove the fact of its being a common heritage arising from different but collective efforts of mankind in its quest for self-actualization and development. It is due to this failure to make this primary distinction between Western culture and value systems that we create institutions and copy value systems which draw their inspirations from Europe and America. But because we have an objective past which has nurtured our society through the ages, the grafting of these alien value systems on ours in the name of "catching up" with the West has only served to create a dualism which Frantz Fanon aptly describes as an obscene caricature.⁷

Foreign cultures and values systems are things that are not easily copied. There are some that can be grafted but remain foreign none-

theless. There have been cases in history where cultures and value systems had been forced on a society but what emerged was not original culture. Therefore, for those of our leaders who insist that we have to copy Western values, Fanon has an apt advice:

"then let us leave the destiny of our countries to the Europeans. They will know how to do it better than the most gifted of us"⁸

This then leaves us with the issue of whether we can find solutions to our current problems of national unity, under-development and economic recession by going back to our past, a common heritage which can serve as a point of reference for a common identity. The issue of what past, or whose past or even whether we can locate in our past a source of inspiration that can propel us into the twenty first century has engaged the minds of many Nigerians. These are valid observations and doubts for which answers can be found.

Let us examine the question of the need to look onto our past, to return to source. Contrary to whatever cynics may say against this suggestion, it is clear that for any meaningful development, Nigeria must look inwards to the roots of its society. It should be noted that the call to search for our strength in our cultural heritage does not in any way suggest that all of our past was golden.

But it is important that we emphasize our past cultural heritage because we have a moral obligation and responsibility to allow our children to make their choices. The system of education that operates in Nigeria today does not allow for a conscious attempt to locate the present in the past. On the contrary the emphasis is on instilling in the minds of the children the aspiration to be anything but Nigerian, to aspire to be Americans, Canadian, British, etc. The children are being socialised to believe that what is white and foreign is superior. Our call to return to our past is predicated upon the premise that for a nation to have national strength it has to develop a consciousness which we would want to refer to as National Spirit."

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For purposes of clarity it is important that we make a clear distinction between consciousness of the past and historical consciousness. Every person has a consciousness of history in that he knows his pedigree, the events that manifested during that person's life, etc. But historical consciousness is more than just awareness of important landmarks in the life of a nation.

Historical consciousness goes beyond cognitive sphere; it is the conception of one's position in the sequence of existence. It is about a critical evaluation and understanding of the relations that were entered into between man and man in the process of development over time. It is a consciousness about one's identity historically determined. Historical consciousness is a process of transcendence informed by a clear vision of love and understanding of the past, as well as pride in what you are, who you are and what you can be derived from a conscious knowledge of the past. Historical consciousness is an objective process which means that it is not optional to any society that wants to survive with a clear identity of its own. However, it is not always that the consciousness held by a people is a reflection of the objective relation with their objective existence. The colonialists understood this very well, hence their attack on the very basis of history, language, the belief system, technology and the implantation in the minds of our people of a false consciousness. We emphasize the significance of historical consciousness because of our conviction that it is not possible to build a nation without having a cultural consciousness which derives from collective experience. It is the collective experiences that have sustained Nigeria, and it is by using the same collective experience that we must continue to nurture it to greatness. However, such history should be an organized critical study of past activities that had significant impact on subsequent developments. It should involve critical interpretation of our past experience in the light of what is happening in the historical present. For what gives history its expression is the people's culture. There is therefore, a necessary linkage between history and culture and the development of national consciousness.

WHAT CULTURE, WHOSE CULTURE?

Since we have emphasized the value of Nigerian cultures as important sources of inspiration for national development, what aspects of the cultures do we use and which of the over four hundred cultural groups should serve as a model? Our cultural multiplicity, rather than being an impediment, should be regarded as a great asset to the nation. For it means that we have access to over four hundred sources from which to draw valuable material for use by our planners to tackle contemporary problems of survival and national development.

This, however, calls for a systematic survey and study of the different cultural groups in the country so as to have a deeper understanding of the systems that sustained them. Such studies should focus on the political institutions, the economy, the values and value systems, technological skills, architecture, medicine, etc.. In the political sphere such issues as the concept of power, and attitudes towards authority, the exercise of power, the responsibility of a ruler to his people, the sanctions that regulate the relation between the ruler and his subjects; the issues of political legitimacy and conflict resolution, etc., should be examined. The chieftaincy institution has continued to enjoy respect, popularity and support among the masses just as the traditional judicial process, emphasizing equity and reconciliation as against antagonism of the right and wrong and its "winner-takes-all" approach of the imported legal system, is a pointer to the potential appropriateness of our indigenous institutions in the solving of developmental problems.

It is a common fact that while traditional values derived from historical, cultural and religious experiences of the people have remained wide-spread and potent, they have not been harnessed for the date-to-day operations of our political life. As a leading Nigerian historian has observed, "often there was no correlation between the norms of traditional values in relation to the concept of authority, exercise of power, basis of inter-personal relations, sense of justice,

and the assumptions underlying the constitution and the operation of our political institutions.⁹

How best the traditional values of the various cultures can be integrated into our political culture to deal with the acquired political behaviour which permits those in power to behave without due regard to propriety, is a matter for our historians and policy makers to handle. One must concede that it is difficult to study and capture inner meanings of such abstract concepts as 'values' 'attitudes', 'sentiments', 'beliefs' and translate them into concrete historical terms. But this task is an imperative which Nigerian historians and other social scientists must tackle.

In the economic sphere, the need to reverse the emphasis being laid on import substitution as strategy for national economic self-reliance is apparent. It has become clear that for us to achieve real economic growth our economic policy must both be culturally anchored and sourced. This is because our need (not desires) are located in what we have and what we can harness and produce. Many projects have failed to properly take off because of our inability to relate them to our peculiar situation or invest in our capacities. We need to study the economies that sustained the political and social institutions such as the Yoruba kingdoms, Hausa, Igbo and riverine states in the pre-colonial period. Such a study will enable us to harmonize the industry of today's Igbo with the commercial skills of the Yoruba and the Hausa which have roots in their cultural experience.

Industrial development is culture-based, and it is only through the study of indigenous skills and inventions which will then be developed to a higher and more sophisticated levels, that we can achieve industrialization. It is obvious that it was the application of these indigenous skills and the inventiveness of the people that produced the huge surpluses that sustained the complex political and social structures that emerged all over the Nigeria area. Today we pride ourselves about what we know of the material culture of the now world famous Nok civilization represented by the Terra-cotta arts, the ancient arts of Ile-Ife, Igbo Ukwu and Benin bronzes, as well as the huge walls and architectural traditions of Borno and Hausaland.

It is these skills and techniques that have to be revitalized by updating them to serve our contemporary needs. The cultural policy for Nigeria in defining its objective emphasizes the specific need to: promote creativity in the field of arts and science and technology, ensure continuity of traditional skills and sports and their progressive up-dating to serve modern development needs as our contribution to world growth of culture and ideas.¹¹

We have a lot to gain from the experiences of the Chinese in the area of developing indigenous skills and technology as stimulus for industrial take-off. Instead of insisting on having a complete "development package" delivered to us, our leaders should support the drive to improve on and develop the skills which history has handed down to us but which have been abandoned. Much could be done to identify and document local inventions. Some of these that exhibit potentials for industrial use should then be enriched and refined by new knowledge acquired through contact with others to cater for the specific needs of the society.

One of the most laudable achievements of this administration is the seriousness with which it has pursued the programme of the National Directorate for Employment (NDE). Whatever the original intentions of the programme the un-intended outcome is the encouragement of creativity and development of new skills. This programme should not only be further supported by providing the needed resources but it should be backed up by serious scientific study of our indigenous technological achievements with a view to reviving and using them for our needs.

One of the most serious problems facing Nigeria as a nation today, and one that has served to tarnish our image abroad, is the indiscipline in every sphere of our national life. This has been recognized by our leaders and institutions have been set up to deal with the problem. These institutions included the Ethical Reorientation of the Shagari era, the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of the Buhari regime and the current MAMSER Crusade. But while the Ethical reorientation was a mere political slogan, WAI attempted to transpose military

discipline into civilian life, MAMSER which is supposed to address wider political, economic and social issues of our time chose to concentrate its efforts on the political and in the end became no more than a propaganda organ of government.

MAMSER like the other institutions set up to address the problem of societal indiscipline, has not achieved much because it used the same concepts, tools and personnel that are at the root of the problem they were set out to solve. Our traditional societies have in their various cultures in-built mechanisms for inculcating moral discipline and imposing sanctions against misconduct and social deviance. These should be exploited.

The sense of communalism which is at the roots of national consciousness is a common characteristic of the various cultures of Nigeria. The various culture groups have developed age-long bonds which now serve as unifying force and a key to understanding our cultural homogeneity. These traits that bind the various communities together should be identified and utilized to serve as a unifying force for Nigerian national culture.

For all these measures to achieve meaningful results there must exist a medium by which they can be realized. This medium is language. One obvious need of Nigeria and which is, perhaps, the most important instrument for the development of a common identity is the issue of a national language for the country. As was indicated earlier in the paper, language is the soul of national consciousness, and Nigeria has to adopt a common language. Whichever language is chosen must possess potentials to accommodate scientific, industrial and economic concepts. For as it has been observed elsewhere, "the language of economic development, of transformation of nature, of the re-organization of social activity, is basically innovative and cultural...."¹²

One could go on and on. But we have to stop somewhere. We would want to stop by quoting the speech of a merit Award Winner which summarizes the potentialities inherent in our culture that could be utilized to achieve the status of self-reliant and proud nation. According to T.A. Lambo

Our society is laden with many unresolved contradictions and conflicts and yet in spite of this it (Nigeria) has inner resilience, cohesion power and strength which, fortunately, hold it together and give it a meaning - a society with *hidden force and power yet unleashed*" (emphasis mine). ¹²

Let us exploit these hidden forces and power located in our culture to achieve national development.

ENDNOTES

1. Navy Commodore Lamba Gwom: Speech at Formal Handing Over of the Culture and Social Welfare Minister to Prof. Sam Oyovbaire, Minister of Information and Culture, 28th January, 1992.
2. **Cultural Policy for Nigeria**, Federal Government Printer, Lagos, 1988, P.1.
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. This argument is brought out strongly in Amilcar Cabral's Speech, "National Liberation and Culture" in **Return to the Source** Monthly Review Press, New York, London, 1973.
7. Frantz Fanon, **Black Skin, White Mask**, Paladin p. 154.
8. Ibid
9. J.F. Ade Ajayi, Nigeria's Evolutionary Political Culture, Issues and Processes" in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Bashir Ikara (eds.) **Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria** University Press Limited and Kaduna Council for Arts and Culture, 1985. p. 7.
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11. Sule Bello, "National Economy And The New National Cultural Policy for Nigeria: Towards Cultivating A Culture of Development", in Sule Bello and Y. Nasidi (eds.) **Culture, Economy and National Development**, NCAC, 1991, p. 13.
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Chapter 2

NIGERIA'S RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DESTINY

By
Dr. C.S. Momoh,

"The contemporary reality in Nigeria today is that we are a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. The nation is a coat of many colours but it is one coat"

-President I. B. Babangida

The title of this chapter has been deliberately captioned to make allowance for what is a fact; that is that President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida in his 7-year reign (1985-1992) worked assiduously, by his pronouncements, actions and policies, to help shape Nigeria's religious, ethnic and cultural destiny. That destiny is one of tolerance, peaceful co-existence, vitality, understanding and harmony.

The chapter is in four parts. The first part gives a general introduction about the philosophical basis of Babangida's administrative style. This is followed by an analysis of the objectives of the National Association for Religious and Ethnic Tolerance (NARETO) as an institutional example of how to achieve national cohesion. The roots of Nigeria's cultural unity are examined in the third section while Babangida's views on the subject are summarised in the conclusion.

There is something unique and spectacular about IBB's administration. President Babangida managed to stamp his own personality and character on his administration. He is a good judge of human character and predilection, President Babangida adjusts to people, issues and situations instead of, as is usual with leaders and rulers, expecting people to adjust to him. Consequently he runs his administration with a human face and humane and considerate disposition.

Babangida did not only run a system, he managed and cared for people. He seemed to love people and to have immense concern for men. In this wise, President Babangida successfully transcended two questions in management, administration and governance.

These two questions are the systematic question and the humanist question in management or administration.

A boss who subscribes to the systematic school of thought believes primarily that he is in charge to run the system and the human beings who are in that system should get that fact straight into their skulls and behave accordingly.

The systemic boss is not concerned with the spirit of the system but the letter, and he sometimes even emphasises the letter too strongly and skews it too blatantly to deal with those who speak out to assert their rights within the system. The systemic boss sees the system as a machine, a robot that is programmed to work perfectly, tirelessly and mechanically.

To achieve that, however, machines and robots equally need perfect oiling and maintenance but the systemic boss often forgets that in a human setting it is the people, the workers, the staff who are the oil and grease of the system. Under the systemic boss, the system develops cracks and crevices sooner than later; degeneration, breakdown and incapacitation are accelerated and before you know it, things grind to a halt.

On the other hand, a boss who subscribes to the humanist school of thought in administration and management believes primarily that he is in charge to cater to human beings, their welfare and sometimes their whims and caprices.

The humanist boss is more concerned with the spirit. But the humanist boss sometimes forgets that human beings can take undue advantage and abuse and mess up the system. While the systemic boss may be feared by his subordinates, the humanist boss is often respected but it is a pyrrhic respect which is often insufficient to ensure optimum performance and salvage the system in critical times.

What is now the IBB style and what may turn out to be the IBB Legacy is the amazing synthesis of both the systemic and the humanist dimensions in management, administration, rulership and governance. This synthesis has resulted in a holistic approach or dimension to rulership or governance.

The boss who subscribes to the holist school of thought in administration believes primarily that a ruler must show concern for both the system and the human beings because the system is supposed to protect and mediate their conflicting interests and sometimes reconsider these conflicting interests with those of the nation. Unlike the systemic boss, the holist boss does not believe that there is anything sacrosanct, permanent, unchanging or immutable in a policy. To believe that a policy is immutable is to believe that those who formulated the policy possess a monopoly of timeless wisdom exhibited in a socio-cultural milieu which is equally timeless.

Unlike the systemic ruler, the holist ruler is open; he does not believe that he is running a government where the system, the bureaucracy, must remain the author, the absolute initiator of anything that must receive government backing, support and endorsement.

President Babangida, as pointed out earlier, made creditable attempts to shape the religious and cultural destiny of Nigeria. As will be evident from the fourth part of this chapter, President Babangida in fact has his own views on religious and ethnic tolerance which he enunciated on occasions of goodwill messages during religious

festivals, laying the foundation stones or opening religious places of worship and centres and, above all, the addresses or papers which he read at NARETO seminars. On the 28th of July, 1992, President Babangida announced the immediate establishment of - the Centre for the Propagation of Religious and Ethnic Tolerance (CENPRENTO). That, to my mind, is the ultimate any president can do to carve his name, tenure and incumbency on the Nigerian Gold of Tolerance.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NARETISM

In what follows, I give a background to the programme of the National Association for Religious and Ethnic Tolerance (NARETO). That Naretism is now a philosophy is a testimony to the volume and quality of work which the association has done since its inception in 1987. The Association has organised yearly seminars since 1987. It has published four volumes under the general title of. Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance.

Ever since we went public in 1987, President Babangida had been actively involved in our activities. He started by giving NARETO moral support. When the President saw that NARETO meant well and is very clear-headed about its aims and objectives, he often responded positively to our applications for financial funding to hold our annual seminars. On top of all that, President Babangida funded the publication of the four volumes of the Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance.

Above all, President Babangida right from day one, participated in NARETO seminars by declaring them open and reading addresses. The opening quotation of this chapter is an extract from the paper the President read at the 1992 NARETO seminar. As I hope to point out in what follows, the third decade of Nigeria's Independence ushered in an era of intolerance into Nigeria's socio-political life. But after darkness comes daylight. Calm always follows storm assuredly as water will always quench thirst. It hardly ever rains without initial gathering of clouds. Pain sometimes

foreshadows pleasure. At the end of a tunnel, however dark and long, is light. The darkness, storm, thirst, clouds, pains and the tunnel of the three decades of post-independence Nigeria are now giving way, in the beginning of the fourth decade of post-independence Nigeria and with the active support and social engineering of President Babangida, to systematic masterplans to instal a millenium of light, peace, tolerance, progress and stability.

The third decade is also the decade of economic recession .

But on the religious plane, the third decade has witnessed a brazen display and manifestation of religious bigotry, fanaticism, fundamentalism and intolerance by some prominent religious leaders and this threatened to destroy, once again, the corporate existence and integrity of the nation. There is no evidence in recorded or oral history that Nigeria has ever witnessed such widespread, perverse and sustained religious hostilities, suspicions and recriminations before.

There are four major religions in Nigeria with Islam and Christianity predominating. The other two are ancient African Traditional Religions and the spiritual religions. The leaders and adherents of the latter always insist, and sometimes vehemently too, that spiritual groups are not religions.

Christianity and Islam are the two religions solely responsible for generating tension, conflicts and acrimonies in the Nigerian body politic. This trend became noticeable towards the dying years of the second decade of Nigeria's Independence.

The third decade simply inherited it. There are international and universal dimensions to the conflict between Christianity and Islam. But there are also local peculiarities to the conflict, chief of which is ethnic or tribal division. To say that Islam and Christianity are the sole culprits in the matter of religious fanaticism in Nigeria is not to agree with popular and well-entrenched views that ancient African religions are peaceful and tolerant.

In their autochthonous homelands, Christianity and Islam are not only traditional rivals but their sects also are. This fact is a double tragedy for Nigeria. The truth about the matter is that Nigeria as a nation is not religiously sovereign.

The nation is a conglomeration of dependent satellites in religious matters. If Islam and Christianity carry on religious hostilities in North Africa, Asia and Europe in arithmetical progression, the proportion in Nigeria is geometrical. The situation is somehow akin to the economic realm where Nigeria's economy is dependent; if the rate of inflation in Britain is 10%, that in Nigeria will be at least 20%.

History has recorded and is still recording major and minor schisms within Christianity and Islam. Two factions emerged in Rome after the compulsory exile of Pope Liberius (335-358) and each of the rival parties elected a bishop. Lade Bonuola gives many examples of inter-christian and inter-muslim intolerance and fanaticism resulting in factionalisations, ex-communications, riots, wars and separations.¹

Christianity, Islam, spiritual religions and even ancient African religions have, in contemporary times, exhibited varying degrees of internal conflicts and tensions. The fundamentalists are waging a battle to take over Islam. Bahai is under siege in Iran which is itself ruled by a minority sect in Islam. Iran does not recognise Saudi Arabian muslims as genuine ones. There are ossified differences between the Shiite and the Sunni and these two see the Ahmadi as a common external enemy. In India, Sikh extremists are at daggers drawn with their co-religionists. In October, 1990, the Hindus clashed with the muslims and over 100 lives were lost over Hind'us demand to demolish a mosque and erect a temple on its site. Other spiritual religions such as Hare Krishna Movement, Grail Movement, Rosicrucian, Eckankar, etc, all have one internal problem or the other within their rank and file.

All these various religions with their innumerable sects have large following in Nigeria. Their Nigerian religious outposts and followership are also heavily funded from abroad. The net result is that Nigerian religious lackeys are more concerned with keeping

their funding channels open than working for the promotion of a culture of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence.²

On the question of the internal strifes within Islam and Christianity, S.A. Ali, in *The Spirit of Islam* says, the church of Muhammad, like the church of Christ has been rent by intensive divisions and strifes. Differences of opinion on abstract subjects, about which there cannot be any certitude in finite existence, have always given rise to greater bitterness and a fiercer hostility than ordinary differences on matters within the range of human cognition. The disputes respecting the nature of Christ deluged the earth with the blood of millions.³

It is pertinent to make two observations before we deal directly with the phenomena of religious intolerance in Nigeria and the programme drawn up by NARETO to assist in solving the problem. The first observation is that Nigerian nationalists cannot accuse the British of sowing the seeds, of religious intolerance in Nigeria during the colonial era. Britain is a Protestant country but during the colonial era Roman Catholicism flourished in Nigeria especially in the Eastern part of the country.

In Britain itself the average Roman Catholic was and may still be looked upon as a threat and a challenge to England's political sovereignty. Leading British philosophers even thought it a moral sin for an Englishman to be a Roman Catholic. Roman Catholics were not considered to be gentlemen, they were branded liars and were not appointed to public offices. It was easy then for our British colonial masters to extend this attitude against Roman Catholics to their colonial policy. At least in the case of Nigeria they did not. Instead there is evidence, according to Dr . H. B. Harunah, that the British prosecuted some alleged persecutions of the Catholics in Nigeria.⁴

For virtually the whole of Northern Nigeria, the British colonial administration did not encourage Christian evangelization too aggressively. However much experts may differ on the reason for this attitude, no one can dispute the fact that the policy ultimately helped

to promote a culture of multi-religiosity.

The second point is that religion is not the only natural causal factor of tension and conflict. War, tension, conflict, strife, and dissension are inherent in nature. Their occurrences or non-occurrences follow natural and societal laws.

It is true that a religious war can be the most devastating and destructive. E.W. Stewart and J.A. Glynn have shown that the Thirty Years' war between Catholic and Protestant states in Europe was more destructive than any other Greek war. But the Trojan War, caused by Helen's legendary beauty, was not a religious war. The world has fought two wars. None of them was a religious war. The point one is straining to make is that a world free of religion is not necessarily a world free of war, tension and conflict. The disquieting thing about any religious war, however, is that it presents mankind with a paradox; something akin to a peaceful war, i.e., a war caused by peace for religion, is the only thing that is supposed to bring peace to man and mankind. Economics, ideology, race, politics, status and class differences can cause wars in the absence of religion. But none of these has holy books, prophets, a Son or Supreme Deity who can be solely identified with messages, injunctions and admonitions of peace to man and mankind. If religion has been what it is supposed to be, it should be the last thing to cause war or generate tension and strife.

Islam and Christianity arrived in Nigeria long before Britain inaugurated a formal colonial administration in the colony. Both religions came with their sectarian and denominational rivalries which have been sharpened and ossified for centuries outside the shores of Nigeria. But the religions were not to grow on a spiritually and ethnically homeogenous soil. The indigenous religions had their own traditions of subtle and invisible conflicts and rivalries.

The area which has exhibited rank and unbridled religious fanaticism and intolerance in Nigeria is the middle region of Northern Nigeria where Islam, Christianity and African religions co-exist. This is also predominated by the minority ethnic groups which have

resisted the planting of the Qu'ran in the Middle Belt. The minority people in this area also have age-old cultural, political and economic hostilities and rivalries with the Hausa /Fulani ethnic groups whether in their natural homelands or as inhabitants in these minority areas.

The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Hausa/Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba, the first two ethnic groups are predominantly Muslims and Christian respectively. The Yoruba people are a mixed breed of Muslim and Christian affiliations. The Yoruba people resolved the question of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence right from birth. Traditionally whenever a new baby is born in a Yoruba family, the Ifa oracle declares which religion- Islam, Christianity, or African religion- the child's destiny has chosen. This is what accounts for the fact of the multi - religiosity in the average Yoruba family. The Yoruba is born religiously tolerant and liberal.

Against this baackground of religious tension in Nigeria which sometimes resulted in physical manifestations, the National Association for Religious (and later Ethnic) Tolerance, NARETO was inaugurated in 1987. The activities and programmes of this association is now the philosophy of naretism.

Naretism, the philosophy of this association, is based on the recognition that every religion has positive and soul redeeming messages which ought to be propagated formally and informally in order to promote a culture of religious tolerance in a multi-religious society. Naretism takes for granted the fact that the religions also have common messages but even where any religion has peculiar and unique messages, such messages are of interest only where they are positive. It is one strength possessed by the Holy books that even when we allow a straight forward reading, there is always a counter-balancing positive passage to ossify a negative passage. For example, a Christian can return an eye for an eye and forget that he is expected to turn the other cheek or that he is supposed to love his neighbour as himself or that the Lord hath said "Vengeance is mine". A Jihadist can maim, kill and spread mayhem and forget that in Islam to kill one person is akin to killing all mankind and to save one is like saving all mankind or that a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands

people are safe and that making peace among ourselves is a better act than fasting, alms and prayers. This is one reason NARETO called on all religions in Nigeria "to interpret the scriptures if necessary with bias in favour of national interest and the preservation of tolerance and life". Naretism also holds that each ethnic group in Nigeria possesses particular attributes which the nation requires for all rounded development to sustain its philosophy of self-reliance. Check through any town in Nigeria where there is no Igbo present and see how much of commercial activities go on there. See if there is any educational, financial, industrial institution which can survive without the Yoruba. Any administrative/executive outfit in Nigeria can hardly do without the Hausa. Nor can the history of the Nigerian military ever be complete without them.

Any section that prosecutes an ethnic group in its midst mortgages and places a moratorium on its development and progress. Spain, we are told, was devastated by the expulsion of the Jews and Moors. France was ruined by the emigration of Huguenots after the termination of the Edict of Nantes. Hitler hated the Jews and as result lost the invention of the atomic bomb to the United States of America.

The destiny of Nigeria in religious matters has been decided by the multi-religious nature of her society. There were at least 750 sovereign ancient African religions before the advent of Islam and Christianity which came with their numerous denominations and sects, their traditional rivalries and hostilities. Fortunately the colonial front did not impose any favoured religion and the three - Ancient African religions, Islam and Christianity - found themselves co-existing since the 14th century. Islam and Christianity each succeeded in securing exclusive territorial spheres of influence which are also identifiable with two of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The other areas are of mixed religious breed. But inter-religious fanaticism and intolerance are virtually absent in areas where there is ethnic and linguistic homogeneity whereas this equation cannot be said to hold especially in the Middle Belt of Nigeria where there is considerable ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity. Unfortunately the minority areas of the Middle Belt of Nigeria and their Hausa/Fulani

neighbours to the North have never been the best of political, economic and cultural friends. This situation has been aggravated by the fact of their diverse religious affiliations. But they clearly picked on the wrong vehicle to sustain their traditional hostilities and rivalries. This is because religion, of all the possible causal agents of wars, conflicts and strifes, is inherently not fashioned to play that role. Religion stands for peace. Religion stands for understanding and co-operative living and sharing. Most religions in Nigeria subscribe to this communality of ideas and our collective survival cannot but be through religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. We can arrive at any other destination but to do that would mean that we have refused to be guided by religious ideals.

THE CULTURAL BOND OF THE NIGERIA NATION

If Nigeria is known and admired for anything by the international community, it is for her rich, dynamic and virile culture. Thus Nigeria took the lead to coordinate and host the black international community in the festival of arts and culture, known popularly as FESTAC, in 1977. Shortly after, the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilisation (CBAAC) was established to preserve and promote the ideals, goals and objectives of FESTAC.

But it is surprising that culture was being promoted in a vacuum as Nigeria had no cultural policy. Again it is to the credit of the Babangida administration that a cultural policy was promulgated.

The fact that a cultural policy was promulgated testifies to the importance the administration attached to culture in national development. In this, as in the case of religions and ethnic tolerance, the administration helped to shape the cultural destiny of Nigeria.

Nigeria is a multi-cultural or culturally pluralistic society. That is what it seems to be now. To the extent that, in the beginning, according to latest researches in history, anthropology and archaeology, Nigeria had one source of origin of its language and culture, to that extent one can say that the plurality and variety of Nigerian cultures was a result of inevitable later developments.

In the following section we will show that there is a cultural bond to Nigerian unity and the Nigerian nation. Then we will discuss the institutions which the Federal Government has in place to sustain and promote Nigerian culture. The Cultural policy for Nigeria defines culture as "The totality of a way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours."

Dr. Harunah, in a fascinating, well researched and well argued paper, on the "task of probing into the past to show whether there has been any cultural bridge that has joined or united the various component Nigerian peoples before the emergence of certain externally generated cultural influences...."⁵ accepted Professor B.W. Andah's definition of culture as:

"All the material and non-material expression of a people as the processes with which the expressions are communicated. It has to do with all the social, ethical, intellectual, scientific, artistic and technological expressions and processes of a people usually ethnically and /or nationally or supranationally related and usually living in a geographically contiguous area; what they pass on to their successors and how these are passed on".⁶

In view of the problems which I think are inherent in the attempts to sustain and promote Nigerian culture, I will give one more definition of culture. Professor W.E. Abraham conceives of the word "culture" descriptively and prescriptively ' in its inclusive and narrower usages. In its most inclusive sense, Abraham uses culture to cover every actual and possible, public and private, of the life of a people. In this sense culture includes "even etiquette and fashions and such things as whether a people clean their teeth three times a day or once" besides the whole gamut of knowledge, the

arts, science, technology, religions, morality, ritual, politics and literature.⁶

The narrower aspect of the word culture is the sense in which it is limited to the things of the mind. In this sense, culture is more or less a mastery of literature, history, music and painting. Abraham's two senses of culture can be reduced to the popular parlance of the state of what a people uses, what a people knows and how the people behaves. The knowledge and behaviour of a people over a long stretch of time constitute their culture.

Dr. Harunah's paper already referred to is also the latest position on the question of the origin of Nigerian peoples, their language and culture. In the paper Dr. Harunah examines the old theories of the "old breed" historians and demonstrates why and how the old theories are not tenable, in the light of new researches and findings of new breed historians.

The "old breed" historians tended to say either that the ancestors of Nigerian people descended directly from "heaven" or that they migrated from outside Nigeria mainly from the Middle East. In contrast to these old theories, we have according to Dr. Harunah, new hypotheses and positions on the origins of the ethnic groups in present-day Nigeria. Linguistic evidence, rigorous interpretations of oral traditions, supplemented by others such as archaeology, ethnography and anthropology, compel a re-evaluation of old theories. A classification of Nigerian languages shows that the languages can be incorporated into a broad family of languages. If, as it is commonly accepted, "a common language descent is an indicator of a common parentage of a people; and since those who speak one language are therefore, assumed to belong originally to one cultural group, it follows that the peoples in present day Nigeria descended from a common place of origin."⁶

Archaeological discoveries reveal that the Niger-Benue confluence, like the confluences or banks of big rivers in other places and other continents, was home to the earliest human settlements. Human settlements in this confluence dates back to about 200 B. C. These archaeological discoveries constitute what is now known as the Nok culture. It is in this same central Nigerian area that most of the languages spoken in Nigeria share common frontiers. Against this background, the opinion generally prevailing now is that the Niger-Benue confluence is the most likely area of origin of the majority of the minor and majority ethnic groups in what is now Nigeria."⁹

Another vital thesis in Harunah's historiographic reconstruction is that the apparent similarities in cultural traits and institutions among most of the ethnic groups in present-day Nigeria point to the fact they originated from one source in the Niger-Benue confluence. It is argued also that the expansion and cultural differentiation, which came into being, and which resulted in the emergence of Nigeria as a multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural state, particularly after 1914, stemmed from a process of slow but steady population expansion and subsequent migrations from the confluence area, and settlement and adaptation of the peoples and their cultural systems to their new places of abode in different parts of what is now Nigeria. Harunah has shown too that these cultural continuities and change in pre-colonial Nigeria were undoubtedly not externally generated.

The significance of Dr. Harunah's excellent paper, is that the people of what is now known as Nigeria belonged, in the beginning, to one family in the Niger-Benue confluence area. That even after migration and dispersion from the original homeland, they interacted and kept in touch through marriages, commerce and, sometimes war. True, the British amalgamated the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914. But this was merely giving colonial formality and legitimacy to what was already an informal indigenous and autochthonous reality. Nigeria, therefore, was, is, and will never be an artificial creation and those who believe otherwise

are being mischievous, tendentious, or ignorant .

The institutions and structures which the Federal Government has established to sustain and promote Nigerian culture are, in essence, doing more than that; they remind us of our roots, our history, our pre-colonial bonds, interactions and contacts . They remind us of our pre-colonial nationality. These institutions and structures are backed up with the principles and ideals of **The Cultural Policy for Nigeria** whose aim is to achieve national mobilisation, self-reliance and economic integration. Other cardinal objectives of the **Cultural Policy** are as follows:

- (i) promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness;
- (ii) evolve from our plurality a national culture, the stamp of which will be reflected in African and world affairs;
- (iii) Promote an educational system that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely from our traditional values, namely: respect for humanity and human dignity of labour, and respect for positive Nigerian moral and religious values;
- (iv) Promote creativity in the fields of arts, science and technology; ensure the continuity of traditional skills and sports and their progressive updating to serve modern development needs as our contribution to world growth of culture and ideas;
- (v). establish a code of behaviour compatible with our tradition of humanism and disciplined moral society;
- (vi). sustain environmental and cosier conditions which enhance the quality of life, produce responsible citizenship and an ordered society;
- (vii) enhance the efficient management of national resources through the transformation of indigenous technology, design resources and skills,

Even though the National **Cultural Policy** did not expressly talk of any mechanism to shield Nigerians from the negative influence of alien cultures, it is understood that this is one of its aims. The National Communication Policy, also formulated in Babangida's era

when Prince Tony Momoh was the Minister of Information and Culture was also concerned with this aspect of our exposure to foreign influences.

BABANGIDA ON RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC TOLERANCE

President Babangida, in his own right, has expounded and analysed what he thinks about religion and religious-ethnic tolerance. As I have indicated earlier, the President used the occasions of religious festivals, opening ceremonies and foundation laying ceremonies of houses of worship, churches and mosques and the yearly seminars organised by NARETO to express his views on religious and kindred matters.

Unfortunately, those who have collated the President's public speeches for publication did not seem to have done much justice to this aspect of Babangida's writings and speeches. Part of the aim under this sub-head is to redress that imbalance. Consequently, substantial parts of President Babangida's two papers on religion and religious and ethnic tolerance will be reproduced here.

On religion, President Babangida's fundamental thesis is that Christians and Muslims should adhere, in action and in thought, to the positive doctrines and tenets of their respective religions. In Babangida's view, everything revolves around this basic, primitive proposition or thesis. This proposition is like a religious grundnorm which sustains and generates attitudinal or behavioural norms in human social interaction and fellowship.

President Babangida holds that faith is the central element in every religion. As he puts it, an adherent must have "faith in one Supreme Being and in His Holy word, faith in His omniscience and in His Benevolence. The scriptures of every religion are replete with references to the centrality of faith, and speak of the good things that come to those who have faith" ¹⁰ In this paper under reference, Babangida drew attention to a point he often made during NARETO seminars. This point is that the common denominators in all the major revealed religions are far more numerous than the differences.

"The injunctions of either of the two leading faiths in our country", Babangida said, "bear much relevance for a nation struggling to build a better future. Given this commodity of concern and commitment, it becomes counter-productive to dissipate so much energy and bitterness on needless rivalries between different faiths:."

That Christians and Muslims should not waste so much energy on bitterness and hostile rivalries is a recurring message in virtually all of the President's speeches bordering on religion. In his 1989 address on the occasion of the launching of the four volumes of the **Nigeria Studies in Religious Tolerance**, Babangida touched on the role which religion plays in the lives of individuals and nations. Religion, Babangida said, prescribes how the individual should be at peace with himself, his family, his neighbours, his community and the Supreme Being, so that he can pursue his activities in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. General Babangida reminded adherents that "We are first and foremost Nigerians before we are anything else. Thus if you are a Muslim, you are a Nigerian Muslim; if you are a Christian, you are a Nigerian Christian; if you are indigenous religionist, you are a Nigerian indigenous religionist, if you are a spiritualist, you are a Nigerian spiritualist; indeed if you are a mystic, you are a Nigerian mystic. We have a duty therefore to collectively protect and sustain Nigeria and to make it a better place for all of us, regardless of the variety of the faith which we profess".

President Babangida also emphasised on the constitutional provision which guarantees the right of every citizen to freedom of worship. The Government, the President once warned, "will not tolerate a situation where some people, in their guise of prospecting for religious converts or in a bid to score political points, unleash fury on other people because of their diverse religious views. We therefore see it as the responsibility of all religions to encourage and promote the noble ideals of religious civility, humility, decency, and peaceful co-existence".

So far we see President Babangida enunciating two other propositions, viz, the centrality of faith in religions and the imperative of religious and ethnic tolerance. These two propositions, as indicated

initially, are ancillary to his fundamental thesis that a Christian must be a good Christian and Muslim a good Muslim.

This was the basic thrust of President Babangida's address which he delivered on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Lagos Central Mosque on 28th May, 1988. A similar theme of tolerance dominated the President's address to the NARETO seminar held at Abuja in July 1992. Some of the issues he raised are:

a. The common positive denominators of religions. Of these religions, Islam and Christianity loom gigantically in these parts but the spiritual groups and Ancient African religions also share in the common positive denominators.

b. The common positive denominators of the Nigerian culture. In this regard we are presented with sameness or similarity in cultural diversity.

c. The call for religious tolerance, peaceful co-existence and ethnic understanding. It is a call that requires for positive, empirical and scientific programmes of social engineering to deal with Nigeria. The call will have to confront and tame the problems generated by religious bigotry, fanaticism, intolerance, ethnic hostility and distrust.

The fact that Islam and Christianity have common positive characteristics is asserted more to draw attention to the need for tolerance and peaceful co-existence than to convey the impression that everything was or is positive in these two religions.

The negative aspects of religions are really not consequences of theological doctrines as such but consequences of human frailties, mischief and, most of the time, ignorance. It may be true that the fundamental points of difference between the best in Islamic tenets and the best in Christian tenets are theological. But it is precisely on these points that man should not sit in judgement over his fellow human being. This point is given due emphasis in this passage from the NARETO creed:

"I believe in the Supreme Being and I subscribe to the doctrines of my own religions , I declare that adherents of other religions have similar natural rights.

It is the Supreme Being alone who knows and who will have the last say on who is the genuine practitioner. I pray to Him to judge me as such and I appeal to my fellow beings to leave that judgement to Him and to Him alone."

The NARETO Declaration is undoubtedly informed by the Christian injunction that "Thou shall not judge" and the Islam injunction that "God, to you alone belong the judgement".

Any claim to certainty, finality, absoluteness of one's interpretation and understanding of religious doctrines, tenets and theology becomes nullified and negatory since it might amount to an annexation of Allah's exclusive function. When human beings begin to judge the religious postures and beliefs of their fellow human beings and proceed to destroy, maim or even kill as a result, one wonders what the Supreme Being will do on the Judgement Day?

The contemporary reality in Nigeria today is that we are a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. The nation is a coat of many colours but it is one coat.

We belong to one nation with one constitution and a common history. The present political and economic reality in Nigeria is such that no ethnic group, major or minor, is dispensable. Each ethnic group has its endowment of natural and human resources which combine to form the national heritage. Our destiny is inter-linked and inter-twined. No ethnic group is inferior or superior to the other.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CENPRETO: CENTRE FOR THE PROPAGATION OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC TOLERANCE

On 28th of July, 1992, President Babangida announced the decision of the Federal Government to immediately establish a centre to promote and propagate officially the ideals, aims and objectives of NARETO - religious and ethnic tolerance. It is to be known as the Centre for the Propagation of Religious and Ethnic Tolerance - CENPRETO.

It is true that in certain important respects, a nation, a society, a country, like an organism, obeys the laws of evolution where growth and development follow certain natural and inexorable laws. But in the case of a society or a nation, the action of human agency, policies and programmes of government and their execution seem to be in-built mechanism of evolutionary laws. Indeed, the action of one man or a few men in one of the countries can make a difference between light and darkness, between regeneration and degeneration, between decay and progress.

By announcing the decision to establish a centre to propagate religious and ethnic tolerance, President Babangida helped to re-shape the religious, cultural and ethnic destiny of Nigeria.

As a matter of fact even the Political Bureau recommended something related to what CENPRETO is all about. On page 278(f) of Government Views and Comments of the Political Bureau, there is the recommendation that "efforts should be made through the school to increase the knowledge of all Nigerians about the basic tenets of the major religions". The government simply noted the recommendation, because the report made no suggestions for the execution of the recommendation. With the establishment of

CENPRETO, the Federal Government seems to have come to grips with this recommendation as one of the functions of the centre is to draw up a syllabus for Religious and Ethnic Studies for the formal schooling system in Nigeria.

According to President Babangida, the establishment of CENPRETO is one way "to effect a systematic, quantitative and scientific approach to the problem of religious fanaticism, ethnic arrogance and hostility". President Babangida also promised that "an enabling decree would be enacted to give CENPRETO a legal status.

It is pertinent to recall that in the past few years there had been aggressive and mindless proselytization, abusive and insensitive sermons and preachings, all showing ignorance and misunderstanding of religious doctrines and tenets.

Following the controversy over Nigeria's admission into the Organisations of Islam Conference (OIC) - the Federal Government set up an advisory council on religious affairs. During their deliberations the religious leaders seem to have compounded matters.

Since the 1980's Nigeria has witnessed conflicts, disturbances and riots. Some of the riots resulted in large scale loss of lives and property, maimings, deprivations, damage to the country's image.

The establishment of a centre to propagate religious and ethnic tolerance is both a natural and social necessity. It is a natural necessity because with or without conflicts and riots, it is useful for religious and ethnic groups to understand and cooperate with one another. The establishment is a social necessity because the contemporary experience in Nigeria demands that there should be institutions to mediate inter-group transactions. Some of the aims of CENPRETO are:

- (i) To propagate tolerance and peaceful co-existence in all its religious and ethnic dimensions.
- (ii) To dissipate the spectre of fanaticism and bigotry and help to reduce religious conflicts and crises:
- (iii) To disseminate information on what unites us as a people:
- (iv) To propagate and disseminate information on the rich heritage, strong elements and peculiar characteristics of the various ethnic groups in the country;
- (v) To hold constant seminars to fine-tune the centre's operations and secure new ideas;
- (vi) To encourage, sponsor and co-ordinate research and other programmes that will help identify certain places, persons and organisations within and outside the country, whose activities pose either a potential or real threat to the evolution and development of a healthy religious culture and a multi-ethnic society in Nigeria;
- (vii) To enlighten the mass media on ethnic and religious sensitivities and the need to exercise restraint in reporting and commenting on such matters.

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Chapter 3

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION POLICY: THE BABANGIDA ERA

By S. Adefemi Sonaike

Introduction

It has long been recognised that any concerted effort to achieve rapid, autochthonous development in the former colonies must have, as a crucial dimension, steps to free the mind from the yoke of centuries of bondage. It is, in fact, arguable that without serious progress in this process of "reversed indoctrination", efforts to achieve positive change in the other crucial areas of life, especially the political and economic, will come to nought. This is because the colonially-contrived structures and forces that kept these countries in bondage for generations and which thrived on what was grandly referred to as "colonial mentality" would continue to wield their influence. To put it more concisely, the battle to decolonise the new, emergent nations of Africa and Asia must start with the mind, that is with the communication function.

Against this background it is easy to understand the fervour with which the Babangida administration has pursued the application of the media and communication in general, to the realisation of the national aspirations. Within six months of coming to power, the administration held two crucial seminars that formed the bedrock of what is now emerging as the National Communication Policy. One of these was the "National Communication Policy Seminar" organised by the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture and which ran from February 2 to 7, 1987. Held at the Administrative and Staff College, Topo-Badagry, in Lagos State, this seminar brought together more than 300 scholars, administrators and policy planners in the communication field to exchange ideas on a wide range of issues and questions centred on formulating a comprehensive communication policy for the country.

The Topo-Badagry seminar was concerned with what we can call the "software" or the soft "underbelly" of communication - the

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exchange or transference of information, thoughts and knowledge through the mass media, principally the print and electronic media, books, the entertainment media of films, records, tapes, traditional media or "Oramedia", and ancillary services such as advertising and public relations. The participants took on the interesting challenge of coming up with ideas and decisions that would not just foster the growth of these communication modes but would ensure that such growth occurs in a manner consonant with the country's fundamental principles, ethos, goals and aspirations.¹

Although the framework for the seminar recognised that "Telecommunications and Computers" have a place in the National Communication Policy, the job of examining in greater detail this "hardware" aspect of Communication was taken on by another group of experts better suited to this purpose and which met at more or less the same period as the Topo-Badagry group. Organised by the Ministry of Communications, the seminar on "Telecommunication Policy for Nigeria" was held at NITEL Training Centre, Oshodi, Lagos State, between January 26 and February 6, 1987. Like its counterpart at Topo-Badagry, the Oshodi seminar also had a mandate to work out ways and means of promoting the growth of telecommunication systems within the country in a manner that would foster the realisation of the nation's objectives, while respecting culture-specific considerations such as the patterns of population growth and distribution, nature of our economy and so on.²

One general goal common to both seminars was to find ways of "democratising" communication. The Topo-Badagry seminar considered means of breaking the urban concentration of communication machinery and minimising the impact of the colonial, pro-Western orientation of the mass media especially of the print, electronic and entertainment media. The Oshodi seminar looked for ways of achieving the target of a million telephone lines of the country by 1990, a density of one percent, a significant proportion of which would, hopefully, be in the non-urban area.

These two seminars laid the groundwork for a National Communication Policy which is still evolving. Yet, aspects of it have already crystallized. Since 1987, at least eight decrees have been promulgated that bear direct relevance to the work of participants at the two seminars. These are: The Federal Radio Corporation of

Nigeria (Amendment) Decree 9 of 1988; The Copyright Decree 47 of 1988; The Advertising Practitioners Decree 55 of 1988; The Media Council Decree 59 of 1988; The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations Practitioners Decree 16 of 1990; The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Decree 14 of 1991, and The Voice of Nigeria Corporation Decree 15 of 1991. As the clamour for private broadcasting reached a peak, Government, in September 1992, set up the National Broadcasting Commission, through the National Broadcasting Commission Decree of 1992. Each of these decrees puts in place one more pillar in building the National Communication Policy.

In this chapter, we shall look at the case for the National Communication Policy and critique the aforementioned legislations that pertain to the policy.

The Case for a National Communication Policy

Prince Tony Momoh, erstwhile Minister of Information and Culture and the moving force behind the Topo-Badagry seminar, in his main contribution to the seminar, provided what is perhaps the best context within which to examine the case for a National Communication Policy.

Nigeria, a rapidly developing, multi-ethnic and plural society with a long history of British colonial imperialism.... is currently undergoing the process of formulating a coherent and comprehensive national communication policy designed to meet the needs of its social, economic and political transformation, the decolonisation of its major institution of acculturation, fostering broad participation of its citizenry in governance, and the development of a just and egalitarian polity at home and a virile and purposeful sovereign relations abroad.³

At least four points stand out in the above explication. First, a national communication policy must be culture-bound with a country's past history and national aspirations representing major parameters. In other words, there is no universal communication policy for all countries of all times. Second, the national communication policy envisaged must be purposive, an instrument deliberately aimed at promoting the realisation of the country's needs at the

social, economic and political levels. Furthermore, this must include a process of decolonisation of the country's "major institutions of acculturation" - schools, the media, even the family. Third, a principal goal of the communication policy must be the promotion of broad participation of the citizenry in politics and governance and the development of "a just and egalitarian polity", in short, democratisation of the political process. Fourth, the policy must be concerned not only with national objectives at home but also with fostering purposeful foreign relations abroad.

Momoh argues that communication and information resources, "properly organised, evenly distributed, and easily accessible... can be the main engine for wholesome development of the society". He believes therefore that "a comprehensive, well-thought out, clearly articulated and harmoniously integrative national communication policy" is "a sine-qua-non for meaningful development to occur in our society"⁴

Momoh defines a national communication policy as "a coherent set of principles and norms established to guide a nation's total communication system in organisation, content and objectives."⁵ In this sense, a national communication policy must embody several other policies that touch on different aspects of communication. In the Nigerian context, these include a print media policy, a broadcast policy, policies on advertising and public relations, a cultural policy, a tourism policy, a creative works or copyrights policy, and a telecommunications policy.

Although these policies may be introduced at different times, together they form the overriding National Communication Policy, somewhat like various pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Momoh believes that a communication policy can be said to exist only where "policies in these other specific areas of social communication are brought into harmonious functional relationships, such that they operate as a whole system rather than as growth and functional elaboration".⁶

Col. Tanko Ayuba, former Communications Minister, in his keynote address to the 1987 seminar on Telecommunication Policy also drew attention to the important role of formalised policy in the general scheme of things under the Babangida administration:

So far, the telecommunications developments in Nigeria have taken place without a well articulated telecommunications policy. Telecommunications is both dynamic and capital intensive and in view of its catalytic effect on the development of other sectors of the economy such as agriculture, health, tourism, and education and its necessity for the commercial, industrial, socio-economic and political development of any nation, the need for an orderly and efficient development of telecommunications infrastructure in Nigeria is now urgent in order to keep pace with the development of the other sectors of the economy. The orderliness is easier to achieve if the venture is based on definite policy and is therefore to achieve definite purpose".⁷

One idea that runs through all that has been said so far is the argument that existing media, in structure, practice and content are inappropriate for achieving our set goals of development. As a direct result of colonisation, Nigeria, like other former colonies, imbibed the Western concept of media practice which naturally came with the prevalent world view of the colonising countries. Among the aspects of American-European concept of media functioning which have been imported wholesale with colonialism, according to Nnaemeka, ⁸ are:

- (a) the notion of an adversary relationship between the news media and political institutions;
- (b) the concept of "press freedom" which ignores the fact that even so-called "independent" media may not be "free" from the influence of their private owners
- (c) passivity and "neutrality" of media institutions in relating to the exploitation and appropriation of collective wealth by the

political and economic power elite. This indirect collusion with the status quo is often disguised as journalistic principle of objectivity; (d) the Western pattern of media concentration in the urban or "core industrial centres" to the detriment of the rural, agrarian settlements. Since media serves the urban dwellers, the interests of the non-urban citizens are neglected or entirely ignored.

In the words of Nnaemeka:

One of the consequences of this pattern of institutionalisation was that news media systems in most parts of the African, Asian, Pacific Islands and the Caribbean subregion of the Third World were, on the attainment of political independence, structurally integrated philosophically, organisationally and by rules and procedures of practices with the culture of the West.... The struggle of political independence did not involve theoretical and philosophical questions about the nature of the institutions of the news media and the role it has to play in the construction and reconstruction of independent nation".⁹

In Nnaemeka's view, a national communication policy must enable the news media make necessary adjustments in their existing structure "to ensure that (they) are properly integrated into the transition programmes and processes and to reflect and articulate the values inherent in the vision of the new society, in (their) organisation, philosophy, content, rules and procedures of practice".¹⁰

Furthermore the world view put out by the news media must "not only be those that advance our vision of life but those that do not run counter to our ethical and moral notions of human existence, corporate relations and collective conscience".¹¹

But above all, a communication policy must provide "clear and articulate structures" for the expression of the values accepted by the majority of the citizenry and should provide "regulatory mechanisms" for defining and promoting what would thenceforth amount to proper practice within the value system basic to the society.¹²

In the sense that the National Communication Policy must be in consonance with the nation's goals and aspirations, Momoh regards the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of the State, as enshrined in Chapter 2 of the Nigerian Constitution¹³ as a logical start-off point in discussing the evolution of an enlightened communication policy. Among other things, this chapter directs that:

1. States and government in Nigeria shall operate based on the principles of democracy, justices and respect for the heterogenous, federal, character of the nation.
2. Conditions must be established to promote national integration and to foster the feeling of belonging among the various peoples of Nigeria.
3. Economic development shall be planned and balanced and operated in manner that would not result in the concentration of wealth or of the means of production in the hands of a few individuals or groups.
4. Equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law is enshrined and so is the independence and integrity of the law courts.
5. There must be equal opportunities for education and public enlightenment at all levels.
6. The state shall actively promote the cause of African Unity and the total political, economic, and cultural liberation of the African peoples.
7. Steps shall be taken to protect and enhance authentic Nigerian culture.
8. The press has an obligation to serve as watchdog or ombudsman by monitoring the various actions of government.

The various policies that together constitute the National Communication Policy reflect these general principles of the Nigerian State to varying degrees. But each policy further embraces objectives and principles specific to its own line of activity. In the case of the Telecommunication Policy, for instance, the overall national objective is stated as "the provision of modern, efficient, reliable and adequate telecommunications devices in the country ..."¹⁴ The policy in effect, seeks "to promote an **orderly and efficient development** of telecommunication... services in Nigeria"¹⁵ (emphasis mine).

In fulfilling these objectives, according to Ayuba, decisions would be needed on certain issues such as:

1. The legislation that should govern the development and use of telecommunications systems in the country. This must include provisions for fair tariff and easy access to telecommunication facilities nationwide.
2. The proper role of government in the above exercise vis a vis the private sector.
3. The rights of citizens to own and operate telecom facilities.
4. Provisions to ensure fair competition and minimise monopoly.
5. Decisions on who should, and how to, control and manage the frequency spectrum in an effective and orderly manner.
6. Allowance for national security. In view of the role of telecommunications in national security, Government would need to specify the areas in which private, and especially foreign organisations, could participate in the provision and operation of telecommunications services. Above all, Government must retain the right to coopt and control telecommunications facilities under national emergency.

At another level of policy, Ayuba maintains, details must be worked out and decisions taken on issues such as:

- * maintenance practice and procedures for telecommunication services in the country;
- * organisation, management and manpower development;
- * sources of funding;
- * planning and implementation strategies;
- * service objectives and how to maintain a specified quality of telecom service;
- * local manufacturing of telecomm equipment;
- * achieving and maintaining standardisation in telecom equipment and usage, and so on.

Ayuba saw the telephone sector as one area in which relatively clear national aspirations have been arrived at, namely, attaining a telephone density of 1 to 100 by the year 2000 "as agreed by our leaders, and other objectives defined in the Lagos Plan of Action, Declaration of Lome and Arusha Declaration ..."¹⁶ A crucial dimension to the telephone aspect of the telecommunication policy, according to Ayuba, was for his ministry "to support present administration's programme of rural infrastructure development by extending telephone service to the rural areas in an economic and judicious manner."¹⁷ In this regard, the Ministry of Communications was to interact closely with the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI).

To summarise, a National Communication Policy, which embodies policies on various aspects of communication, including telecommunication, is necessary to ensure orderly application of communication to development and to the realisation of the nation's goals and aspirations. In what remains of this chapter, we shall examine those aspects of the Communication Policy that have so far

crystalized into concrete legislation. These' are:

1. The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Decree 9 of 1988.
2. The Media Council Decree 59 of 1988.
3. The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Decree 14 of 1991.
4. The Voice of Nigeria Corporation Decree 15 of 1991.
5. The Advertising Practitioners Decree 55 of 1988.
6. The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations Practitioners Decree 16 of 1990.
7. The Copyright Decree 47 of 1988, and
8. The National Broadcasting Commission Decree of 1992.

*The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
(Amendment) Decree 9 of 1988.*

This decree amended the FRCN Act of 1979. The decree had two main goals. The first was to enable the FRCN generate revenue through commerical ventures. Top of such ventures are advertisements and programme sponsorship, staging of popular drama in theatre for a fee, participation in music industry, and charging fees for the use of its choir. In its old colonial format, radio (and also television stations) operated entirely on government subvention and were forbidden from airing advertisements or charging fees for services they offered.

Secondly, the decree amended Sec. 17 of the FRCN Act of 1979 to promote the decolonisation and democratisation of radio programmes and make them relevant to the nation's goals and

aspirations. Specifically, the FRCN, in its operations and control of its station programmes, was to ensure that "all programmes are selected with due regard to the distinctive culture, interest and taste of the people (served by) the stations on the one hand, and the fulfilment of national needs on the other..."

The Nigerian Media Council Decree 59 of 1988.

This decree replaced the still-born Nigerian Press Council Act of 1978, and established the Nigerian Media Council "to promote high professional standards for the Nigerian Media".¹⁸ The Council comprises a pot-pourri of 18 members drawn from widely diverse areas within and outside the media. These include representatives of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, the Nigerian Guild of Editors, the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria, and the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria. Also included are representatives of educational institutions concerned with the training of journalists, the Federal and state ministries of information, Federal and state-owned radio and television organisations, and the News Agency of Nigeria. Even the "general public" is not left out: on the Council are two representatives of the public "one of whom shall be a woman and the other a legal practitioner."¹⁹

The Council is empowered to:

- i. inquire into complaints about the conduct of the media and of any journalist, and the conduct of any persons or organisations towards the media and to exercise, in respect of the complaints, powers conferred under the decree;
- ii research into contemporary media development and engage in updating media documentation;
- iii foster the achievement and maintenance of the highest professional and commercial standards by the Nigerian media;

- iv review developments likely to restrict the supply, through the media, of information of public interest and importance or likely to prevent media access to information and advise on measures necessary to prevent or remedy such developments; and,
- v. ensure the protection of the rights and privileges of journalists in the lawful performance of their professional duties.²⁰

In investigating complaints against any media organisation or person, the Council is also empowered to summon any person or persons in Nigeria to give evidence before it or to produce any "document or other thing" believed to be in his possession. Where parties duly summoned fail to show up, the Council is empowered to consider and deal with the matter in their absence. More significant perhaps is the power granted the Council to "enter upon any land or premises personally or by agent.... for any purpose which in its opinion is material to (an) inquiry)...."²¹

Based on other sections in the decrees:

1. The Council is empowered to direct a medium of information to publish an apology or correction on a subject matter on which complaint was made if Council's investigation found such complaint justified. The journalist or person involved in perparing such matter may also be reprimanded.²²
2. The Secretary to the Council has the duty to prepare and maintain a register of the names, addresses, approved qualifications and other particulars of all persons who are entitled to be registered as journalists in accordance with the provisions of the decree. The Secretary is to further "cause the register to be printed, published and put on sale to members of the public..." The register is to be updated annually and made available to the public.²³

Sections 17, 20 to 22, spell out qualifications and other conditions for registration as a journalist by the Council. These include

sion of a certificate of experience issued by the Council, and holding of a qualification approved by the Council as relevant to media practice.

The decree also spells out penalties for "unprofessional conduct" by journalists and punishment for practising as a journalist without being registered.

The Media Council Decree of 1988 generated a lot of controversy in the same manner as its 1978 predecessor did. Ironically, former Information Minister, Prince Tony Momoh, who was at the receiving end of current controversy led the criticism against implementation of the Nigerian Press Council Act of 1978. This time

the objections concern mainly four areas of the decree;

- (1) membership of the Council;
- (2) the power of the Council to register journalists;
- (3) the power of the Council to enter upon land or premises in the course of inquiry, and,
- (4) the directive that the register of journalists be published and sold to members of the public.

The membership of the Council is criticised on the grounds that it leaves room for the possibility that non-journalists may dominate the Council. This, in turn, would mean that persons outside the profession would be regulating the media profession, something comparable to accountants and lawyers regulating the Medical Council.²⁴

A similar argument has been made regarding the registration of qualified journalists. Critics feel that registration of journalists should be carried out by a professional body such as the Nigeria Union of Journalists. The power of the Council to enter premises in the course of inquiry is criticised as a violation of the fundamental

and constitutional right to privacy while practising journalists believe that publishing and selling the register of journalists exposes them to danger of letterbombs or even of physical attacks.

The Nigerian Press Organisation (NPO), the umbrella group for all media associations, went to great lengths since the Media Council decree was promulgated, to iron out these thorny issues with the Minister of Information and Culture, Professor Sam Oyovbaire, and other relevant agencies of government.

As at August 1992 there was indication that a common ground may have been reached by all parties and that the Council would be inaugurated before the end of 1992.

The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Decree 14 of 1991

This decree further amends the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria Act of 1979 to divest the corporation of its powers of external broadcasting. An interesting aspect of the decree is the wider powers it gives to the supervisory minister with regard to certain aspects of the running of the FRCN. According to Sec. 14, "the Minister may give the Corporation directives of a general character of relating generally to particular matters with regard to the exercise by the Corporation of its functions under this Act and it shall be the duty of the Corporation to comply with such directives."

The Voice of Nigeria Corporation Decree 15 of 1991

This decree apparently promotes the expressed interest of the Government in strengthening its external information arm. The decree formally established the Voice of Nigeria Corporation with the power, among other things, "to broadcast external news, bulletins and programmes, for and on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria."²⁵

According to Section 8 of the decree, the Corporation shall, "to the exclusion of any other broadcasting authority or any other body in Nigeria, be responsible for broadcasting externally, by radio, Nigeria's

viewpoint to any part of the world". Other highlights of the decree are as follows:

1. Section 5 directs the Corporation to "Provide as a public service in the interest of Nigeria radio broadcasting services for global reception in such languages and at such time as the corporation may specify.

2. Section 13 directs the Corporation to broadcast news bulletins and programmes in five languages of English, French, Fulfude, Hausa and Swahili.

3. The Corporation must ensure that its services reflect views of Nigeria as a federation and give "adequate expression to the culture, characteristics, affairs and opinions of Nigeria."

4. More specifically, the Corporation must ensure that its officer", the Corporation shall broadcast as government programme or announcement "at its own expense."

5. Whenever so requested "by a duly authorised public officer", the Corporation shall broadcast a government programme or announcement "at its own expense."

6. Unlike other broadcasting organisations in the country, the Voice of Nigeria is forbidden from carrying commercial advertisements and sponsored announcements, except programmes approved for international broadcast by UN agencies such as the FAO, WHO and so on which it may carry for a fee.

ADVERTISING PRACTITIONERS DECREE 1988

This decree established the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) and empowers it to determine who advertising practitioners are, qualifications for new entrants, to establish and maintain a register of persons entitled to practice the profession, conduct examination and award certificates or diplomas in the

profession and regulate as well as control the practice of advertising in all its aspects and ramifications.

The Council, according to the decree, shall consist of a chairman, a distinguished professional to be appointed by the President; seven persons to be appointed by the minister one of whom shall be from the ministry, 10 persons to be elected by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, and two persons to represent institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

The decree empowers the Council to appoint a registrar who will also be its secretary. Apart from keeping minutes of council meetings, the Registrar shall prepare and maintain a register of all persons who are entitled to be registered as fellows, full members, associates or students of the profession. The council is duty bound to recommend qualification for would-be members and the fees to be paid in respect of the entry of names of the register.

This decree makes it mandatory for anybody wishing to hold any advertising position in the public service or in a private establishment to be registered with APCON. Any person not being so registered, "who holds himself to be registered or uses any name, title, description or symbol calculated to lead any person to infer that he is so registered, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a maximum fine of 1,000 naira or six months imprisonment or both, for a first offence and if for second time, for a jail term between one and three years. The decree also established the Advertising Practitioners Disciplinary Committee charged with the duty of considering and determining any case referred to it.

Also established is a five member Advertising Practitioners Investigation Panel "to conduct preliminary investigation into any case where it is alleged that a registered person has misbehaved in his capacity as such or should for any other reason be the subject of proceeding before the disciplinary committee and decide whether the case should be referred to the disciplinary committee." Three members shall form a quorum at any meeting of the disciplinary

committee and judgment is by majority decision.

Section 23 specifies penalties for unprofessional conducts. An erring member may get his name struck off the relevant part of the register, may be suspended from practice, or fined. But Section 24 empowers the disciplinary committee to restore a cancelled name when and it deems such an action fit.

COPYRIGHT DECREE 47 OF 1988

The decree repeals the Copyright Act of 1970 and makes new provisions with respect to copyright on intellectual property and the protection of such material. The decree introduces new provisions relating to right to share in the proceeds of sale of a copyright, conversion rights, and so on. The decree introduces new forms of infringement of copyright and provides wider forms of redress in cases of such infringements as well as sets up new infrastructures for the effective administration of copyright provision in Nigeria.

This decree explicitly spells out works that are eligible for copyright: literary works; musical works; artistic works; cinematograph films; sound recordings, broadcasts, and performers' works. Copyright applies only to literary, musical or artistic work with an "original character" and "fixed in a definite medium of expression now known or later to be developed, from which it can be perceived, reproduced or communicated either directly or with the aid of a machine."

The decree also protects works of architecture, and Section 5 gives architects the exclusive right to control the erection of any building which reproduces the whole or a substantial part of work in the original but not the right to control the reconstruction in the same style as the original of a building to which the copyright relates. Copyright in broadcast also includes "the communication to the public of the whole or a substantial part of a television broadcast, either in its original form or in any form recognisably derived from

the original; and the distribution to the public for commercial purposes of copies of the work in any form".

Section 10 makes adequate provisions for assignment and licence of copyright while sections 11 and 12 discuss the right to claim authorship and the right to share in the proceeds of sale.

Publishers, printers, producers, or manufacturers of works in which copyright subsists are empowered to keep a register of works produced by them showing the name of the author, the title, year of production and the quantity of work produced.

Sections 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 specify what constitutes an infringement of copyright, action for infringement, and liability.

The penalty ranges from 100 naira on every copy to as high as 50,000 naira where a corporate body infringes a performer's right.

Section 23 confers on performers the right to control for 50 years their performing, recording, or live broadcasting, reproduced in any material form and adaptation. Performance here includes "a dramatic performance (which includes dance and mime) a musical performance and a reading or recitation of a literary act or any similar presentation..." Section 28 also protects expression of folklore against reproduction, communication to the public by performance, distribution by cable or other means as well as adaptations and translations.

To ensure unimpeded enforcement, the decree sets up the Nigerian Copyright Council and charges it with the responsibility of monitoring and supervising Nigeria's position in relation to international conventions. The council has a governing board consisting of a chairman, a director of the council, a representative of the Federal Ministry of Education, a representative of the Federal Ministry of Trade, a representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a representative of the Nigerian Police Force, a representative of the National Library, and two persons knowledgeable in copyright matters to be chosen by the Minister in charge of Culture. Other members include

15 representatives of authors' associations as follows: writers, publisher, musicians and music publishers, cinematograph producers, theatre practitioners, broadcasting organisations and visual artists. The decree empowers only the Federal High Court to try offences or disputes involving copyright matters.

The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations Decree 37 of 1990

This decree dissolves the Association of Public Relations Practitioners incorporated in the Companies Act No 51 of 1968 and instead establishes the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations to set standards for entrance into the profession of public relations, establish and maintain a register of members, and discipline erring members.

Section 2 creates three categories of membership: Fellows, members, and associates, and spells out qualifications for registration into each of the cadres. To register as a fellow, a practitioner must have had 10 years post-qualification practice. To qualify as member, a practitioner must have been in the profession for not less than 10 years and must have enrolled as an associate whether in active practice or not, while associates are persons who have passed examinations prescribed or accepted by the Institute. The council has the discretion to register graduates, affiliates and student members.

The decree establishes a Council which is the governing body of the Institute, made up of the president, vice president and 20 other persons being fellows, members or associates of the institute. Five of them shall be appointed by the minister and must be practitioners, and the remaining 15 are to be elected. The council is empowered to do anything which in its opinion is calculated to facilitate the carrying on of the activities of the Institute.

The register is empowered to prepare and maintain a register of the names, approve qualifications and particulars of all persons who are entitled to be enrolled as public relations practitioners and who apply to be registered. It is also the responsibility of the registrar to print, publish and put the register on sale.

Part IV of the decree deals extensively with methods of registration into the Institute and requirements of institutions that may run courses on public relations. It also demands that an applicant for registration, in addition to evidence of qualification, must satisfy the Council that he or she is "of good character", has attained the age of 21, and has not been convicted in Nigeria or elsewhere for an offence involving fraud or dishonesty.

The decree establishes a disciplinary tribunal and an investigating panel. The former consists of the chairman of the council and six other members appointed by the council and shall consist of four council members and one public relations practitioner who is not a member of the council. A practitioner found guilty of an offence may have his name struck off the register.

The National Broadcasting Commission Decree of 1992

The decree establishes the National Broadcasting Commission which is empowered, among other things, to process and consider applications for ownership of radio and television stations, including cable television services, direct satellite broadcasting and other media of broadcasting.²⁵

The first commission, inaugurated in early October, 1992 has 13 members and is headed by veteran journalist, Mr. Peter Enahoro. Other members include representatives of the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (AAPN), broadcasting organisations, and representatives of journalism associations.

- The Commission, among other things, is empowered:
- i. to regulate and control the broadcast industry in general, and in particular to preserve the ethical standard as technical excellence in public, private and commercial broadcasting in Nigeria;
 - ii. to approve location of stations, transmitted power, areas of coverage and types of broadcast equipment to be used;
 - iii. to determine an "enduring sanction", including revocation of licenses, of defaulting stations.

The decree expressly forbids the operation by any person of any apparatus or premises for the transmission of television, radio satellite or any other medium of broadcast within the country unless in accordance with provisions of the decree.

An interesting aspect of the decree is the demand that an applicant for a licence, in addition to being a registered corporate body with majority shares held by Nigerians, must satisfy the Commission that it is not applying on behalf of any foreign interest.¹ It must further undertake that the licenced station or stations will not be used "to offend religious sensibilities, promote ethnicity, sectionalism, hatred and disaffection among the peoples of Nigeria".

The decree makes the granting of licenses subject to "the availability of broadcast frequencies."

Conclusion

The Babangida government, perhaps more than any other government before it, has squarely taken on the awesome task of evolving a media and communication policy for Nigeria. Although aspects of the policy now seem scattered under various decrees, the foundation has been laid for a formalised approach to the use of communication for the development of the country.

ENDNOTES

1. See Momoh, T., "A Framework for National Communication Policy" in **Philosophy and Dimensions of National Communication Policy**, Volume 1, Tony Nnaemeka et. al., (eds), Lagos; Centre For Black and African Arts and Civilisation, 1989. See especially Introduction to the chapter.
2. See keynote address, pages 8-13 in **Seminar On Telecommunication Policy For Nigeria**, Federal Ministry of Communications, Lagos, 1987.

3. Momoh, T. op. cit. p.11
4. Momoh, T., preface to **Philosophy and Dimensions of National Communication Policy**, op.cit. p.xv
5. *ibid*, p.11
6. *ibid*, p.11
7. op.cit **Seminar on Telecommunications Policy for Nigeria**, p.10
8. Nnaemeka, T. "Issues in National Communication Policy: Parameters of Theory and Experience", in **Philosophy and Dimensions of National Communication Policy**, Vol. 1, op.cit., p4
9. *ibid*, p.4
10. *ibid*, p.5
11. *ibid*, p,7
12. *ibid*, pp 7, 8
13. Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979. Also, 1989. Lagos: Department of Information, Printing Division.
14. Ayuba, (Col.) A. T., "Keynote address...", in **Seminar on Telecommunications Policy for Nigeria**, Federal Ministry of Communications, Lagos, 1987, page 11.
15. *ibid*, p.11
16. *ibid*, p.11
17. *ibid*, p.12
18. Explanatory note to the Nigerian Media Council Decree 1988, Federal Government Press, Lagos.

19. Sec. 2 (1) (e). It is not clear if this implies that the legal practitioner cannot be a woman.

20. *ibid.* Sec 3 (a-e).

21. *ibid.* Sec 9 (1) (f)

22. *ibid.* Sec 15

23. *ibid.* Sec 16

24. See for instance, "The first victims of Decree 59," QUOVADIS article in Daily Times, January 25, 1989, page 7.

25. Explanatory note to the decree.

26. The gazette of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree; 1992 was not available as at September 1992 when this was written. This write-up is based on media reports of statements from the Ministry of Information and Culture and speeches at the launching of the commission.

Chapter 4

LITERARY AND PERFORMING ARTS

By
- G. G. Darah

I propose in this chapter to examine how the literary and performing arts fared in the seven years . The assessment is in form of broad surveys and highlights of major tendencies and themes. I begin with a review of the immediate background to the establishment of the government. This is intended to establish the trends, continuities and changes that were taking place at the time. Literary and artistic developments may be influenced by dramatic political and historical events, but traditions of art transcend these epochs. The review of the pre-1985 years will be followed by highlights of developments in the various fields of literary and artistic culture. This will enable us to see the different ways the arts have responded to the demands of economic recession and its attendant social stresses and adjustments.

The literary arts refer to fictional and imaginative works such as novels, stories, poems and drama. In the Nigerian context, there are two traditions of literature, the oral and the written. It is not easy to document the development in the oral tradition because creativity takes place in over 400 languages. Much of the material to be referred to is sourced from the written tradition, especially the urban-based sections. The performing arts refer to drama, theatre as well as music and entertainment. A full documentation of what was produced in the seven years is yet to be undertaken. Consequently, the references in the chapter will be biased in favour of forms and areas about which information is readily available. The conclusions based on this stock of information are therefore provisional and tentative.

The creative scene in Nigeria was in ferment at the beginning of the decade of '80s. This situation reflected the opportunities for critical inquiry offered by the 1979-1983 period of civil rule. As Professor Dapo Adelugba remarks of the time, a new spirit of nationalism and cultural self-assertion "was reflected in the hopes and joys, the fears and anxieties, the filibusterings and whimperings of comic, sentimental, tragic, satiric and buffoonish, ebullient and optimistic heroes of the stage and the screen". The older and more established writers

like Achebe, Soyinka and J.P. Clark-Bekederemo were entering a new phase of creativity. Soyinka's release of his musical album of satirical songs, **Unlimited Liability Company** in 1983 as well as his **A Play of Giants** affirmed his long-standing reputation as irrepressible critic of despots and opportunists. His film, **Blues for a Prodigal**, complemented the two works already mentioned. When he marked his fiftieth birthday in 1984 at Ife, he startled his admirers with the declaration that his was a wasted generation of the Nigerian intelligentsia, a theme that had run deep in all his creative and critical engagements for nearly three decades. But his assessment of the fate of the man, of ideas in a neocolonial setting had turned out to be prophetic.

Clark-Bekeremo had retired from teaching at Lagos in 1980 and gone on to set up the PEC Repertory theatre to open up a new avenue for theatre in the urban setting of Lagos. His example signalled the decline of university based theatre and the emergence of a new tradition of small but professional theatre outfits along a line already well developed by the Yoruba popular travelling theatre for which Hubert Ogunde remains the unrivalled titan. Ola Rotimi's **If** and later **Hopes of the Living Dead** showed the pervasive influence of the outlook of anomie that was evident in the imagination of the older generation of writers.

The field of theatre was witnessing new experiments in the exploration of popular themes and techniques. After nearly 45 years in professional theatre, Hubert Ogunde was given the task of building a National Troupe with a team drawn from major language areas of the country. What looked like a popular theatre movement was emerging with active seasons in the drama departments at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the then University of Ife and the University of Calabar. The Benue Arts Council was also active in the tradition with the influence of scholars like Professor Iyorwuese Hagher. What may provisionally be described as the second generation of Nigerian dramatists attained maturation in the years of the Second Republic (1979-1983). Among the leading voices were Sonny Oti based in Jos, Olu Obafemi in Ilorin, Femi Osofisan and Bode Sowande at Ibadan, Tunde Fatunde in Benin and Tess Onwueme in Owerri.

Their works were marked by a questioning of existing conditions and class relations arising from the growing inequalities and wasted opportunities of the "oil-boom" era. There is a tendency in their plays which reflects an ideology of partisanship with the victims of the socio-political crisis. Indeed their works were seen as an artistic extension of the rigorous debate of class struggle and revolutionary redemption that characterised intellectual discourse from the mid '70s. Adelugba is right to attribute this to the "growing popularity of Marxian and proto-Marxian dialogue and debates on Nigerian university campuses."² Link between drama, theatre and film was showing rewards with Ogunde's entry into film making in the early '80s. That experiment has developed into a major form of entertainment in Yoruba-speaking areas.

The developments in theatre had their parallels in the field of prose, fiction and poetry. A new generation of novelists and poets matured in the general ferment of critical engagement with issues of social relevance and political awakening. Among these were writers like Festus Iyayi whose first novel, *Violence* (1979) proclaimed a radical aesthetics in a genre that was dominated by pessimism and existential angst. As we shall show later, the organisational structure of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) started by Achebe in 1980 gave necessary impetus to this creativity. A notable female voice that emerged was Zainab Alkali whose novel, *The Stillborn*, revealed a potential that was hardly acknowledged to exist in the Islamic regions of the North. Another female novelist of note to emerge was Ifeoma Okoye who, together with Alkali, Onwueme and Buchi Emecheta defined the aesthetic contours of a new feminism in Nigerian letters.

The genre of poetry witnessed the most profound development in terms of temper and radical outlook. The leading voice was that of Niyi Osundare who, in the words of the Russian aesthetician, Viadimir Mayakovsky, introduced a tradition of poetry of social command. His first volume, appropriately titled *Village Voices* confirmed the legitimacy of a trend already discernible in Odu Ofeimun. But Osundare took a bolder step by distilling a new poetics from a combination of modern English verse and the oral tradition.

The tradition is also characterised by linguistic accessibility, social relevance and ideological inclination that leans unambiguously in favour of the oppressed and marginalised sections of society. Osundare's other kindred spirit is Tanure Ojaide who is also indebted to the oral tradition for themes and idioms. Ossie Enekwe, Chinweizu, Ezenwa-Ohaeto and Tunde Fatunde were other voices whose poems reflected the spirit of the times.

The musical scene has been the most vibrant and fecund field of creativity in Nigerian cultural life.

Traditional musical forms have developed apace, although the decline in rural life adversely affected continuity in the classical genres. Urban-based music began in the 1940s and has produced numerous styles and stars. What is now known as popular music also has a comparatively long history. By the time our review opens, many great names had already become established, each identified by nuances and stylistic variation. **Juju** music of Yoruba and the **Afro-beat** movement were already in the realm of classical traditions by the mid 1970s. New variations of these familiar forms were already visible in the horizon by the early 1980s. Also well established were the chant-and-chorus styles of minstrels like Mamman Shata as well as inimitable soloists like Dan Maraya Jos. What distinguished the Babangida years from previous epochs is the exponential growth of syncretic forms like *afro-juju*, reggae and *futi*. The social context of this development will be examined in greater details later.

In summing up the background to the seven years under review, we can identify a few dominant features in the literary and performing arts. The first is that the dominant creative spirit was marked by a radical and critical thrust in which art was more openly acknowledged as the handmaiden of social change. The other element to note is the emergence of new talents which strove to spread their lustre in a firmament long dominated by the first generation of men and women of letters. Also discernible in the creative endeavours is the mood of anger and railery against the wastage of national resources and opportunities by the political elite. The fall of the Second

Republic and the coming to power of the military in 1983 confirmed this preception of the state of the nation. How did literature react to these changes?

Although the overthrow of the civilian government was enthusiastically welcomed by the people, there is no evidence as yet that literature and art celebrated the General Muhammed Buhari government that succeeded the overthrown order. Rather, the arts in general assumed a stance of indifference that revealed uncertainties and anxiety. These fears were heightened by draconian legislations and indiscriminate harassment of vocal citizens immediately after the government settled down to business. The most worrisome encounters were recorded in the areas of human rights abuse and the intelligentsia, whose members produce the bulk of the artists, was a prime target. Soon the attitude of indifference changed to hostility and resistance. Literature and the performing arts were active theatres for the ventilation of disenchantment with the government and its methods. The Buhari government fell in the wake of this resistance, but the attitude of defiance and resistance it engendered in the populace did not immediately change; rather it was carried over to the Ibrahim Babangida government that took over in August 1985. Although the government took steps to relax the atmosphere of fear and tension by freeing detainees and encouraging open debates on national issues, this was not fundamental enough to regain the confidence of the critical sections of the elite.

The vigour and quality of literary production at the time Babangida's government came to power can be gauged by the prizes won by established and new writers. At the 1985 Association of Nigerian Authors conference in Abuja in November the harvest of new writing was evident. Two young women, Tess Onwueme and Zainab Alkali won the drama and prose awards respectively. Chinweizu, another new voice in poetry, won that year's award for verse. What has happened to literary culture in general from 1985 to 1992 appears to have been prefigured in the winning titles by Onwueme and Alkali. The "**Desert Encroaches**" was the title by Onwueme and Alkali's was "**The Stillborn**". But more prizes were won thereafter. Niyi Osundare's **The Eye of the Earth**, a volume of

poetry lamenting the wanton waste of the earth's plenitude, won the Commonwealth Prize for poetry. Soyinka's Nobel Prize for literature in 1986 proclaimed the universal recognition of Nigerian letters. In its editorial on the matter entitled "The Nobel Comes to Africa" *The Guardian* remarked the uneasy relationship between governments and artists. The paper recalled how Soyinka had rejected offers of national honours "from two previous regimes whose political complexion he positively loathed". The paper lamented the non-recognition of people of high intellect and imagination. For being the first African to win the Nobel prize for literature Soyinka was given one of Nigeria's highest honours, Commander of the Federal Republic (CFR). This gesture was seen at the time to signify a new attitude of government to the arts in general, but this expectation was not fulfilled in subsequent years.

The endangered fate of the arts in general and literature in particular was the theme of Achebe's 1986 National Merit Award lecture provocatively titled, "What Has Literature Got to Do With It?"³ Achebe laments the failure of our neocolonial state to accord recognition to literary and artistic culture which, in his own view, is the imperishable measure of a society's achievements in civilisation. "People create stories create people" was the poignant way he reiterated the primacy of literary art in the regeneration of life. The relationship between the character of the state and the arts was the subject of a critical exchange between Professor Biodun Jeyifo and Odi Ofeimun. The exchange was inspired by the death in May 1987 of Obafemi Awolowo whose introduction of free primary education in Western Nigeria in 1955 inaugurated the development of Africa's largest republic of lettered citizenry in the twentieth century. Jeyifo's article "Awoism and the Arts" was serialised in *The Guardian* newspapers of July 13 and 14 1987. A week later Ofeimun published a rejoinder with the title "Neither Marx Nor Awo". Jeyifo had argued that in spite of Awolowo's reputation as a reformer and modernizer, he was lacking in aesthetic sensibility. Ofeimun attempted to refute this charge by drawing attention to the overall environment of enlightenment brought about by Awolowo's socio-economic reforms. Ofeimun stressed in particular the potentials for artistic development offered by mass education and the

introduction of the first television service in Africa. The latter especially engendered a new tradition of drama and theatre popularised through television. As Jeyifo's book *the Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre in Nigeria* (1986) has demonstrated, the socio-economic developments in Western Nigeria were critical factors in the rapid expansion of popular theatre, both as business, entertainment and art. As it turned out, the Jeyifo-Ofeimun debate was both a celebration of a heritage as well as an epilogue to an epoch of exuberant creativity in post-independence Nigeria. In the five years since this debate took place, there has been a steady decline in the quality of literary arts and its patronage by the broad masses.

But honours and awards came at intervals to proclaim the vitality and resilience of literary culture in Nigeria. During the period Tanure Ojaide won the Commonwealth prize for poetry. Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* was awarded the 1988 Commonwealth prize for prose. Osundare's volume of poetry, *Waiting Laughters* published by Malthouse Press, Lagos, won the 1991 Noma Prize for Publishing in Africa. Chinua Achebe was the first winner of the Langston Hughes Prize for Academic Achievement in 1991, the same year 31-year-old Ben Okri won the prestigious Booker Prize in Britain for his monumental novel *The Famished Road*. Also in 1991, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo became the third literary artist after Abubakar Imam and Achebe to receive the Nigerian National Merit Award.

As young writers emerged to claim their place in the literary scene, the older ones continued to turn out masterpieces. One such work was Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) which reinforced his status as one of the world's greatest story tellers and universal counsellors. The novel came twenty years after Achebe's "creative silence", his *A Man of the People* having been published in 1966. But there is a striking similarity in style and theme, especially in the ironic exploration of the subject of misuse of power in a neocolony. The images of cynical manipulation of power, contempt for the masses and alternative views are familiar to readers of *A Man of the People*. But despots in *Anthills* are now soldiers, not the civilian politicians of the earlier novel who, in spite of their corruption and ignorance, still exhibit the features of style and admirable exuberance. The

ironic distance in the older novel also gives way in *Anthills* to a more partisan authorial inclination in favour of the agencies for progressive change. There is much ideological compatibility between the fictive world of *Anthills* and Achebe's political monograph, *The Trouble With Nigeria* in which he examines the recurring failure of leadership in Nigeria.

A similar ideological thrust runs through Kole Omotoso's *Just Before Dawn* (1989) in which he attempts to unveil the conspiratorial deals between the British colonialists and the conservative fraction of the national elite who took over power in 1960. The book combines the techniques of a fictional narrative with that of historical commentary and this introduces a new genre into Nigerian letters. Omotoso calls his method of narration "faction", perhaps in recognition of the "weakness" of the normal style of fiction to deal with the complex nature of the Nigerian political and socio-cultural situation. A consummate attempt at re-evaluation of national history is evident in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *On a Darkling Plain*, a memoir-commentary on the Civil War (1967-1970).

The critical enterprise in Nigeria was expanding in scope and theoretical depth at the time the government came to power. Critics of radical inclination dominated the field. A cursory look at the titles reveals the radical orientation of the time. Biodun Jeyifo's *The Truthful Lie: Essays in a Sociology of African Drama* (1985) and *The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre in Nigeria* (1986) are typical. So are Chidi Amuta's *Towards a Sociology of African Literature* (1986) and *The Theory of African Literature* (1989). Even George Gugelberger's (ed) *Marxism and African Literature* (1985) has a heavy Nigerian presence with five of its thirteen chapters contributed by Nigerians. Soyinka's *Art, Dialogue and Outrage* was a good example of efforts to present in one volume the seminar essays of one member of the "great tradition" of Nigerian letters. A similar endeavour is evident in Achebe's *Hopes and Impediments* already referred to. In 1991 Howard University Press in the United States of America reissued major poems and plays of Clark-Bekederemo under the title, *Collected Plays and Poems*, an ambitious volume containing seven plays and 137 poems selected from his five antholo-

gies. The critical introduction to the volume done by Professor Abiola Irele is a splendid specimen of the erudition and theoretical rigour for which the Irele generation of critics is well known. Howard University Press also published in 1991 a new edition of Clark-Bekederemo's monumental **Ozidi Saga** with a critical introduction by Professor Isidore Okpewho.

Other important works of literary criticism appeared in the seven years. The most valuable in terms of national coverage is the **Perspectives on Nigerian Literature** (1988) a two-volume anthology of essays selected and edited by Yemi Ogunbiyi from the *The Guardian Literary Series*. The publication is a major reference book for literary historiographers and researchers. Another good book published is **Nigerian Female Writers: A Critical Perspective** (1989) edited by Henrietta Otokunefor and Obiageli Nwodo and published by Malthouse Press. There are eighteen chapters on all genres of creative writing, including interesting essays on children's literature and juvenalia. This is the first attempt, in book form, to define a national aesthetic of female writing in Nigeria.

The Annual University of Calabar International Conference on African Literature and English Language stimulated good books of essays. In the seven years four important volumes were published under the series title of "Calabar Studies in African Literature". The volumes are **Literature and Society** (1985), **Black Culture and Black Consciousness in Literature** (1987), **Critical Theory and African Literature** (1987) and **Literature and National Consciousness** (1990). The Calabar conferences which gave rise to the titles just mentioned are an example of stimulation which gatherings of this nature give to the development of artistic culture. In spite of the morale-depressing environment that prevailed during the seven years in the country's academia, a number of important conferences and seminars took place that illustrated the vitality of Nigeria's literary and critical heritage. When Soyinka won the Nobel prize in 1986, an international symposium, sponsored by the Federal Government, the French Government and UNESCO, took place in Lagos in May 1988. Its theme was "African Literature: Before and After the Nobel". Besides FESTAC 77, the symposium was the largest gathering of African men

and women of letters ever hosted by Nigeria. Its proceedings in English and French were published in book form in 1991 by the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC).

An equally ambitious endeavour was the "Eagle on Iroko" symposium held at Nsukka in 1990 to mark the 60th birthday of Chinua Achebe. Both the symposium on the Nobel and that in honour of Achebe constitute a watershed in the history of literary criticism in Nigeria.

Oral literary scholarship was a growing discipline by the middle of the '80s. The efforts of pioneers like Adeboye Babalola, Oyin Ogunba, Wande Abimbola, Donatus Nwoga and Dandatti Abdulkadir had inspired a generation of researches and translators. But the most prolific scholar in the field in recent times was Professor Isidore Okpewho of the University of Ibadan. His edited book of essays, *The Oral Performance in Africa* (Spectrum, 1990) is a great tribute to the scholarship on oral literature and the aesthetics of performance. Other active scholars of the period were Professor Ibrahim Yahaya of Bayero University, Professor Ropo Sekoni of Ife and Chukwuma Azuonye of Nsukka. As Abba Sani has ably demonstrated, the study of oral literature requires the application of a methodology that recognizes the dialectical interfaces between all the basic forms of artistic expression in our predominantly oral culture. These forms include poetry and song, orature and other formalised use of speech, drama, dance, music and the plastic arts. Again, as in the genre of historical narrative, Saro-Wiwa's *The Singing Anthill: Ogoni Folktales* is an excellent example of his multi-talented creativity.

The development of institutional and organisational support for the arts is one of the most remarkable developments of the period. With specific reference to the literary arts, the efforts of ANA constitute the most profound influence. The award of prizes instituted by ANA in 1983 has grown into the most formidable structure of literature in Africa. Through the award scheme it became possible to discover new talents which otherwise would have been unknown. In 1990 and 1991 respectively the new works entered for the prizes numbered no

less than 100 titles. The number of prize donors has also expanded to include multinational firms which hitherto had no avenue to demonstrate their support for the arts. The sheer number of new writings and manuscripts entered for the prizes has grown so much that a new tradition of publishing has also developed. A good example of this endeavour is the Lagos-based Malthouse Press which within five years became a leading publisher of new authors. It is also noteworthy that the involvement of big firms in the award scheme helped to challenge writers and publishers to produce works of high literary and technical quality. Nigerian literature has been the better for this.

The impact of ANA has also been felt in regions of the country where formations did not exist for the promotion of the arts. State branches of ANA now meet regularly to discuss the works of new authors, the most active being that of Lagos. The Edo-Delta branch took one step further by establishing a house journal, *RAKE*, in which new writings make their appearance. That journal now serves a function similar to that provided by "*Black Orpheus*" and "*Transition*" for the first post-independence generation of writers.

The inspiring example of ANA had its counterpart in the Lagos-based Committee for Relevant Art (CORA). Although the interest of CORA stretches across the entire gamut of verbal and non-verbal art, the quarterly meetings it hosts under the code-name of "Art Stampede" helped to sustain a robust tradition of open and informal discussion on contemporary artistic experience.

For the first three decades after independence, the university theatres were the cradle of bold experiments in drama and the performing arts. The decline of the academia during the seven years led to an exodus of great talents and professionals from the campus-based drama troupes. The popular theatre programme at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and the College of Education, Katsina-Ala in Benue State became literally abandoned. Soyinka's retirement from Ife adversely affected the fortunes of Ife as a standard bearer in the tradition. Ola Rotimi's initiative to develop a theatre in Port Harcourt met with severe difficulties. The persistence of people like Osofisan and Adelugba at Ibadan, Kalu Uka in Calabar, Olu Obafemi in Ilorin

and Iyorwuese Hagher and Sonny Oti in Jos helped to prolong the twilight in those theatres. By 1990, escalating cost of mounting productions had driven theatre companies into idleness.

But a few people managed to sustain a thriving tradition of theatre outside the academic communities. The best illustration of this stubborn initiative is the Collective Artistes Programme under the directorship of Chuck Mike formerly of the Ife theatre. With effect from 1989, the group was able to put up an annual festival of plays, each running for weeks, even months. The PEC Repertory Theatre established by J.P. Clark-Bekederemo about a decade ago has been turned by the group into a modern equivalent of the old Mbari Club that nurtured the likes of Soyinka and the late Duro Ladipo. The organisation and management methods employed by the Collective Artistes are a subject of interest for those who used to think that Lagos was too restless a city to sustain a theatre culture.

The example of the Collective Artistes has a rough duplicate in the Writers's Resort established by playwright Bode Osanyin at Ijoko-Ota, near Lagos. For years now the place has hosted a regular event at which a notable writer reads and discusses his works to a select audience. A similar experiment was started at Nsukka some years ago in a place called "The Anthill". The encounters there were a great stimulant to budding writers and critics.

Another institutional framework for the promotion of literary culture was the Children's Literature Association of Nigeria (CLAN) founded by the veteran female writer, Mabel Segun. CLAN was able to draw attention to a crucial but neglected area of national culture through seminars and workshops for writers and illustrators of juvenile literature. Thanks to the pioneering role of CLAN, the subject of relevant writing for children gained greater significance in literary and critical circles. Mabel Segun went further to consolidate the gains by establishing a documentation centre in Ibadan to coordinate research work on the genre. A complementary effort was initiated by the International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) which sponsored a project of reading material for children. The books are to appear in the major Nigerian languages.

The examples given above illustrate the significance of infrastructure in the promotion of the arts in general and literary arts in particular. In academic traditions, conferences and seminars are the main avenues for generating ideas about forms of art prevalent at various times. The economic recession during the seven years reduced the number and frequency of conferences and intellectual encounters. In a stable and normal environment the papers that are delivered at these academic meetings form the basic materials from which scholarly essays and books are developed.

A major casualty of the times is the tradition of journals devoted to a systematic analysis of art forms. By 1985, most universities had established journals and periodicals as media of regular exchange of ideas. Rising cost of printing was already threatening the survival of these efforts, but a few still appeared. The Department of English at Ahmadu Bello, Zaria, published *Saiwa* and *Work in Progress*. The Literature Department at Ife managed to keep alive its *Ife Studies in African Literature and the Arts* (ISALA). The Department of Modern European Languages at Ilorin had just started one. *Okike* began by Achebe and colleagues in 1970 was still appearing, if only irregularly. In 1992 all these journals had ceased to be, except perhaps *Okike* which published its 30th issue in 1991.

The vacuum created by the dearth of academic journals has been filled somewhat by the growth of literary journalism in the popular press.* It was *The Guardian* newspapers that brought respectability to literary criticism when in 1985 Yemi Ogunbiyi introduced the "Guardian Literary Series" from which he selected materials for the two-volume book of essays already referred to. Literary journalism has become an established tradition in most newspapers and weekly magazines. Nearly every newspaper now has an art review column although the coverage is biased in favour of music and general entertainment. The *Daily Times* started a weekly, "Times Review of ideas and the Arts" in 1989. Focus on the arts in the print media was helped by the founding of the Art Writers Organisation of Nigeria (AWON) under the inspiration of Ben Tomoloju of *The Guardian*.

This additional berth helped to popularize literature and comments on it. It also gave opportunity for new writers to get introduced to the newspaper readership. But with the popularization also came heavy prices. The criticism and commentary carried in the art pages are usually rather short and shallow. Owing to the technical constraint of these media, it is not possible to undertake serious and comprehensive analysis of works in them. One other constraint is the perishable nature of the opinion expressed. The articles and reviews carried are not usually available for researchers and students to refer to. If *The Guardian* had not published some of its pieces in book form, their value would have been as shortlived as the newspaper editions in which they appeared. Whereas new creative writing is now brought quickly to the notice of readers, no real, tangible discourse of literary criticism has emerged.

The festival is the most advanced and elaborate institution of culture in Africa. The organisation of seasonal festivals affords the opportunity for the literary and performing arts to grow. Dr. C. Aniakor has provided a description of festival events which deserves quoting at length. According to him,

Festivals are the fullest expression of aesthetic values and the world view of which they are a part. Many art forms are invoked and given focus and visibility in these celebrations of continuity of man-kind and its interaction with the environment."

The view helps us to appreciate the place of festival events in the creation and recreation of art forms in Africa. Two examples of the the promotional potential of festivals are worthy of note in the period under review. One is the masquerade festival held at Enugu in the former Anambra State. The masquaerade festival has brought to national focus the interfaces between all the forms in Nigerian folk culture. As Aniakor argues, the aesthetics of multi-dimensionality and dynamism in African art is best exemplified in the performance events at masquerade festivals. In them one encounters the rhythmic combination of song, music drama, and storytelling in their most vivid and arresting forms.⁷

The revival in 1988 of the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) brought out the enormous potentials in our folklore of verbal performing arts. From the 7th edition in 1988, the celebration became an annual event save for 1991. The NAFEST has offered a platform for the best in our arts to be on display at regular intervals. It is indeed the biggest national carnival in Africa. Under the directorship of Dr. Sule Bello, NAFEST has developed into a huge artistic and commercial enterprise. The production of commercial video films from the events as well as the publication of proceedings of festival symposia have enhanced the status. The initiative on book publishing was taken by the former director, Mr. Frank Aig-Imoukhuede when he edited the useful manual on culture, **Tapping Nigeria's Limitless Treasures** (1988).

The festival, as we have already pointed out, is the grand institution of mass communication and popular culture in traditional Africa. In the seven years most of the big national festivals and durbars of the various language groups were held. It is impossible to appraise their impact on literature and the performing arts because no systematic documentation of them has been undertaken. But it is important to stress the link between festive events and the instruments of technologised culture such as radio and television. With the creation of eleven new states during the seven years, more radio and television stations were established. How much contribution the stations made to the development of the arts must await the outcome of detailed research.

The decline in drama and theatre which we have already noted was compensated for somewhat in the expansion of television and video as media of popular culture. This development was essentially an urban phenomenon. The special appeal of television and video is due primarily to the power of audiovisual representation as well as the mobility of the form. It requires a steady patronage of theatre-goers to sustain a thriving tradition in live theatre and drama. Hubert Ogunde and others in the Yoruba popular theatre tradition were able to prosper in the profession because the large urban populations invested in watching them perform. By the early '80s there was

already a shift of interest from stage plays to film. Ogunde, Baba Sala (Moses Adejumo) and others were compelled by this shift to produce their classical works in celluloid. This trend matured in the Babangida years as the facility of television and video became more accessible. In a sense, what happened is illustrative of the transformation in aesthetic perception that arises from what Walter Benjamin once described in his seminar essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In Benjamin's words, "the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant ... because of the thorough-going premediation of reality with mechanical equipment..."⁸ Benjamin goes further to explain the "magical" power of the film medium thus:

By close-up of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring common place milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexplored field of action."

The technical revolution in motion pictures was evident in the popularity enjoyed by drama works presented on television and video. This experience is typified by the situation in the National Theatre in Lagos. In the past few years, even the great theatre groups were unable to retain the interest of their fans. A number of them had disappointing experiences with live drama performance. But films, especially those based on Yoruba folklore and metaphysics, were heavily patronised. On Saturdays and Sundays, especially, the two cinema halls in the theatre were besieged by crowds of Yoruba-speaking audiences which came to see their celebrated actors and actresses "in action" in films and video rather than on stage as was the case when the Yoruba popular theatre was the dominant form of entertainment in the urban areas.¹⁰ The biggest star of television drama for nearly ten years was Jimoh Aliu whose *Arelu* serial was immensely popular for its ingenious use of good acting and exploration of magical and metaphysical properties in the Yoruba culture.

Television drama and soap opera were immensely popular, especially for those who had no access to private video. Since 1960 when Soyinka's play was first shown on the former Western Nigeria Television in Ibadan, the television has been the main medium for bringing theatre to the homes of the urban dwellers. In the early part of the seven years, national drama programmes like "Cockcrow at Dawn", "Samanja" and "Village Headmaster" were still aired. The comedies that have survived include "New Masquerade".

The most remarkable drama serial created in the seven years was Ken Saro-Wiwa's "Basi and Company" shown on the network programme of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). It is an excellent example of the exploitation of wit, lyricism of speech, characterization and topicality. This point is worth stressing because of the increasing failure of imagination noticeable in more recent samples of the genre. To a large extent, the comic spirit is alive in these plays, but a prevailing air of self-censorship, not unconnected with sponsorship of programmes by multinationals, is becoming obvious in the retreat of the critical imagination that made the television comedies both robust entertainment and a weapon of moral reform.

As the classics of the '80s disappeared due, perhaps, to decline in sponsorship, new programmes were introduced. On the NTA network, for example, there are now soap operas by enterprising groups whose productions focus on social insecurity faced by the emergent class of the young and affluent business executive. Issue of romance and individualism of the elite feature prominently in the plays. The role of private firms in the promotion of television theatre is exemplified by the initiative of the Africa Continental Bank in sponsoring the film production of the proto-epic story of Achebe's "Things Fall Apart".

Music, especially of the popular tradition, underwent major developments during the period. The point need to be stressed that music is the most developed medium of artistic expression in Nigeria. Music-related behaviour permeates virtually every social and artistic activity. A detailed examination of musical forms and their characteristics is impossible within the scope of this survey. Unlike

the situation of English-language literature, for example, the idioms of music are still largely dominated by ethno-cultural aesthetics. Some scholars have observed that despite the dynamism that has marked the growth and development of most music forms there is still to emerge a national musical idiom. Omibiyi-Obidike has argued that a national musical culture can emerge only if there is a conscious attempt to develop a "fusion of the diversified traditional music of the various ethnic groups."¹¹

The closest attempt to the evolution of this national culture of music is the popular genre. Popular music is used here to refer to forms and expressions of music practised in urban areas and aimed essentially at the mass of the poor and underprivileged people.

As I have said elsewhere, the music is popular because it is addressed to the masses of urban dwellers who patronise it for psychoaesthetic reasons; it is also popular because it (music) serves as a vehicle for articulating the desires and views of the masses of people who are displaced from the public space of the society by dominant economic and political forces. For the structurally disabled urban masses, the music performs the therapeutic function of a spiritual beverage.¹²

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's Afro-beat movement introduced a radical, critical temper to popular music in the 1970s. That tradition has remained the leading voice in the exploration of issues of class polarization, human rights abuse and protest against social injustice. Fela is the most revolutionary of the popular musicians who use the medium to raise critical issues.¹³ But the economic distress of the period expanded the ranks of protest musicians. The reggae form was very popular during the period because of its features of topicality and free structure that make it amenable to improvisation. In its Caribbean "home" reggae music has been essentially a protest genre and Nigerian exponents have been faithful to this tradition. As an artistic movement of protest against social injustice, popular music played a significant role in the seven years. The ranks of artistes employing music to protest the economic and social hardship of the structural adjustment regime expanded by the years. In addition to Fela, there emerged a host of other artistes like Ras

Kimono, The Mandators and Majek Fashek whose lyrics became anthems of the oppressed of the cities. Tony Okoroji, President of the Performing Musicians Employers Association of Nigeria (PMAN) explained the phenomenon thus:

.....music is the lingua franca of the worldIn Nigeria popular music is an example of this universal language. Music has become an important rallying point for the people The Nigerian musician has become a very important political figure. The musicians look at social and political issues as it was never done in the past. For them music is not just about entertainment. It is about asking questions, it is about raising issues, it is about suggesting new directions.¹⁴

Hit albums of the period include Kimono's "What's Gwan" and The Mandators' "Crisis" and "Rat Race"

The following lines of Kimono's "What's Gwan" illustrate the temper of the reggae songs:

Mama Africa

We no understand what's gwan in this our country

Ask them for me to know

No facilities in this our country

No place to sleep and no work to do

No money to spend and no food to eat

Illegal detention without no trial

Muslim and Christian are running after mundane materials.

There can be no more appropriate epitaph of the social-economic crisis of the Babangida years than the lines just quoted.

Okoroji in the interview quoted explained how economics defined the form and styles of the popular music. In his own view artistes had to adapt to the high cost of music-making by turning to reggae which permits the use of minimum number of performers. In place of the huge orchestra typified by Fela's Afro-beat, the reggae bands are made up of a few artistes. This arrangement made it possible to cut down on cost of maintaining a group. Thanks to the economic recession of the time,

The crowded stage one sees in Fela and other Yoruba popular groups is now shrinking.

Besides reggae, other synthetic musical forms emerged. In the Yoruba urban centres, *fuji* and *afro-fuji* became the vogue. The *fuji* has grown into a Nigerian equivalent of rap music of African Americans in the United States of America. Its fluid lyrics and stable beats permit a lead singer to improvise commentary in ways similar to the classical Yoruba oral poetry such as *oriki* and *balala*. Older and more established *fuji* exponents like Ebenezer Obey and Sunny Ade retained their large following because they did not attempt to graft the fast tempo of disco on their own style.

Other musicians like Fela and Charlie Boy represented a tradition that was as permanent as the *oriki* and *balala* from the pop tradition in North America. The new illustrates part of the crisis of consciousness that characterises contemporary urban music in Nigeria. As in video and the cinema, the generation of musicians gives the impression that what comes from North America and Western Europe is inherently good. The disco mania that is now pervasive is an expression of this ideological disorientation.

The most significant factor that influenced development in music is the growth of an entertainment industry. In the seven years popular music enjoyed enthusiastic promotion by big business and multinational corporations. The involvement of these corporations helped to expand audience and markets for artists. The sponsorship of carnivals and musical festivals became a regular feature of the urban mass culture. The intervention of big business and the consequent commercialisation of the various forms tended to promote a certain tradition of frivolity and sensation. Some Yoruba *fuji* musicians, for example, are noted for a dance segment typified by exaggerated pornographic postures and manipulations. The video versions of the music are popular largely because of the sexual idioms in them. This structure of commercialised art is an extension of the philosophy of cash nexus which has come to define social relations in the *bara* decade years.

Commercialisation also extended to hitherto more conservative sacred and religious music. Dance and music have always featured in church liturgy and worship. The new evangelical movements in

Nigeria have made very creative adaptation of traditional music to attract worshippers and retain their interest. Music was one weapon Africans used to fight for cultural autonomy in Christianity. As Professor Sam Akpabot has pointed out, this was because "Worshippers could react to sermons, songs and rhythmic beats spontaneously without any inhibition....."¹⁵. The hypnotic power of music in worship, has been further enhanced by the element of electro-acoustics produced by modern musical instruments. Churches now have large orchestras which produce music in the disco and rock form to which worshippers dance ecstatically. The entertainment aspect of Church liturgy has become a huge business in which commercial video films play a crucial role. In the years under review, churches in Lagos and other major cities used music to expand their proselytisation work.

ENDNOTES

1. "The Development of Drama and Theatre in Nigeria" in Peter Ekeh and Garba Ashiwaju (eds) **Nigeria Since Independence : The First 25 Years**, Vol. vii "Culture" Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Limited 1989, p.80
2. *ibid.* p.80
- 3 The text of the lecture is available in Chinua Achebe's **Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays, 1965-1987**, Heinemann, 1988, pp. 106-177.
4. See his "Orature and the Quest for National Integration: The Nigerian Experience," Peter Ekeh and Garba Ashiwaju (eds) *op. cit.* p. 152-173.
5. The potentials and pitfalls of this tradition are examined in detail in Afam Akeh's five-part essay published in the **Daily Times** of May 11, 25 and June 1, 8 and 15, 1991
6. "Cosmos, World View, and Aesthetics" in Herbert Cole and C. Aniakor (eds), **Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos**, Regents of the University of California, 1984, p.223
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 219
8. See his **Illuminations**, edited with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc, 1968, p.234
9. *Ibid.*, p.236

10. Report from National Theatre, Lagos.
11. M.A. Omibiyi-Obidike: "The Role of Music and the Recording Industry in National Development", in Sule Bello and Yakubu Nasidi (eds) **Culture, Economy and National Development**, National Council for Arts and Culture, 1991, p. 211
12. "Popular Music and Counter- Consciousness in Nigeria", paper presented at the Conference on "Power, Marginality and Oral Literature in Africa" University of London, January 17-19, 1991, pp. 4-5
13. For a thoroughgoing review of this tendency, see Dr. Iyorchia Ayu's essay "Creativity and Protest in Political Culture: The Political Protest in Popular Music of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti" in Iyorchia D. Ayu, **Essays in Popular Struggle**, Zim Pan-African Publishers, Oguta, 1986, pp. 1-55
13. Interview with G.G. Darah and Onoriode Ayi, Lagos, 11th January, 1991.
14. Peter Ekeh and Garba Ashiwaju (eds) op. cit. p. 97

Chapter 5

VISUAL ARTS AND FILM

by Toyin Akinosho and Dayo Komolafe

The socio-cultural environment defines the tenor of art. It dictates the content, depth, patronage and the flourish of the arts. Art grows out of the scenery and recreates the neighbourhood in ways that are determined by the social milieu. The montage of all the pieces of art produced within a given community at any time is the most reliable portrait of that society at that time.

Visual and cinematic arts in the last seven years in Nigeria have been determined by the response to the "shock therapy" administered on the economy. It has been the era of the artists as a survivor and the content of the average work of art is proof of this.

Contemporary fine art has flourished more in the past seven years than at any time in Nigeria's 78 years of nation-building. More than ever before, sculptures proliferate on concrete pillars along inter-city highways, imposing themselves on the surrounding. On street corners and sidewalks, it is common to see cement sculptures, metal works and paintings depicting day-to-day events that have become the main theme of the street artists, who once maintained an obscure presence almost out of sight of pedestrians and motorists. Art exhibitions take place nearly every week in Lagos, six times the frequency in 1983. The increase in the number of shows doesn't even tie with the rate of growth of population of artists in the city. In 1985, 70 artists took part in OFFERING FROM THE GODS, an exhibition organised by the Lagos chapter of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA). Seven years later, in 1992, the number in the SNA registry has only increased to 137 artists.

But why Lagos? Lagos occupies an important place in contemporary fine art in Nigeria because there is minimal promotion and exhibition of art in other cities. The art market is mainly in Lagos, with over 90 per cent of the patrons of contemporary art.

The number of people at exhibitions and art connoisseurs increased tremendously in this period. In 1983, a week-long exhibition by

David Dale, a major artist, attracted less than 200 people throughout the life of the show. Today 500 patrons literally scramble to see the new creations of a minor artist like Idowu Otun on opening day alone. The price of an oil painting jumped from an average of 800.00 naira in 1985 to 8,500.00 naira in 1992. The connoisseurs are worried. But many artists blame increase on the price of art material. Some observers have been quick to link the effervescent outpouring of art appreciation to trends in the world's major art centres in New York and London, where the value of art works appreciated in the late 80s.

The general consensus, however, is that the local trend is a product of economics and sociology. First, people simply became more aware of Nigerian art as an item of decoration. Secondly and more importantly, the economy in the past seven years fostered the kind of enterprises that need art to freshen their appeal. The Structural Adjustment Programme may have failed to increase the manufacturing index, but it did enhance the growth of entrepreneurship in the service sector of the economy. There was a boost in local tourism, interior decoration, textile and fashion design, and other businesses. Promoters of these enterprises use art and articles for everything centering around corporate image-making.

Banking Halls need relief works with network of decorative motifs. Merchants of gift items routinely order for scores of paintings in "warm colour". Artists with keen business sense supply all of these in mobile suitcases and containers.

One distinguishing feature of the art scene today is that, unlike 15 years ago, the dominant collector of Nigerian art is not a foreigner. He is a Nigerian. "It is important", says Nick Robertson, erstwhile cultural attache at the United States Information Service in Lagos, "to note that there is a huge market for Nigerian art today, and that the major buyers are no longer foreigners, but the Nigerian middle class". It so happened that for the past 10 years, there has been a strident call on the Nigerian cultural agencies to take over the promotion of Nigerian art from foreign cultural agencies. Art enthusiasts regularly accused the Nigerian cultural establishment of standing aside when the German Cultural Centre (Goethe Institute),

the Italian Cultural Institute, the United States Information Service (USIS) collectively determined the number of exhibitions that would take place in Lagos in any given year. More worrisome was the fact that by 1983, there were only five formal exhibition centres for contemporary art in Lagos, of which only the Exhibition Hall of the National Theatre was owned by the Nigerian government.

The Didi Museum was opened on Victoria Island, Lagos, during the period. It is a repository of contemporary art and artefacts from all over the world, as well as a documentation centre for all Nigerian folkways in architecture, music, religion, etc. The key aspect of the Museum's day-to-day activities, however, has been the regular exhibition of contemporary Nigerian artists. Didi Museum organises six exhibitions a year, the same number as the Italian Cultural Institute or the Goethe Institute. Didi Museum quickly became a dominant focus of attention by cultural affairs reporters. Didi's emergence may have served as impetus for artists to come out and show more of their works, since it effectively increased the number of exhibition spaces available.

Every other private gallery that has been set up, since Didi Museum, has been inspired by the profit motive. The buzzword is that "there's a goldmine in the arts".

Art dealership has become as respectable as advertising or marketing consultancy. Some notable collectors like Folabi Kofo-Abayomi have become art dealers, while some well-heeled art dealing shops like ART and OBJECTS now routinely hire advertising agencies to help them package their exhibitions. This new song is an upbeat version of the ballad rendered by Mrs. Emily Aig-Imokhuede who set up GONG GALLERY in the early sixties and became one of the country's pioneer art dealers. Just twelve years ago, in 1980, Mrs. Aig-Imokhuede had declared "From my own experience I would not encourage anyone to become an art dealer in Nigeria I don't think this society is ready for that yet".

Things are no longer what they used to be. The apparent profitability for those in the art market has lured people from otherwise more

lucrative professions into it. Mrs. Simidele Adeniran-Ogunsanya, a lawyer, left her promising career as legal officer at the Nestle Foods to devote full time to dealership. Dr. Dele Olusanya, a medical doctor, overhauled his small artshop Sinsemillua Gallery and relocated it from Benin to the Allen Avenue in Ikeja, Lagos.

Some of such "invasions" have helped improve the worth of the art market and prepared it for future growth. For example, Something Special Gallery, owned by one-time-collectors-turned-dealers, Kofo Abayomi and Bisi Towry-Coker, has introduced segmentation and management consultancy into the art market by way of specialising on just a few, selected artists and managing them, critiquing their works and exhibiting them. With the aid of a computer database, the gallery traces the movement of any work acquired from it, so as to be fully aware of where to go whenever the artist involved is scheduled for a retrospective exhibition.

The new, domestic, private-owned galleries have not quite shifted the focus away from the old foreign cultural agencies, which incidentally continue to attract the largest assembly of collectors and enthusiasts to the exhibitions they host. Even so, the official cultural establishments is rapidly showing a strong presence. While the National Gallery for Crafts and Designs opened in 1984 remains idle for half the year, the National Museum, Onikan, has become in the last five years, the dominant exhibition centre for contemporary Nigerian art. It doesn't matter that the Museum was set up primarily to document and propagate variegated aspects of Nigerian culture. Two different exhibitions of contemporary art are opened there every week, and so the Museum has extended its space to include a hall where a photo documentary of Nigeria's past leaders is permanently on view.

The National Museum has not shied away from the prevailing profit motive in the propagation of culture. An artist requesting an exhibition space needs only to pay 3,500 naira and he is assured of a sale. The primary objective of exhibition has changed from the desire to show off the level of skill achieved and thematic concerns to selling the works to pay bills. The fact that the National Museum

is willingly encouraging this trend has angered many watchers who believe that such centres should only be available to artists who have gone through other galleries and have proved their art is worthy to be exhibited at such a major forum as the Museum.

For all the flourish that the art scene has exhibited in the past decades, the content of a piece of fine art work has suffered in terms of depth and thematic exploit. Much of the visuals today is stripped of theoretical grounding. It would be wrong to say that nothing is being done to improve on what the earlier generation of contemporary fine artists created. In these seven years there have been incisive work produced at Akoka in Lagos, Enugu and Nsukka and some experimentation still keeps coming out of Zaria. But these are very little, and they appear submerged in the ocean of mediocre art. The artist has found himself in an environment which doesn't insist on great, profound art. And he is responding with works that are hastily put together.

The art historian, Dele Jegede, surveyed the entire scene with cynicism and declared that the art circuit has been infected with the "PLC syndrome". Jegede identified insufficient education as one of the problems. "Judging by the hollowness of some of the works being exhibited by our regular stream of budding artists, one may be justified in indicting an educational system which now buckles under the harsh impact of an oppressive economy. It would appear that our studio art students, especially the painters, are more interested in manufacturing works which are more likely to satisfy the untutored taste of the art collector than meet the minimum requirements demanded by the teacher". Jegede thinks it is "the mercenary tendency", rather than any act motivated by the desire to make genuine contributions to the meaning of art, "which is central to the uproarious cacophony of art exhibitions".

The promotion of Nigerian arts and culture witnessed remarkable renaissance. The factors responsible for the nation's cultural re-awakening are manifested in many folds. However, the most important landmark event in this regard, was the launching in 1988 of the CULTURAL POLICY FOR NIGERIA. The policy, amongst

other things, has specific provisions for the development and enhancement of contemporary arts through the establishment of specialised institutions like the National Gallery of Arts. Other existing cultural agencies are also mobilised to embark on resourceful programmes in promoting Nigerian culture in general and Nigerian arts and artists in particular. For instance, the Nigerian Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) has been reorganised to make it better equipped to fulfil the laudable goals of the Cultural Policy.

Similarly, the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) has been significantly restructured to harness and manifest the cultural aspirations of the Federal Government in relation to the promotion of Nigerian arts. The festival, which became an annual event at the instance of General Babangida, afforded ample opportunity for Nigerian artists to display their artistic prowess and compete with one another. At the 1990 edition of the festival, for example, the National Open Art Competition in Painting was staged. This particular event resuscitated the seemingly dormant spirit of competition among Nigerian artists. The competition created avenues for Nigerian artists to research, reflect on the past in order to enrich the present and future development of the visual arts.

It is perhaps very important to state that a very potent avenue of promoting contemporary Nigerian arts and crafts is the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC). The council, more than ever before, has been very forceful and purposeful in promoting Nigerian works of arts both here and abroad. The council is a resource centre for Nigerian 'hard core' arts and contemporary artists. It has all along been involved in the organisation of seminars, workshops and art exhibitions in the need to educate Nigerians on the nature and the present state of contemporary Nigerian arts.

Some of these exhibitions subtly re-echo the former Director General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Professor Gabriel Olusanya's notion of "cultural diplomacy". For instance, on February 15, 1992, the NCAC in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute, Lagos, staged an exhibition of masks. The exhibition was organised to encourage a comparison in the artistic nuances of

African and Western traditions of mask-making.

More importantly, the NCAC is embarking on a vigorous export drive for Nigerian art works in line with the Federal Government's economic policy towards diversifying 'the country's foreign exchange sources. The council's export drive is informed by the realisation that the nation's cultural sector has potentials that can be exploited to boost trade in crafts, paintings, sculptures, ceramics, etc. For instance, at the 1990 Taipei International Export Fair in Taiwan, the council exhibited various samples of decorative and functional Nigerian arts and crafts such as metal works, leather works, calabashes, beads, pottery and wood works. Also, Nigerian craft products were exhibited at the International Fair of Nigerian crafts in Timisoara, Romania, in October 1991. Dr. Sule Bello, Director of NCAC reported with a sense of achievement, that over 100,00 people visited the Nigerian stand at the Taipei Fair and that about 13 companies indicated interest in the importation of Nigerian crafts.

By most accounts, the economic policy of the Babangida administration has significantly affected the production and consumer behaviour of most Nigerians. People have increasingly become more enterprising and adventurous in their skills and trades. The average Nigerian has been able to forego imported things for cheaper but equally useful alternatives. Economic reasons create necessities, a way of boosting the local craft industry and consequently inventions. The local textile industry, for example, is presently very active following the prevailing economic hardship. Nigerian textile products have become the vogue among the fashionable elite. The boom in the textile industry is also evident in the fact that fashion design institutes have sprung up all over the country. Moreover, local textile products have made quite appreciable impact on foreign markets.

People are now becoming increasingly interested in the previously neglected traditional ways of furnishing houses. In line with this new direction, a sample of a traditionally furnished apartment was exhibited at the 1990 edition of NAFEST. Traditional furniture of various shapes and designs were exhibited there. The model apartment had woven mats as carpets, and was adorned with impressive wall decors such as designed calabashes, carvings and leather artefacts.

Observers at the exhibition were of the opinion that the idea should be introduced to estate developers because of its cost-benefit advantages.

It would perhaps be an under-statement that the overall success of the government's cultural promotion drive would very much depend on availability of funds. The underlying cost of arranging arts exhibitions, arts festivals, and securing local and international markets for the nation's cultural products, could be overwhelming for the respective bodies charged with effecting such activities. This reality perhaps informed the decision of President Ibrahim Babangida to establish the National Endowment Fund for the Arts, to advance and enhance the nation's cultural fortunes. The fund, when it is fully and functionally operational would attract contribution from both the federal and state governments. It is also expected to draw donors from commercial houses including multi-national companies, private concerns and individuals.

The positive developments in fostering Nigerian arts would be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of two particular agencies in this regard. The first is the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) which sponsored apprenticeship training for young school leavers under its Vocational Open Skills Scheme. The second agency is the Better Life for Rural Women (BLP), the brainchild of the First Lady, Mrs. Maryam Babangida. Rural women are encouraged and mobilised to partake in the production of various craft items. Their products are exhibited at various rallies and fairs in Nigeria and abroad.

The film industry, the youngest of the arts in Nigeria, has somewhat made tremendous progress in the last few years. Its slow growth in the country is not unconnected with its very heavy financial demands, availability of trained technicians, actors, actresses and most importantly, equipment. It is about the only field of arts where technical capability is a prerequisite for development. Film production in the country in the pre-independence and early post-independence era, was largely limited to newsreels, features and documentaries.

For over a decade in post-independent Nigeria, foreign films of Western and Indian origins dominated the film industry in Nigeria. These two distinct film traditions had considerable influence on the Nigerian society at that point in time. In respect of Indian films, for instance, the Indian language, which is not intelligible to Nigerians, did not even constitute a barrier to the acceptability of the films as Nigerians easily embraced the universal film language and identified with the songs, drums, and dances that constituted the aesthetic of these films. In the past two decades or so Nigerians have blazed the trail in private film making in the country. This crop of independent producers include Babs Yahaha, Ola Balogun, Francis Oladele and Eddie Ugbomah. It is also very important to note that the entry of popular theatre practitioners like Late Chief Hubert Ogunde, Ade Folayan and Moses Olaiya led to an upsurge in indigenous film productions.

The history of film production in Nigeria dates back to 1948 with the establishment of the colonial film unit. But it was about 30 years later, 1979 to be precise, that efforts were directed at establishing a virile, functional and purposeful film industry in Nigeria. At that point in time, the NCAC organised a seminar on film and its relationship to cultural development in Nigeria. The historic seminar made some recommendations to the then Federal government, expatiating and emphasizing the desirability of having a functional film industry. These efforts culminated in the promulgation of Decree No. 61 of 1979 which brought about the establishment of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC). After a period of relative inactivity, NFC was resuscitated in 1985 with the appointment of Brendan Shehu and Mr. Eddie Ugbomah as the General Manager and Chairman respectively in 1989. With these developments, the corporation embarked on the construction of its industrial film complex in Lamingo village, Jos.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to emphasize that with the valuable material assistance offered by the Plateau State government in terms of provision of land for the film industrial complex and a building, the corporation has been able to save part of the cost it would have

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incurred in the execution of its projects. Coupled with tremendous assistance it received from the Federal government, the corporation has been able to complete about 80 per cent of its project executions. A major achievement in this regard is the completion of its ultra-modern colour film processing laboratory, in Jos in 1989. The laboratory, within a short period of its existence, has considerably enhanced the quality of film production in the country. It offers services ranging from printing of rushes for 16 and 35mm colour films, negative cutting, tural prints, duplicating, release prints, and liquid gate blow-ups. This has consequently widened the scope of NFC's operations to make it more vigorous, purposeful and functional.

Furthermore, sources at the corporation's public relations office claim that the equipment for the dubbing studios has arrived and the installation is expected to be completed by the end of 1992. The corporation's film archives have also started operations. As a result, Nigerian films in the British library have been brought back to Nigeria and kept in the archives.

Apart from NFC's film productions which are predominantly documentaries and promos, the last seven years have witnessed an avalanche of indigenous feature films in Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. The themes of these films range from the metaphysical to current occurrences in our social reality. The cinema houses which had been deserted following the advent of personal video machines in Nigerian homes, have been witnessing a resurgence of patronage as a result of these films. In view of the more conducive environment that surrounds the Nigerian film industry, individuals and corporate bodies have been involved in a more resourceful and adventurous film production drive, knowing fully well that the country is now well endowed with the necessary requirements and that there is a ready audience for their products. For instance, the NCAC, in collaboration with the National Film and Television School in London, United Kingdom, recently produced an indigenous Nigerian film by Balewa titled "Kasarmu Ce" (This land is ours) The premiere of this film, which is an embodiment of Nigerian and indeed African values was watched and launched by President Ibrahim Babangida.

at Abuja Sheraton Hotel and Towers on April 22, 1992.

From all indications, it appears that the Federal government's efforts to mobilise corporate bodies and individuals to appreciate Nigerian arts as a potent means of preserving our past and fostering coordinated modernisation are yielding positive returns. For instance, in 1991, people were mobilized under the auspices of Pan-African Movement of Nigeria to press for the return of Benin art treasures that were looted in the 1987 British invasion of Benin. The body, with the active support of the Oba of Benin, spearheaded a mass signature drive towards retrieving looted art works such as the FESTAC mask and others from British museums and private collections.

The Organisers of this movement insist that Benin art treasures brought African art to pre-eminence and corrected the erroneous notion that African art was primitive. They also argue that Benin arts are not only priceless but have religious and historical values which could help us retrieve our roots, and restore our dignity and cultural identity.

With all the mentioned activities in the nation's cultural sector and several others, one could confidently claim that the seven years of the Babangida administration have been a period of cultural renaissance, bringing the nation's immense cultural values to the awareness of the people and thus encouraging them to explore the potentialities of our culture for self-reliant development.

Chapter 6

IBB AND THE MEDIA

by
Dayo Alao

INTRODUCTION

When John Galbraith in his book, *The Anatomy of Power*, observes "No one should minimize the power of the media", he had in his mind the important role the press is empowered to perform by virtue of its position as the watch dog of the society.¹

The press in any society has never been a neutral agent in class and ideological conflicts. In its conventional role, the press is expected to set the tone of public debate, analyse and interpret events in the interest of the general public. That is why the press is entrusted with ideological functions that either help to confer legitimacy on existing societal arrangements or to promote an alternative that would be in the interest of the citizenry.²

One attribute of the press that has remained constant over the ages is that it is the pride of all men with ambition to power. It is the desire of every ruler to either make the press an ally or tame it, limiting its freedom to such a level that would no longer pose a threat to the stability of the power holder.

In Africa, most statesmen do not stop at keeping the press at arms length; they introduce legislations that constantly check and regulate the press. The press in Nigeria is acclaimed to be the freest in Africa, but the Nigerian situation exemplifies the general constraints outlined above. Government ownership and control of most of the media are the major constraint.³

Through the use of legislation, government is able to curtail what it perceives as undue expression of press freedom. Owners of the private media take their cue from the attitude and actions of government.

That to some extent, accounts for the proliferation of media organisations established to provide political and economic bases for the proprietors. Opinion expressed therefore in which the support of the proprietor is not enlisted is considered or seen as anti-establishment. Quite too often the press is accused of insensitivity to issues affecting national security and national interest. These contentious terms have been used as convenient excuse to impose restrictions on the press. The point deserves stressing, however, that media practitioners do not always exhibit the sense of balance demanded by Nigeria's complex and multi-ethnic constituencies. In a number of instances, the interests of owners of media organisations are presented as if they are synonymous with those of the whole country.

This chapter seeks to examine the press coverage of issues and events during the seven years of Babangida's administration. In doing this, conscious effort will be made to show how Babangida's administration won the support of the press and the number of times press/government relations recorded sour notes.

MEDIA SUPPORT

When President Ibrahim Babangida came to power in August 1985, the first thing he did that won the hearts of the press was the abrogation of Decree 4 that the Buhari/Idiagbon administration promulgated in 1984. The decree that sought to protect public officers against false accusation had generated controversy in the media and public circles. The first two victims were Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor of "The Guardian". They were jailed one year each for publishing a report that Buhari's government considered a "speculation". The Guardian was fined.

Throughout the twenty months of Buhari's government, the press and influential Nigerians never relented in their opposition to the draconian decree and other acts that bordered on abuse of human rights. In his maiden broadcast on August 27, 1985 Babangida abrogated the decree. The announcement was received as a soothing massage and a balm to heal the cancerous wounds inflicted by the

twenty- months rule of Buhari and Idiagbon.

President Babangida went beyond rhetorics when he made good his promise by abrogating the obnoxious decree and ordering the immediate release of those jailed under it.

The nearest thing to Decree 4 in the Nigerian Press history was the 1976 decree passed shortly after a Lagos University lecturer, the late Dr. Obarogie Ohonbamu, questioned the integrity of late General Murtala Muhammed. Decree 4 was promulgated as a drastic response to a series of press commentaries and reports that the government described as embarrassing. For example, a special message was sent round the Universities that it was unlawful for Nigerian academics to speak to foreign journalists without permission from the authorities.

The seriousness of the decree is best captured by a Guardian editorial as follows:-

“The press has resigned itself to the innocuous chronicling of the pronouncements of public men: and the government is preoccupied with incestuous monologue with itself. And out of this, what stands out is the improverishment of the state itself and the stifling of the very processes by which the nation regenerates itself.”

With the abrogation of Decree 4, President Babangida became the darling of the press. Cartoonists sketched him as a saviour of the oppressed. Commentators became more sympathetic to his cause. Some publishers and editors found their way to his home and enlisted themselves as members of his kitchen cabinet. With decree 4 abrogated and victims granted pardon, the doors of Dodan Barracks, the then seat of power, were flung open to former critics like Tai Solarin, Wole Soyinka and a host of others.

The release of public officers from detention and the President's granting of an interview to the **Nigerian Tribune** (that had over the years been noted for its anti-government posture) further endeared

Babangida's government to the mass media. The assessment of the first 100 days of Babangida in the media was favourable. A little bit of self-censorship by the press and the remarkable tolerance level of the government smoothened relationships in the first few months of President Babangida's administration.

It was with this same spirit and urgency that the press thought government would tackle its programmes. The smiling face of President Babangida became popular with a press which had seen the stern and austere looks of the duo, Muhammed Buhari and Idiagbon.

President Babangida's dexterity in handling state affairs made Chinweizu, a **Vanguard** columnist, to compare his skills to that of Argentina's ace footballer, Diego Armando, known as Maradona. Chinweizu's commentary appeared on July 6, 1986. Within the same period, a cartoonist with the **West Africa Magazine**, a publication of **Daily Times** also portrayed President Babangida as dribbler of many parts and styles. The cartoon was captioned "Maradona".

In September, 1987, when the President granted audience to Kaye Whiteman, the editor-in-chief of **West Africa Magazine**, he wanted to know President Babangida's reaction to being addressed as Maradona of the Nigeria political scene. "I laughed" was Babangida's laconic reply.

Also commenting on Babangida's skills in 1987, late Chief Bisi Onabanjo, writing in his **AIYEKOTO** column of the **Nigerian Tribune** referred to President Babangida as "Maradona". Over the years, the "maradonic" image has been a familiar one by which Babangida's actions are sometimes portrayed in the press.

COVERAGE OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

A year after assuming office, the administration set up the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) to uplift the living standards of people in the rural communities throughout the country, and to educate them about the administration's political and economic measures as contained in the transition programme and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). And in order to effectively promote the activities, the press support was seriously enlisted. Most Nigerians hailed the establishment of the Directorate and the media helped immensely in enlightening those who had doubts about its functions.

Counting on the support of the mass media, DFRRI set out a bold programme of opening up the rural areas for development. By 1992, about 80 percent of the estimated 96,000 kilometres of rural feeder roads and a good percentage of electrification targeted by the presidency had been executed.

The media was generally supportive of the establishment of the Directorate of Mass Mobilisation and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), although some conceived it as a duplication of the Federal Ministry of Information. In practice, however, MAMSER turned out to be necessary complement to the Ministry's statutory functions. MAMSER adopted innovative methods of building awareness, particularly in regard to the drive to enshrine a new political culture.

MAMSER attempted to make its existence relevant by sponsoring certain information programmes. Among them were political enlightenment programmes in the print and the electronic media. The ideals of democracy, who should vote, how to vote, and the type of persons to vote for, were all propagated. A good example of such campaigns was the 6.50am regular slot on Radio Nigeria. Media surveys showed that many Nigerians benefited from the programme.

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MAMSER also sponsored adult literacy campaigns by creating a social mobilisation corps or MAMSER brigade of 25,000 youths as pioneers. They embarked on mass literacy campaigns, especially on political education, so as to get the best out of our democratic process towards the Third Republic. Unfortunately, the programme crashed because of improper homework of the executors. The agency that was helping in doing the job was consuming so much money that the establishment could no longer cope with continuing with the programme.

MAMSER also embarked on anti-smuggling campaign as a positive measure towards economic recovery. Unfortunately, not much was achieved. However, MAMSER, somehow, tried to inculcate the spirit of discipline and self-reliance in the people. The local communities were mobilised to form co-operative societies to enable them to take loans for whatever laudable projects they might want to start. To an extent, the effort succeeded.

Another programme that projected Babangida's administration positively in the media was the Better Life Programme (BLP), a brain-child of Mrs. Maryam Babangida. Although many people were sceptical when it was introduced in 1987, there was a widespread desire in 1992 in favour of continuing with the programme after the end of military rule in 1993.

Like a wild fire spreading uncontrollably in the forest, BLP has penetrated into almost all the local communities in Nigeria. Looking up to Mrs. Babangida as a point of reference, the wives of various state governors, who were the chairpersons of the BLP in their states, have reasonably mobilised the rural women in their various localities for diverse projects.

Because of its laudable aims and objectives, the press gave the programme a good coverage. Journalists did not fail to criticise when and where they should. Supporting the BLP in its editorial comment of June 14th, 1990, the *Nigerian Tide* wrote:

"The Nigerian Tide does not see the programme in any other light than that it is a people-oriented one which no stone should be left unturned in the effort to achieve".

Giving an appraisal of the BLP after four years, the **Voice** wrote in its editorial of October 8th, 1991,

It is on record that Mrs. Babangida, as the brain behind the BLP, a few months ago won the United Nations Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger. The award was in recognition of her pioneering role in the BLP.

A documentary film on the BLP titled, **THE STORY SO FAR**, won the special prize at the Second Pyongyang International Film Festival for non-aligned developing countries. Undoubtedly, the achievements of BLP so far cannot be separated from the support given to it by the media.

SOUR NOTES

What appeared like the best press relationship that any military government could enjoy was not without sour notes. However, the relationship did not get to the level of alienation and hostility witnessed during the Buhari/Idiagbon era. The press was conscious of its role in encouraging peace, progress and stability, while the government also maintained a fairly good record in liberalism in keeping with universal traditions of press freedom.

Like in any other part of the world, some policies and actions of government threatened the cordial relationship between the press and the government. One of such issues is the continued existence of Decree 2 in our statute books.⁵ It was generally expected that Decree 2 of 1984 would be repealed along with Decree 4. Decree 2, (State Security Detention of Persons Decree) like the abrogated Decree 4 was promulgated by the Buhari/Idiagbon government in 1984. Rather than abrogate it, Babangida's administration merely amended certain parts. Its essential lethal instruments were retained, to wit, "No Suit or other legal proceeding shall lie against any

person from anything done or intended to be done in pursuance of this decree". The clause rendered the courts and the course of justice irrelevant and made the release of those in detention under the decree difficult.

Press comments and opinions have consistently highlighted the dangers of the decree for indirectly suspending chapter iv of the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that made provisions for Fundamental Human Rights.

When the decree was amended by Decree 12 of 1985 by Babangida's government, the measure was welcomed by the press, for it took cognisance of inherent dangers in vesting the authority of action on only few people. But the press expressed worry about the clause of the decree that increased the period of a detention of a victim to six months from the initial three months.⁶ Press and public opinion supports the view that the decree granted to the military the power of a prosecutor and judge, thereby making nonsense of the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of Nigerians as a people and the press as an institution. For a very long time there was an overwhelming call for the scrapping of the decree.

The issue of Nigeria's membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) generated press and public furore. The press handling of the matter nearly split the country along religious lines. But President Babangida's ability to manage crisis minimised danger of the Muslim-Christian divide⁷ that the press seemed, inadvertently, to be promoting. The government set up a 22-member presidential committee to examine the level of Nigeria's involvement in the matter. This intervention did not quite erase suspicions that the government had been overwhelmed by sectarian religious pressures.

There were other cases of press bashing. Media practitioners in government were on the neck of their colleagues. The press was accused of sensationalism and publication of falsehood. Early in 1986, some Newswatch editors were interrogated over their commentaries that caused concern to the government. Late Dele Giwa the

editor-in-chief and chief executive of the magazine was accused of gun running and an attempt to stage a revolution. He was later freed of some of the charges. But the media bliss the administration was enjoying almost came to an abrupt end on October 19th, 1986 when Dele Giwa was killed on his breakfast table by a parcel bomb.

Giwa's gruesome killing was a rude shock to the nation, moreso, that the method used was so "sophisticated and alien" to the country. The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) was grieved to the extent that it declared five days of mourning in honour of the fallen colleague. From then on, journalists got scared.

All in all, what really worried the press was government's inability to find Dele Giwa's killer. The NUJ, under the leadership of George Izobo, expressed dissatisfaction with the way the police were handling the matter. Izobo once told Prince Tony Momoh, a journalist, who was then the Information Minister:

"Our patience is running out. It seems the police are not doing much to track down the killers, and we are not kept informed on the latest about the issue".

Media practitioners and "Newswatch" staff in particular were still nursing the wounds of Giwa's death when again the sledge hammer of the Federal Government fell heavily on the Newswatch Communications in April, 1987. The magazine was banned from publishing for six months for unauthorised publication of the report of the political bureau set up by the Federal Government to fashion an enduring political future for Nigeria.

In that April 13th 1987, edition aptly titled, THIRD REPUBLIC - A NEW POLITICAL AGENDA, Newswatch magazine carried views which government felt could destabilize the country. Within a few days, Decree 6 of 1987 was promulgated proscribing the magazine. The decree reads in part;

Whereas section 36 (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 provides that every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinion and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference.

"And whereas Section 36 (3) of the said Constitution provides that nothing in this section shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society for the purpose of preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence;

"And whereas it is also provided in section 41 of the said Constitution that nothing in section 34, 35, 36 and 37 of the Constitution shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality;

"And whereas **Newswatch** magazine has published classified and confidential matters in its volume 5, No. 15, issue of April 13th, 1987.

"And whereas it is necessary to take appropriate measures to prevent further disclosure of classified and confidential matters in the interest of public safety and public order;

"Now therefore, the Federal Military Government hereby decrees as follows:-

"(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 or in any other enactment or law, the Weekly Newsmagazine known as "**Newswatch**" and published by Newswatch Communications Limited, is hereby proscribed from being published and prohibited from circulation in Nigeria or any part thereof.

"(2) The premises where the Weekly Newsmagazine referred to in Section 1 of this decree is published shall be sealed up by the Inspector-General of Police or any officer of the Nigeria Police Force authorised in that behalf during the duration of this decree".

And so, **Newswatch** was banned. As could be predicted, the ban equally generated a lot of furore across the length and breadth of the country. It was the second terrible blow **Newswatch Communications Limited** suffered within six months.

Dazed by the ban, **Newswatch** Executives and Directors immediately tendered an apology to the Government. The interceding of the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and others softened the heart of government enough to revoke the ban before the period stipulated in the decree.

With the Federal Government curbing what it regarded as the excessive freedom of the press, the example encouraged state governments to tighten the harness on their own media. Minor errors and criticism of government policies or functionaries were looked at with an intolerant view. The period saw the firing of editors like Jonathan Ishaku, who was editing **The Nigerian Standard**, a newspaper owned by the Plateau State Government, the arrest of journalists like Femi Aborishade of **The Labour Militant** Ikpe Etukudo of **New Horizon** magazine, Etim Etim of **The Guardian**, and Mohammed Hassan of **Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo**.

Again in March 1990, Bala Dan Abu, the editor of **Quality Magazine**, a sister publication of **Newswatch** magazine, was arrested for publishing an 'offensive' story. Former Imo State Governor, Sam Mbakwe, had granted an interview for the magazine in which he said inter alia: "The Spirit of Biafra still lives.... Ibos will fight again".

In June, 1990, the police acting on the orders of the Lagos State Governor Colonel Raji Rasaki, sealed up the premises of the **Champion Newspaper** in Lagos. The editor of the **Daily Champion** Mr. Emma Agu, was detained for four days. The offence of the organisation was that it published a story on the closure of Alaba International Market in its June 8th edition. The Governor considered the story untrue and embarrassing and felt the best way to clear himself

and his government was to close up the newspaper house.

Also in 1991, the same State Government closed down "The Guardian" newspapers for writing a story on "Yabatech - police fracas". The then editor of the "Guardian Express", Mr. Bayo Oguntimehin, and three other reporters were arrested and charged to court for attempting to cause disunity and distability in the country. The action was hotly contested by the NUJ and civil rights organisations. The newspaper house was opened and the journalists released after some days.

Media practitioners were indeed irked by the incessant closure of newspaper houses located in Lagos. They were angry with the way the Lagos State Government was clamping down on them indiscriminately just because their newspaper houses happened to have been located in Lagos. They expected a little restraint in handling issues related to the press since both the government and the press ought to be partners in progress, working for the good of the society. Besides, journalists expected the Federal Government to wade into the matter and caution state governments against sealing off newspaper houses indiscriminately.

As if the hard days for journalists were forever, Concord Group of Newspapers was shut for weeks in April of 1992. The "African Concord", a newsmagazine published in the Concord stable, had carried an "embarrassing" story, "HAS IBB GIVEN UP"? The magazine highlighted certain events which nearly gave the impression that President Babangida was confused about the state of Nigeria's economy. The Concord Group was closed down and the premises sealed off.

The said development became a media issue for some weeks as the editor of the magazine, Mr. Bayo Onanuga, was allegedly asked by the publisher of Concord Group, Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola, to tender an apology to President Babangida. Onanuga was reported to have refused to do that and decided to resign his appointment. Propelled by the spirit of solidarity and commitment, the majority of "African Concord" staffers resigned with the editor.

Pressmen and women began to wonder whether they could perform their professional duty without molestation if they ever wrote stories that did not favour the government or the people in power.

But President Babangida was not a rigid personality. All along, the benevolence of the administration was never in doubt. The uncertainty that typified the Buhari/Idiagbon years was largely absent. From time to time the administration gave assurances on its willingness to tolerate criticism. For example, in a statement reported by the "West Africa" magazine of September 23rd, 1989, President Babangida said that he had kept faith with its liberal policy on the media.

We are running an open administration which emphasises responsiveness to the yearnings and aspirations of the people ... since we do not claim to know all the answers ministers must demonstrate a willingness to listen to genuine advice and constructive criticism .

But the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation Mr. Clement Apamgbo did not fail to warn in "West Africa" magazine of July 6-12th, 1992 that:

Any malignant turmour requires a surgical operation...the right of freedom of the press is not absolute. You cannot in the name of press freedom sabotage the security of the country.

Apart from government legislation, the effect of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) severely handicapped the media industry. Cost of printing materials and equipment went up in an astronomical degree. Newsprint tonnage that sold at N965 in 1986, cost about N6,500 in 1989. The price went to N16,000 in 1992. A similar trend was noticeable in the cost of equipment in the electronic media. (See chart under "References") Although President Babangida removed the import duty on newsprint, the impact was not felt because of the constant fall in the value of the Naira.

IBB'S GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN MEDIA COVERAGE

Military governments, especially those in Africa were already becoming unpopular globally when General Babangida took over power in 1985. However, his government was able to win the favour of foreign media initially because the August 1985 coup was bloodless. His revocation of Buhari's oppressive laws especially Decree 4 of 1984, also helped to raise his profile.

But the good rapport was short-lived. The new dimension to the hitherto favourable reports crept in when government clamped a ban on wheat importation in the country. The ban was to encourage local production and as well reduce the drain on the economy. The ban took effect from January 1, 1987, although the announcement had been made several months before then. Public opinion considered government action as a bold step towards self-sufficiency. But most wheat exporting countries did not seem to like the ban. As a way of showing their annoyance there were a series of negative reports on Nigeria, especially its economic policy.

That notwithstanding, the Federal Government stood its grounds. It was not ready to submit to blackmail by the media. Government made swift moves to counter the negative reporting by embarking on a series of advertisements in some foreign newspapers and news magazines to correct the erroneous impression already created by the Western press, especially.

In the *Newsweek* magazine of August 28th, 1989, the Federal Government placed a 20-page advertisement propagating the economic potentials of the country, and the measures the government was taking to put her faltering economy back on sound footing. In the supplement, aptly headlined "Working for Prosperity", issues on the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), transition arrangement and distribution of gas to more states, were highlighted. As a follow-up on August 27th 1990, the Federal Government placed another 23-page supplement in the same magazine in which it analysed achievements between 1985 and 1990

State Governments were not relegated to the background as some of them equally placed advertisements in support of the Federal position. For instance, in efforts to woo more investors, the Ogun State government had a supplement in the December 16th, 1991, edition of the Newsweek magazine with the title OGUN STATE - GATEWAY TO NIGERIA.

But the Federal Government would not leave any stone unturned to redeem the country's image. In another pragmatic move to make the world know why Nigeria and other member nations of the ECOWAS contributed troops to form ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), sent to war-torn Liberia, the Department of External Publicity of the Federal Ministry of Information, published a pamphlet titled: LIBERIA - A MISSION OF PEACE. A portion of the pamphlet read "For the avoidance of doubt, Nigeria has no territorial ambition in Liberia or anywhere else in Africa or worldwide. Nigeria firmly believes in the principle of inviolability of national integrity of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations. Neither Nigeria, nor the other members of the ECOWAS forced their way into resembling military adventurism. Nigeria is a member of a sub-regional group that took a solemn decision to restore peace by separating the warring factions in a sister country, Liberia".

While the Federal Government and well-meaning-Nigerians were worried over how to improve Nigeria's image, some sections of the foreign media were seemingly and desperately making a mockery of the good efforts. For example, when Governor Raji Rasaki of Lagos State was touring Agege Local Government Area of the State in March, 1990, he instructed the people (Lagosians) to kill whoever "come to your house to steal" and "lynch any of the robbers so caught". The period the governor gave the instruction happened to be the time when Prince Charles and his wife, Lady Diana, were visiting the country. Although many Nigerians disapproved of Governor Rasaki's statement and said so openly, a London tabloid,

The Mirror, still went ahead to paint the country in the familiar stereotype of "heart of darkness".

In a story titled "Charles and Di's journey into danger", the paper informed its readers that the couple were visiting a country where "mobs were encouraged". It went as far as insinuating that the royal couple would be visiting the governor who gave the "killing" order. Nigerians at home and aboard were bitter about the report since Governor Rasaki merely expressed a personal opinion and not that of all Nigerians.

But for a country whose image has, without justification, been battered by negative foreign media reports, and whose citizens have been subjected to various inhuman treatment abroad, any citizen would naturally want some respite after the Rasaki case. Unfortunately, it was never to be. Another attack was unleashed on the country barely a year after. And the pain was more because the foreign reporter who did the damage was resident in Nigeria.

William Keeling, the London *Financial Times* correspondent in Nigeria, had published an article in June 29th, 1991 edition of the journal in which he highlighted how the Federal Government expended the oil wind-fall accruing to the country during the Gulf War. Government was still to furnish Nigerians with the accounts of Nigeria's oil revenue at the end of the War when Keeling came up with his "misleading reports". The journalist said that about 3 billion dollars of the oil revenue were unaccounted for by the Central Bank. Consequently, he speculated that the money could have been used on the 1991 OAU summit held in Abuja as well as the operation of ECOMOG in Liberia.

Keeling had, on some occasions, been summoned by government over certain reports he wrote in the *Financial Times* which were considered misleading. In January 1991, the then Finance Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Alhaji, summoned him over two articles he wrote in 1990. One was on the British Foreign Office's protest against what they considered as Nigeria's pro-Iraqi stance during the Gulf War. The other was on the failure of the Federal Government to receive 500 million dollars World Bank loan meant for the Ajaokuta Steel Complex. The Federal Government was so irked by the oil windfall story that she summarily deported Keeling. And in quick succession,

government wrote three different rejoinders to the offensive story. But a damage had already been done to Nigeria's name, no matter how minimal.

All these negative reports on Nigeria make foreign nationals suspect Nigerians wherever they go. Nigerians travelling abroad are subjected to dehumanising searches by airport officials because they were seen as potential "criminals". Nigerians abroad were seen as drug couriers whose shadows could even conjure users of drugs. It was not surprising, therefore, when *Newsweek* in its October 14th, 1991 edition, labelled Nigerians as major carriers of heroin. The name of Nigeria was displayed on the cover of the magazine while its cover story, headlined, **THE NIGERIAN CONNECTION - THE NEWEST LINK IN GROWING HEROIN TRADE**, portrayed the country as a leading participant in the illegitimate drug trade. It was reported that Nigerians control as much as 40 per cent of the supply of heroin to the United States.

Why the foreign media obstinately waged campaigns of calumny against Nigeria over the years may baffle those who innocently ascribe attributes of objectivity to Western mass media. But Nigeria's experience is only typical of a hysteria that has defined the West over the centuries. It does seem that any country in the world that has the potential to challenge Western hegemony is a target of negative attacks. The experience of Libya and Iraq is instructive here.

Nor can the local press be completely exonerated from blame in the matter. Most of the time, the damaging portraits of Nigeria are picked up from the pages of our newspapers where sensationalism overwhelms the professional calling for balance and fair judgement.

Notwithstanding the occasionally strained relations and unpleasant encounters, there is no doubt that Babangida has enjoyed a fairly good media coverage. His personality, ability to surprise as well as his capacity to generate controversy have made Babangida administration the biggest media event in Africa, except perhaps South Africa.

Below is a comparative data of cost of purchases of some essential printing materials during the Babangida years.

	ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE		
			1985	1987	1992
1.	Black Ink	1 Kilo	10.70	30.00	50.00
2.	Printing Film	A Packet	750.00	950.00	1,500.00
3.	Newsprint	Ton	450.00	1,500.00	17,000.00
4.	Blanket	-	900.00	1,800.00	400.00
5.	Plates	Sheet	45.00	65.00	200.00
6.	Pick-up Van Peugeot	1	9,000.00	25,000.00	350,000.00

Source:

The Daily Times of Nigeria Plc., Purchasing Dept., Ikeja (1985-1992)

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Chapter 7

BOOK PUBLISHING UNDER IBB

BY

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It is fascinating to observe a slow but steady rise of an industry that was about seven years ago in a state close to paralysis, at least in comparison with other industries. For those of us in the profession, this sudden awakening of interest and the resultant activity provide a refreshing hope for the development of publishing in Nigeria. The credit for the new viability of publishing in Nigeria must be shared by the main actors in the book production environment. These actors comprise the Federal government of Nigeria, Nigerian authors, publishers, investors, and professional bodies such as the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA).

By its very nature, the publishing industry thrives on the interdependence of various trades and interest groups. It is about the only industry that relies, for its success, on several skilled personnel and owes a substantial part of its success or otherwise to prevailing governmental attitude and policies. In the last seven years, the Nigerian publishing industry has witnessed a remarkable improvement in output that we cannot ignore. There is a consensus among critical watchers of the industry that more than fifty per cent increase in actual performance has been attained in the period under review. The most dominant factors at play in the consideration of contemporary trends in publishing in Nigeria can easily be classified under two broad groups of incentives and dis-incentives.

INCENTIVES

Central to the intellectual development of any country is the publishing process through which information is disseminated in a formal manner for public consumption.

The rate at which the publishing industry of any country develops could, in fact, be used as a yardstick for determining the intellectual maturity of the populace. For example, in a Catalogue of published Books in England, an entry under "Publications of the Week"

indicated that 2,040 publications were released in that week alone in Britain. In Nigeria, sources close to the National Library indicated that Nigeria barely records 1,000 publications in a year.

This disparity is a pointer to the recognition accorded by the entire populace to the publishing industry, yet it has been long realized that any society that is non-committal in respect of its publishing activities is doomed to intellectual and political under-development. To what extent, therefore, has our publishing environment been sustained and nurtured to avert the danger of under-development? Under the Babangida administration the cry for the curtailment of high book price and promotion of a viable publishing industry has been very loud. Not surprisingly this call has been heeded by government officials who realized the importance of education and acquisition of knowledge through printed matter. It will be appropriate to mention some of the land-mark decisions that have been taken so far.

GOVERNMENTAL ACTION

In Nigerian governmental circles an awareness of the continental 'book hunger' was shown and linked to the urgent need for mass literacy and the protection of the book industry. This governmental commitment created the impetus for the establishment of certain structural entities. Such entities were charged with the implementation of government policies relating to book development, administration of the copyright law, text book production and literacy promotion. The Book Development Centre which was established as a part of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has taken its rightful position as the government parastatals for the publication of text books under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education.

The Ministry itself has recorded considerable success in its book development activities, an achievement that is amply traceable to the commitment of the functionaries. Within a brief period of its introduction of the mother-tongue learning process, the Ministry was able to release its first print-run of primary school texts in the

main Nigerian languages. With its relocation to Abuja the NERDC is in a stronger position to further promote book production and publishing within the country.

THE NIGERIAN COPYRIGHT COUNCIL

The promulgation of the Copyright Decree 47 of 1988 and the establishment of the Nigerian Copyright Council reflect the commitment to promote intellectual culture. The promulgation of the Copyright decree alone testifies to the determination of the government to reduce, if not remove the structural obstacles to development of publishing. Since the Copyright Council was established, authors, artists, and all those generally in the creative industry have been able to heave a sigh of relief over the nagging problem of piracy.

Protection of intellectual property is after all as much of a business of government as is the protection of physical property, of great significance to the citizen of Nigeria in particular is the fact that government has now created a suitable cultural social and legal environment for writers to function. Prior to the promulgation of the law we saw how book pirates brazenly reproduced cheap versions of the books of popular authors such as Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and others. A single element that is found most fascinating by writers and artists alike as far as Copyright law is concerned is the sharpness of the clauses which make it possible for the aggrieved party to seek both civil and criminal remedies for copyright infringement. One other significant aspect of the law is the articulation of royalty obligation by the publisher to the writer or artists.

NATIONAL LITERACY COMMISSION

The creation of the National Commission for Mass Literacy would appear to be the third lap of the tripod created by government in order to promote the publishing trade. Over the years, there have been claims, even by some of our leading writers, that Africans don't read.

The truth of course is that Africans would read when they are in a

position financially and educationally to do so. Fortunately Nigeria has accepted that the book is one of the important tools education and that there can be no mass literacy without a conscious promotion and nurturing of the publishing industry.

As a matter of fact, educationists the world over have reached a consensus that literacy cannot be delimited without thought and provision for the printing and publishing trade. As I have once observed, what is literacy if not the ability to read and write with understanding? The establishment and sustenance of the relationship of a printed word is what literacy is all about.

The sixth objective of the Literacy year (1990) is "to use international literacy for launching the plan of action for eradicating literacy by the year 2,000, and for addressing issues of critical importance to the progress of literacy such as reducing primary school drop-outs and establishing programmes to prevent a relapse into illiteracy". But the gains of adult literacy classes are short-lived when the literate adult does not have a continuous supply of interesting materials to read.

WORLD BANK SUPPORT

Over the years, the World Bank has been consistent in its release of funds to governments for book development as part of a national development support programmes. Nigeria has been a beneficiary of this kind of loans which are used not only for governmental publishing but establishment of libraries in both urban and rural areas. During the tenure of the Babangida administration the World Bank loans were utilised extensively for publishing as observed earlier and the gains of that programme were becoming evident by 1992.

NOMA AWARDS

The Noma award is another incentive to promote publishing development in Nigeria, although it is usually organised under the auspices of the African Book Publishing Record. The award was instituted by the late Shoichi Noma, a Japanese publishing industrialist.

The sole aim of the award is to promote the publishing enterprise in Africa. The winning publication is usually selected by a committee made up of academics, book publishers and other representatives of the book industry. Niyi Osundare's poetry book **Waiting Laughters** published by Malthouse Press in Lagos won the 1991 Noma award.

Although the associations of the book trade in Nigeria have been much maligned over the years, it must be admitted that the Nigerian Publishers Association has woken up from its stupor in the last few years. The result is that the Association has been able to cultivate a permanent lobby at the Federal Ministry of Education, a move whose gains can be seen in the Ministry's positive attitude towards the book trade.

Of even more impactful significance is the Association's ability to get Nigeria involved in the establishment and operation of the African Book Collective Limited (ABC) located in Oxford, England.

This is a very successful experiment that promises far-reaching rewards for the African publishers whose books will now be available for sale in the Western market. It should be noted that scholarly books from Africa will be given special attention by ABC, a step that promises lucrative sales for the scholarly outfits in Nigeria.

Modest as this may seem, the establishment of the ABC marks the beginning of the end of the "cupboard love" that exists between the Nigerian author and the foreign publisher.

Hitherto, Nigerian authors accused of the unpatriotic act of placing their manuscripts with foreign publishers gave the excuse that local

publishers could not give the exposure they needed internationally.

With the ABC in operation, no Nigerian scholar would ever have to go beyond the walls of his or her University press to publish a manuscript and have it distributed worldwide.

It is worth noting that apart from the revitalisation of NPA under the Babangida administration, the birth of the scholarly publishers also took place in the period under review.

TRAINING

Unlike other professions, publishing is one in which training was, until recently, undertaken on the job. Up to the 1980s most Nigerian trainee publishers obtained practical experience and formal training abroad. Publishing houses that could not afford to send trainees abroad simply recruited mass communication graduates from the universities and organised induction programmes for them. When the Federal government approved in 1990 the establishment of a postgraduate book publishing programme to be run by the Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, it was evident that Nigeria was ready to grapple with its own problems. There is every assurance that the course will be adequately funded and subscribed to by the Nigerians.

DISINCENTIVES

Harsh conditions characterise the publishing environment in Nigeria. This ought not to be the case since publishing provides the touchstone for intellectual mobility and the overall upliftment of any nation. The problem faced by all the operatives in the publishing industry are enormous and even daunting except to the very courageous. First and foremost, is the problem of finance. Most of Nigerian publishing houses are grossly under capitalised. Traditionally, investors do not put their money into publishing ventures because of the fear of low returns. In the past few years, however, some entrepreneurs have invested their funds in what is now popularly referred to as junk magazines. Asked why they did not go into book publishing, they responded that the business of magazines

move, while that of books tends to be too slow and unpredictable.

Next to the problem of narrow capital base, is that of shortage of materials. Most of the inputs required in the industry is manufactured in the Western world. Notably, all the hardware and even paper are imported. All efforts to persuade the government to lower or remove the heavy tariffs were unsuccessful until 1991 when drastic reductions were announced. But implementation has been frustrated by bureaucratic inertia. The devastating devaluation of the naira has further compounded the publishers' predicament, making importation of necessary materials extremely difficult.

Personnel turnover is high since salaries are unavoidably low. Book publishing as a profession has not yet come into its own, and professional editors have been put out of jobs in the wake of technological advances that have overtaken their trade. Yet, Nigeria is not benefitting maximally from the harvest of computerised publishing, since most of the equipment, even when acquired, still requires trained operators and engineers to keep them running.

Problems abound in the logistics of distributing and actually selling books owing to the poor conditions of our roads, transportation difficulties and ineffective communication channels.

Authors who should be the greatest allies of publishers are not always showing understanding since their own plight too is pathetic. Scientists, for example, lack research material, and are no longer privileged to attend conferences and seminars abroad. These limitations rob them of the stimulus needed for active intellectual activity which generates manuscripts. The difficulties are not totally insurmountable.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Apart from the Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Ministry of Justice embarked on an activity that by our local standards can be considered revolutionary. Under the administration of Prince Bola Ajibola, the Ministry commenced a massive publishing programme

featuring production of Law Reports and Statutes. It is remarkable that this step was not taken in the past to stem the shortage of books especially in the legal profession.

INDIGENOUS PUBLISHING INDUSTRIES

Although local publishing is done in Nigeria as an enterprise operated and dominated by British Publishing Houses, there has been an upward trend in the growth of indigenous publishing houses. It is instructive to note that whereas a few decades ago, most Nigerian authors published their manuscripts abroad, the reverse is now the case. Many Nigerians and indeed Africans are comfortably placing their manuscripts with Nigerian publishing houses. Some non-Nigerians from the developed countries have been publishing their manuscripts in Nigeria. This is a pointer to the increasing acceptance of our local publishing practice.

More significantly, the local publishing industry has been able to adjust to the turbulence of the economy by becoming more self-reliant. The resultant effect is that even though Nigeria is still lagging behind in terms of the number of titles produced yearly, she is the leading country in the African continent. Some statistics will not be out of place here. According to Mr. Victor Nwankwo in a recent article on publishing by Nigerians: "the decline in the availability of books started in 1982 corresponding to the austerity measures in the same year a study of the turn-over of the major Nigerian publishers from 1979-1982 indicates a consistent drop of about 12% over those of 1980. The book study sector points out that production costs have increased by 70% over the same period. Yet compared to other African countries Nigeria is still the leader in the publishing industry. It is on record that Nigeria in 1984 published 836 titles as compared to Senegal's 42 and Mozambique's 88". Why then has there been a decline in the publishers turn-over and the availability of books? It is clear that the various elements in book production have their respective set-backs. A few of these factors are examined below.

Authors

Since the establishment of the missionary presses in the nineteenth century Nigeria has not witnessed the proliferation of authors and publishing houses as happened in the last seven years. As recently as 1980 most text-books were imported. With the encouragement of indigenous publishing, however, several Nigerians have taken up the challenge and written books for both formal and informal education. This development has spread to the authorship of children's book, leisure books and general interest books. There is no doubt that the printed word has found a place of its own during the seven years under review.

One obvious feature of this development is the emergence of book-launching ceremonies which tend to help the publisher recoup his investment or a good percentage of it within a day. The result is that such books never get to the bookshops or libraries. Be that as it may, the fact remains that an awareness of the need for publishing books, not only for formal education purposes but for documentation and posterity, has been established. The role of the association of the Nigerian Authors cannot be ignored or under-estimated in this regard even though the association tends to favour the literary arts to the exclusion of the sciences.

Printing and Marketing

The technological revolution in the printing industry remains the greatest phenomenon of the century. With the introduction of high level technology to the publishing industry, it has become not only possible but feasible to produce books within a very short period and have them in good quality binding. This is not a feat that can be accomplished by the small scale publisher with meagre means. Typesetting and printing have become closely linked to the computer business, even though at great cost to the publishing houses.

Torn between the factor of high cost and the obligation to teach, many teachers, especially at the tertiary level, have had to resort to jungle style publishing by producing hand-outs. Heavy machinery and

consumables and computers are imported elements in the publishing industry. Without an adequate financial base no publishing industry can thrive. For a long time the Nigerian Publishers Association has been calling on the government to render direct assistance. It is comforting to learn that its cry is being heard and that, more than ever before, the government is working in collaboration with the Association to put an end to the problem of book shortage.

Book marketing continued to be a nightmare for publishers for various reasons. Most publishers operate on a skeletal budget and find it difficult to extend credit for very long periods. There is also the problem of the Nigerian book consumer who does not place priority on books which vis-a-vis compete with other necessities of life such as food and clothing. A related technical issue is that Nigerian bookshops operate from very narrow capital base and are not patronized as vigorously as they are in more literate societies. The general feeling that only text books are worth acquiring is yet to be dispelled.

Infrastructural problems such as availability of good roads, transportation and security, militate against adequate distribution. It is well known that even though there are now thirty state capitals, most publishers distribute their books only within a limited radius of their operation base, that is, close to their warehouses, so that collection of returns can be organised with minimal difficulty. Many bookshops link their book orders to the syllabuses of schools, and higher institutions. Books other than those of core texts do not enjoy priority. For the above reasons and others, the book situation in Nigeria has only marginally improved in the last few years or so. It is a matter for concern that even within the major cities and the informal outlets such as the bridge tops, book hawkers prefer to market imported books.

CONCLUSIONS

For the publishing industry to operate meaningfully and achieve its goal of ensuring that at least 164 out of every million of the population get a book to read, a symbiotic relationship has to exist between the government, the private sector and the publishing industry. Right now structures have been put in place to protect the intellectual arm of the industry through the education sector. Rather than get involved in direct publishing, an appropriate step to take is for the government to stimulate the industry from a distance, thus acting as a facilitator. Finances pose the problem for the author, the publisher as well as the seller or buyer of books. This is an area that would respond to governmental action. Loans at concessionary interests ought to be made available to the publishing industry.

Government should cooperate with the Nigerian Publishers Association for procurement of equipment for both origination and finishing processes. These areas ought to be subsidised as an incentive to publishers. Authors and prospective authors are usually so cash-strapped that they cannot sustain their research activity or wait for publishers' returns on their intellectual property. The result is that only the established and fairly well-to-do writers, especially in the area of tertiary education, place their manuscripts with publishing houses.

In the case of bookshops, encouragement has to be given to private entrepreneurs to open bookshop chains at state and local government levels. This initiative can be taken as part of the rural development programme of the government. Although the Ba-bangida government has done a great deal for the publishing industry it could have done more. If provision can be made by the government for the acquisition of shelter by the generality of Nigerians, then it should be a matter of routine for the same government to provide for not only physical comfort but intellectual upliftment, thus promoting the emergence of an enlightened society.

APPENDIX I

COPYRIGHT LAW

Right to share in proceeds of sale

12 -1. Notwithstanding any assignment or sale of the original work the authors of graphic works, three dimensional works and manuscripts shall have an inalienable right to a share in the proceeds of any sale of that work or manuscript by public auction or through a dealer whatever the method used by the latter to carry out the operation.

2. The right conferred by this section shall apply only to originals of such works.

3. The conditions for the exercise of the right conferred by this section shall be determined by regulations to be made by the Nigerian Copyright Council established under section 31 of this Decree.

4. The foregoing provisions of this section shall not apply to architectural works or applied art.

5. In this section, "author" includes heirs and successors-in-title.

Duty of Printer, etc, to keep Register.

13. Publishers, printers, producers or manufacturers of works in which copyright subsists shall keep a register of all works produced by them showing the following, that is -

- (a) the name of the author;
- (b) the title,
- (c) year of production; and
- (d) the quantity of the work produced.

APPENDIX II

PART I - COPYRIGHT

Works eligible for copyright

1. - (1) Subject to this section, the following shall be eligible for copyright:-

- (a) literary works;
- (b) musical works;
- (c) artistic works;
- (d) cinematography films;
- (e) sound recordings; and
- (f) broadcasts.

2. A literary, musical or artistic work shall not be eligible for copyright unless -

(a) sufficient efforts have been expended on making the work to give it an original character; and

(b) the work has been fixed in any definite medium of expression now known or later to be developed, from which it can be perceived, reproduced or otherwise communicated either directly or with the aid of any machine or device.

3. An artistic work shall not be ineligible for copyright by reason only that the making of the work or the doing of any act in relation to the work involved an infringement of copyright in some other work.

APPENDIX III

COPYRIGHT DECREE

First Ownership of Copyright

9. - (1) Copyright conferred by sections 2 and 3 of this Decree, shall vest initially in the author.

2. Notwithstanding subsection (6) of section 10 of this Decree where work -

(a) is commissioned by a person who is not the authors' employer under a contract of service or apprenticeship; or

(b) not having been so commissioned is made in the course of the author's employment, the copyright shall belong in the first instance to the author, unless otherwise stipulated in writing under the contract.

3. Where literary, artistic or musical work is made by the author in the course of his employment by the proprietor of a newspaper, magazine or similar periodical under a contract of service or apprenticeship as is so made for the purpose of publication in newspaper, magazine or similar periodical, the said proprietor shall, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary, be the first owner of copyright in the work in so far as the copyright relates to the publication of the work in any newspaper, magazine or similar periodical; or to the reproduction of the work for the purpose of its being so published, but in all other respects, the author shall be the first owner of the copyright in the work.

APPENDIX IV

RIGHT TO CLAIM AUTHORSHIP

11. - (1)The owner of a copyright has the right -

(a)to claim authorship of his work, in particular that his authorship be indicated in connection with any of the acts referred to in section 5 of this Decree except when the work is included incidentally or accidentally when reporting current events by means of broadcasting;

(b)to object and to seek relief in connection with any distortion, mutilation or other modification of and any other derogatory action in relation to his work, where such action would be or is prejudicial to his honour or reputation.

2.The rights referred to in sub-section (1) of this section are perpetual inalienable and imprescriptible.

3.For the purpose of this section, "author" includes his heirs and successors-in-title.

INDEX ON ARTS CULTURE

A

- Abdulkadir, Dandatti 77
 Abimbola, 'Wande 77
 Abiola, M.K.O. 115
 Aborishade, Femi 14
 Abiaham, W.E 31, 23, 42
 Abu, Dan Bala 114
 Abuja 126
 Abuja Sheraton Hotels and Towers 102
 Achebe, Chinua 69,70,73,74,75,77,80,84,126
 Ade-Ajayi, J.F. 18
 Ade, Sunny 87
 Adelugba, D. 68,70,78
 Adejumo, Moses 88
 Adeniran - Ogunsanya, Simidele 95
 Adeogun, Dupe 124
 Administrative and Staff College (ASCON) 44
 Advertising Practitioners Disciplinary Committee 59
 Advertising Practitioners Investigation Panel 59
 Africa 2,44,49,71,74, 77, 81,104,177,118,120, 126, 127,128,131
 African Book Collective Centre (ABC) 81, 102, 128
 Africa Book Publishing Record 128
 African Concord 121
 Africa Continental Bank (ACB) 84
 African Publishers 128
 African Religions 24,25,28,29
 Afro-beat movement 71,87
 Afro-juju 71,87
 Agbese, Dan 121
 Agege Local Government Area 118
 Agu, Emma 114
 Ahmadi 25
 Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABU) 69,78,80
 Aig-Imokhuede 94
 Aig-Imokhuede, Emily 94
 Aig-Imokhuede, Frank 82
 Aiyeokoto 107
 Ajaokuta Steel Complex 119
 Akeh, Afam 89
 Akinfeleye, Ralph 121
 Akinosho, Toyin 92
 Akpabot, Sam 88
 Akpamgbo Clement 116
 Alaba International Market 114
 Alao, Dayo 104
 Alex 87
 Alhaji, Abubakar Alhaji 119
 Ali, S.A. 26
 Aliu, Jimoh 83
 Alkali 70,72
 Allah 38
 Allen Avenue 95
 America 9,10,75
 American-European Concept 48
 Amuta, Chidi 75
 Anambra State 81
 Ancient African religions 37
 ancient arts 14
 Andah, B.W. 31
 Aniakor, C. 81,89
 Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) 58,59
 Arelu 83
 Arendt, Hannah 89
 Armando, Diego 107
 Art Writers Organisation of Nigeria 80
 arts 6,15,32,34,92
 Arusha declaration 52
 Ashiwaju, Gabriel 25,44
 Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (AAPN) 54,63
 Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) 70,77,78,132
 Atanda, J.A. 122
 Australia 5
 author 123,134,135,137,138
 Awolowo, Obafemi 73
 Ayi, Onoriode 90
 Ayu, Iyorchia D. 90
 Ayuba, Tanko 48,51,52,65
 Azuonye, Chukwuma 77

B

Baba, Sala 83
 Babalola, Adeboye 20,21,23,24,35
 Babangida I.B. 36,39,40,42,97,99,101, 106, 107, 111,115,116,117,120.
 BabangidaAdministration 30,44,102,105, 109, 110,120,125,127,129.
 Babangida, Maryam 99,109,110
 Babangida Government 64,107,111,134
 Balewa, Abubakar Tafawa 101
 Balogun, Ola 100
 Basi and company 84
 Bauch, Dan 42
 Bayero University 77
 Bello, Sule 18, 82,90
 Belmont 122
 Benin 2,69,95
 Benin arts 102
 Benin bronzes 14
 Benjamin, Walter 83
 Benue Arts Council 69
 Benue State 78
 Better Life for Rural Women (BLP) 99,109,110
 Bonuola, Lade 25,42
 Book Publishing 129,130
 Booker Prize 74
 Borno 14
 Britain 5,25,26,27,74, 125.
 British Colonial Imperialism 46
 Buhari, Muhamadu 25
 Buhari and Idiagbon 106,107
 Buhari's Government 105,116
 Buhari, Idiagbon years 15,116
 Buhari's oppressive laws 117

C

Calabar 78
 Calabar Studies in African Literature 76
 California 122
 Canadian: 10
 Caribbean home reggae music 85
 Caribbean subregion of theThirdWorld 49

Catholic 27
 Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) 30,42,64,77
 Centre for the Propagation of Religious and Ethnic Tolerance (CENPRETO) 23,39,40
 Chad Basin 2
 Champion Newspapers 114
 Charles 118
 Charlie Boy 87
 Chieftaincy institution 13
 Children's Literature Association of Nigeria (CLAN) 79
 Chinweizu 71,72,107
 Christ 26
 Christian 28,35,36,37,86
 Christianity 24,25,26,27,27,29,27 88
 churches 88
 cinematograph producers 62
 Civil Right Organisations 115
 Clark-Bekedermo 69,74,75,76,99
 Cockcrow at Dawn 84
 Cole, Herbert 89
 Collective Artistes Programme 79
 College of Education 78
 Colonial Administration 26,27
 comity of nations 3
 Committee for Relevant Art (CORA) 78
 Commonwealth prize 74
 Communication Policy for Nigeria 64
 Concord Group of Newspapers 115
 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979 111,112
 Copyright 60,125,126,136,137
 Cosmos, world view and Aesthetics 89
 Cultural Policy for Nigeria 4,6,15,18,31,34,47,69
 Culture 3,5,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,20,30,31,42 88,89,100,102
 Culture, Economy and National Development 90
 Creative works or copyrights policy 47

D

Daily Champion 114
Daily Times (The) 80,89,107
Dale, David 93
Darah, G.C 68,90
Davidson, Basil 2
decree 45,46,53,58,60,62,63,64,
100,105,106,110,111,114,117,121,126,137
Department of English 80
Department of External Publicity 118
Diana, Lady 118
Didi Museum 94
Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural
Infrastructure (DFRRI) 52,99,108
Directorate of Mass Mobilisation
and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) 109
Dodan Barracks 106
Dominic, Joseph E. 122
Drama 68,77

E

Eckankar 25
Economic Community for West Africa State
(ECOWAS) 118
economic recession 10,24,68,80
economy 6,7,13,18,27,93
ECOWAS Monitoring Group
(ECOMOG) 118
Edict of Nantes 29
Edo- Delta 78
Ekeh, Peter 89,90
Ekwensi, Cyprian 126
Emecheta, Buchi 70
Enahoro, Augustine Ufuo 121
Enahoro, Peter 63
Enekwe, Ossie 71
England 124,128
English 58,76,77,85
Etim, Etim 6
Ethnic groups 15,37,40
Etukudo, Ikpe 27,29,32,38,41
Europe 14
Europeans 9,25

Evolution of Political Culture in
Nigeria 18
Ezenwa - Ohaeto 71

F

fanaticism 24,27,29,37,40,41
Fanon, Frantz 9,10,18
Fashek, Majek 86
Fatunde, Tunde 69,71
Federal Government 31,34,39,40,76,97,100
101,102,112,113,114,115,117,118,119,124,129
Federal Government Press 65
Federal High Court 62
Federal Ministry of Communication 64,65
Federal Ministry of Education 61,125,128,130
Federal Ministry of Information 44,108
Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs 61
Federal Ministry of Justice 130
Federal Ministry of Trade 61
Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
(FRCN) 53,54,57
Fela 85,87
Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) 30,
76,102
film industry 99
Fogan, Kedinga 112
Folayan, Ade 100
Foreign Cultural Agencies 93
foreign films 100
foreign media 120
France 29
French 58,77
French government 76
Fundamental Human Rights 111
fuji 24
Fulfude 58

G

Galbraith, John 104
Gaskiya Tafi Kwaba 114
Gella, Yaro 2
German Cultural Centre
(Goethe Institute) 93,94

Giwa, Dele 111,112
 Glynn, J.A. 27
 Gong Gallery 94
 Government parastatals 125
 Government policies 125
 Grail movement 25
 Greek war 27
 Guardian Editorial 106
 Gugelberger, George 75
 Gulf war 119
 Gwom, Lamba 18

H

Hagher, Iyorwuese 69,79
 Harcourt 89
 Hare Krishna movement 25
 Harunah, H.B 26,31,32,33,42
 Hassan, Mohammed 114.
 Hausa 14, 29,58,101
 Hausa/Fulani 28,29
 Hausaland 14
 Heinemann Educational Books (Nig)
 Limited 89,122
 Helen's Legendary Beauty 27
 Hindu 25
 History 7,10,12,15,25,30
 Hitler 29
 Holy Books 27,28
 Howard University Press 76
 Huguenots 29

I

Ibadan 69,78,79,84
 IBB Legacy 22
 Ibn Akuyu 42
 Ibn Khaldun's theory of History 2
 Ifa 28
 Ife 2,69,77,78
 Ife Studies in African Literature and the Arts
 (ISALA) 80
 Ife theatre 79
 Igbo 14,28,29,101

Igbo Arts 89
 Igboland 2
 Igbo Ukwu 14
 Ijala 87
 Ijoko-Ota 79
 Ikara, Bashir 18
 Ikeja 95
 Ile-Ife 14
 Ilorin 69,78
 Imam, Abubakar 74
 India 25
 Indian Films 100
 Indian language 100
 indigenous religionist 36
 indigenous spiritualist 36
 industrial film complex 100
 intellectual culture 126
 International Board of Books for Young
 people (IBBY) 79
 International Literacy Year 127
 International Fair of Nigerian Craft 98
 Intolerance 24,27,29,37
 Irabor, Nduka 105
 Iran 25
 Iraq 120
 Irele, Abiola 76
 Ishaku, Jonathan 114
 Islam 24,25,26,27,29,37
 Italian Cultural Insitute 94,97
 Iyayi, Festus 70,74
 Izobo, George 112

J

Japanese publishing industrialist 128
 Jegede, Dele 96
 Jews 29
 Jeyifo, Biodun 73,74,75
 Jeyifo-Ofeimun 74
 Jos 69,78,100,101
 Jos, Dan Maraya 71
 journals 80
 juju 87
 juju music 71
 junk magazines 129

juvenile literature 79

K

"Kasarmu Ce' 101
Katsina - Aja 78
Keeling, William 119
Kimono, Ras 85,86
Kofo- Abayomi, Folabi 94,95
Komolafe, Dayo 92

L

Ladipo, Duro 79
Lagos 44,45,64,65,69,74,76,78,79,83
88,90,92,94,95,96,97,118,128,129
Lagos Central Mosque 37
Lambo, T.A. 16,18
Lamingo village 100
Langston Hughes Prize 74
Law Reports and Statutes 131
legislation 51,53,104,116
Liberia 118
Liberius 25
Libya 120
literary and artistic development 68
literary journalism 80
Literature and National Consciousness 76
Local Craft Industry 98
Local Tourism 93
London tabloid 118
Lord 28

M

Malthouse Press 74, 76, 78, 128
manufacturers of works 135
Maradona 107
Marx, Karl 73
Marxian and Proto-Marxian dialogue 70
Marxism and African Literature 75
mass communication 82
mass literacy 127
masquerade festivals 81
Mayakovsky, Vladimir 70
Mbakwe, Sam 114
media 45,105, 115, 116, 121
media practitioners 111
Medical Council 56
Medicine 13
Merse 2
Middle Belt of Nigeria 29
Middle East 32
Mike, Chuks 79
Ministry of Communications 45, 52
Ministry of Information and Culture 66
Mogekwu, Matt 121
Momoh 47, 50
Momoh C. S 20, 47
Momoh, Tony 35, 46, 55, 64, 65, 112
Moors 29
morality 32
mosque 25
Mozambique 131
Muhammed 26, 106
museum 95, 96
music 4, 68, 77, 84, 87, 88, 136, 137
music publishers 62
musicians 62
muslim 28, 35, 36, 37, 86
mystic 36

N

NARETISM 23, 28, 29
Nasidi, Y 18, 90
National Association for Religious and Eth

nic Tolerance (NARETO) 20, 23, 26, 28, 29,
 35, 37, 38, 39, 39, 42
 National Broadcasting Commission 46
 National Commission for Mass Literacy 126
 National Communication Policy 34, 44, 45,
 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 64, 65
 Nigerian Council for Arts and Culture
 (NCAC) 90, 97, 98, 100, 101
 national culture 16, 34, 79
 national development 4, 5, 7, 13, 17, 18, 30
 National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
 15
 National Drama Programmes 84
 National Endowment Fund 99
 National Festival of Arts and Culture
 (NAFEST) 82, 97, 98
 National Gallery for Crafts and Design 95
 National Gallery for Arts 97
 National Library 61, 125
 National Museum 95
 National Theatre 83, 90, 94
 National Troupe 69
 negative foreign media 119, 120
 New Horizon Magazine 114
 New Masquerade 84
 New York 93
 News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) 54
 Newswatch 111, 112, 113, 114, 121
 Newsweek 118, 120
 Niger 2
 Niger-Benue Confluence 33
 Nigeria 3, 5, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30,
 32, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 48, 50, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62,
 63, 64, 68, 74, 77, 84, 92, 99, 104, 118, 119, 120,
 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132
 Nigerian Arts 93, 95, 96, 97, 99
 Nigerian authors 124
 Nigerian Constitution 50
 Nigeria Copyright Council 61
 Nigerian Culture 8, 31, 34, 37, 71, 93
 Nigerian Educational Research and Devel-
 opment Council (NERDC) 125, 126
 Nigerian Female Writers 76
 Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) 100, 101
 Nigerian Film Industry 101
 Nigerian Folk Culture 81
 Nigerian Gold of Tolerance 23
 Nigerian Institute of International Affairs
 (NIIA) 97
 Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR)
 59, 62
 Nigerian Police Force 61, 113
 Nigerian Political System 7
 Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance 23,
 36, 42
 Nigeria's Independence 23, 24
 Nigerian Languages 79, 126
 Nigerian Media Council 54
 Nigerian Medical Law 122
 Nigerian National Merit Award 74
 Nigerian Press 54, 57, 106
 Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) 124,
 128, 129, 133
 Nigerian Publishing Industry 124, 127
 Nigerian Tide 109, 110
 Nigerian Trainee Publishers 129
 Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) 54, 112,
 114, 115
 Nile River 2
 Nitel Training Centre 45
 Nnaemeka, T 48, 49, 64, 65
 Nobel Prize 73, 76
 Nok 2
 Nok civilization 14
 Nok culture 33
 Noma award 127
 Noma prize 74
 Noma, Shoichi 128
 North 29, 70
 North Africa 25
 North America 87
 Northern and Southern Protectorates 33
 Northern Nigeria 26, 27
 Nsukka 77, 79, 96
 Nwankwo, Victor 131
 Nwene Mutapa 2
 Nwoga, Donatus 77
 Nwodo, Obiageli 76

O

Oba of Benin 102
 Obafemi, Olu 69, 73
 Obery, Ebenezer 57
 Ofeimun 70, 73
 Ogoni Folktales 77
 Ogunba, Oyin 77
 Ogunbiyi, Yemi 76, 80
 Ogunde, Hubert 69, 82, 83, 100
 Oguntimakin, Bayo 115
 Oguta 90
 Ohonbamu, Obaregie 106
 oil - painting 93
 Okike 80
 Ojaide, Tanure 71, 74
 Okri, Ben 74
 Okoroji, Tony 86
 Okoye, Ifeoma 70
 Okepe who, Isidore 76, 77
 Oladele, Francis 100
 Olaiya, Moses 100
 Olusanya, Dale 95
 Olusanya, Gabriel 97
 Ombiyi - Obidike, M. A. 85, 90
 Ombudsman 50
 Omotoso, Kole 75
 Onabanjo, Bisi 107
 Onanuga, Bayo 115
 Onikan 95
 Onwueme, T 69, 70, 72
 Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)
 40, 111
 Oriki 87
 Osanyin, Bode 79
 Oshodi 45
 Osinbayo, Yemi 122
 Osofisan 69, 78
 Osundare 70, 72, 74, 128
 Oti, Sonny 69, 78
 Otokurefor, Henrietta 76
 Otun, Idowu 93
 Owerri 69
 Owo 2
 Oxford 128

Oyovbaire, Sam 18
 Ozidi Saga 76

P

Pacific Island 49
 paintings 92
 Pan African Movement 102
 PEC Repertory Theatre 69, 79
 Performing Musicians Employers Association of Nigeria (PMAN) 86
 Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 76
 piracy 126
 plastic Arts 77
 policy implementation 4
 Political Bureau 39
 politics 6, 7, 27, 31, 32
 Port-Harcourt 78
 post - colonial period 5
 post - colonial State of Africa 5
 post - independence Nigeria 23, 74
 post - independence Era 100
 Postgraduate book publishing programme 129
 pre - colonial Nigeria 33
 pre - independence era 99
 press freedom 48, 104
 pressmen and women 116
 Print Media Policy 47
 printers 135
 print and marketing 132
 private gallery 94
 pro - western orientation 45
 producers 135
 Protestant 26, 27
 Public Relations Practitioners 62
 publishers 62, 78, 124, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135
 publishing houses 132, 134
 publishing industry 124, 125, 127, 131, 132, 133, 134

Q

Quality Magazine 114
 Qu'ran 28

R

radio and television organisations 54
 Radio Nigeria 108
 Rasaki, Raji 114, 118, 119
 reggae 71, 87
 religions 32
 Religious and Ethnic Studies 40
 religious bigotry 24
 religious fanaticism 24
 religious intolerance 26
 religious tolerance 26, 30, 42
 Religious War 27
 riots 25, 40
 rituals 32
 riverine states 14
 Robertson, Nick 93
 Roman Catholic 26
 Romania 98
 Rome 25
 Rosicrucian 25
 Rotimi, Ola 69, 78
 Rural Development Programme 134
 Russian Aesthetician 70

S

Saiwa 80
 Samanja 84
 Sani, Abba 77
 Saro - Wiwa 75, 77, 84
 Saudi Arabian Muslims 25
 Savannah Belts of Hausaland 2
 Second Pyongang International Film Festival 110
 Second Republic 69
 Segun, Mabel 79
 Sekoni, Ropo 77
 self - censorship 84
 self - reliance 3, 7, 29, 34, 102
 self - sufficiency 4, 7, 117
 Senegal 131
 Shagari era 15

Shata, Mamman 71
 Shehu, Brendan 100
 Shiite 25
 Sikh 25
 Sinsemillua Gallery 95
 Social Mobilisation Corps 109
 Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) 92
 Socio - political crisis 70
 Sociology 93
 Solarin, Tai 106
 Sonaike, Adefemi S. 44
 South Africa 120
 Sowande, Bode 69
 Soyinka, Wole 69, 73, 75, 76, 79, 84, 106
 Spain 29
 spiritual religions 24, 25
 Stable polity 3
 Stewart, E. W. 27
 strife 27, 30
 Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) 93,
 108, 116, 117
 Sunni 25
 Swahili 58

T

Tada 2
 Taipei Fair 98
 Taiwan 98
 Tamuno, Tekena N. 122
 technologies 4, 9, 12, 15, 32, 34
 telecommunication systems 45, 51
 telecommunications and Computers 45
 telecommunication Policy, 45, 47, 48, 51
 telephone sector 52
 Terra - Cotta arts 14
 tertiary education 134
 text book production 125
 textile 93, 98
 The Press 104
 The Association of Public Relations Practitioners 63
 The Copyright Council 46, 53, 60, 160, 126,
 135,

- The Development of Drama and Theatre in Nigeria, 89
 The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Decree 14 of 1991 46, 53, 57
 The Guardian, 76, 80, 81, 114, 115
 The Literature Department at Ife 80
 The London Financial Times 119
 The Mandators 86
 The Media Council Decree 59 of 1988, 46, 53, 54, 55, 65
 The Mirror 118
 The National Broadcasting Commission, 46, 53, 63, 66
 The National Open Art Competition in painting 97
 The Newspaper Proprietor Association of Nigeria (NPAN) 54, 114
 The Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) 54, 114
 The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations 46, 53, 59, 62
 The Nigerian Standard 114
 The spirit of Biafra 114
 The spirit of Islam 26
 The Voice of Nigeria Corporation 46, 53, 57
 The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre 62, 68, 74, 75
 Third Republic 109, 112
 Thompson, Tunde 105
 Timisoara 98
 Times International 122
 Tomoloju, Ben 80
 Topo - Badagry 44, 45, 46
 Tourism Policy 47
 Towry - Coker, Bisi 95
 tradition 4
 tribes 5
 Trojan War 27
- U
- Ugbomah, Eddie 100
 Ugochukwu, Onyema 121
 Uka, Kalu 78
 UN agencies 58
- under - development 9, 10, 125
 United Kingdom 101
 United Nation's Prize for Leadership for the sustainable end of Hunger 110
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 4, 76
 United States Information Service (USIS) 93, 94
 United States of America 5, 26, 87, 120
 University Press
 University of Calabar 76, 129
 University of California 89
 University of Ibadan 69
 University of Ife 69
 University of London 90
- V
- value system 4, 5, 9, 10, 14
 Vanguard 107
 Victoria Island 94
 Village Headmaster 84
 Village Voice 70
 visual arts 92, 97
 vocational open skills scheme 99
- W
- Wadsworth Publishing Company 122
 War Against Indiscipline (WAI) 15
 West Africa 121, 122
 West Africa Magazine 107, 116
 western europe 87
 western hegemony 120
 western market 128
 western mass media 120
 Western Nigeria 74
 Western Nigeria Television, Ibadan 84
 Western press 117
 Western world 130
 What's Gwan 86
 Whiteman, Kaye 107

Wimmer, Roger D. 122
World Bank 127
World Bank Loan 119, 127
World Health Organisation (WHO) 58

Y

Yaba College of Technology 129
Yabatech - police fracas 115
Yahaya, Babs 77, 100
Yoruba 28, 29, 87, 101
Yoruba Culture 83
Yoruba folklore 83
Yoruba Fuji Musicians 87
Yoruba kingdoms 14
Yoruba oral poetry 87
Yoruba speaking audience 83

Z

Zaria 78, 96
Zim Pan - African Publishers 90

CHAPTER CONTRIBUTORS VOL.IV

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