

# Revival of Historical Foundations and Heritages through Education: Panacea for Peace and Security in Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

*The alien nature of crimes in Nigeria has necessitated the need to look inward and find possible ways of reviving Nigeria's historical foundation and heritage. It is against this backdrop that the objectives of this paper is conceived and anchored. Suitably historical analysis was employed in this paper in order to identify features of historical foundations and heritages of Nigeria and to find the missing link between traditional educations and present violent prone modernized Nigeria. Oral traditions and craft works form the major features of historical foundation and heritages in Nigeria. These historical foundations and heritages afterwards subconsciously generate among young people character formation, leadership training, skills and vocational training, and other basis of traditional education. However, the relegation of historical foundation and heritage is believed to have resulted into poor character formation, belligerent nationalism, laziness and corrupt leadership which are the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria. It is therefore, recommended that families and schools should rejuvenate these historical foundations and heritages that promotes peace and collective security in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Education, Historical Foundation, Heritage, Peace and Security

## **1. Introduction**

Nigerian societies before nineteenth century British incursion were recorded to be governed by prestigious norms and values injected through education in historical foundations and heritages. Upon these foundations stand tranquility, love, togetherness, hard work and dignity of labor. Each society had socio-political system that professes peace and ensured collective security (Obasi and Erondu 1997). There is no gain saying the fact that the advent of colonialism drastically changed the mode of affairs in every facet of Nigeria. Therefore, many believed that the historical foundations and heritages of the Nigerian peoples that flourished in the pre-colonial times invariably disappeared with the colonial regime.

After observing the socio-political trends of event in post-colonial Nigeria, Sunny Okoso in a song exclaimed "which way Nigeria? This question has remained unanswered till this day. Nigeria is today confronted with high level of insecurity occasioned by numerous factors that were alien to the Nigerian people like kidnapping, suicide missions, and bombing of civilian population by terrorist groups. This has raised serious concern among scholars on the factors that must have build-up to drive Nigerians off their historical foundations and heritages. These factors according to Attah and Bukar(2009) include but not limited to colonial traits, modernization and misconception

of educational objectives. Colonialism introduced into Nigeria all sorts of differentials and disharmonies (Uya and Erim 1984). Furthermore, there seem to be great socio-cultural transfiguration going on in Nigeria, from traditionalism to modernism or globalism, mainly as a result of relegating historical foundations and heritages in the educational process both at the formal and informal realms. Thus, Erim (2004) maintained that Nigeria is among that part of the world now generally referred to as societies in transition, created by waves of delusive historical education and misplacement of priority.

Without a clear sense of identity based on sound historical education, we are in danger of merely drifting along with others. Burston (1975) posited that history is the story or the evolution of one's environment, its development and explanation of the present general laws governing the behavior of the society. The value of history from Burton's assertion is based on the fact that these laws apply to our own time and knowledge of them enables us to deal more wisely with the future. Reference has often been made to the relevance of history as a vital tool for the transformation of culture and for social control.

In spite of the fact that we are in the era of internationalism, we must not fail to appreciate that international community is an aggregate of nations, each with its own distinctive character. It is discernable that nationality and national character are the results as well as, if not rather than, the causes of history (Erim 2004). On this note, this paper is aimed at evaluating features of Nigeria's historical foundations and heritages in educational process and its relevance to peace and security in Nigeria. This is because the past provides standard for the present as well as starting point for the forward movement.

## **2. Concept of Education**

There have been controversies on the originality of the word "education". To some scholars the word "Education" was believed to have been derived from the Latin term "Educatum" which means the act of teaching or training. Others postulated that it has come from another Latin word "Educare" which means "to bring up" or "to raise". In the opinion of some other scholars the word "Education" has originated from another Latin term "Educere" which means "to lead forth" or "to come out" (Swastik 2012). Our intention here is not to content on the actual source of the word education, however, all the Latin words listed here indicates that education seeks to nourish the good qualities in man and draw out the best in every individual. On this basis many great philosophers have recapitalized the concept of education.

Aristotle conceived Education as "the creation of a sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty, especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty of which perfect happiness essentially consists". In view of Aristotle's supposition, happiness is the central aim of education. It is noteworthy that what constitute happiness apparently amount to principles, conducts and ethics globally accepted and these are what education intend to manifest in humans. Thus, to Socrates "education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man". Universalistic norms from all parameter denounce acts that cannot guarantee the safety of others, acts that bring agony and pains, but mostly promote peace and happiness among people. This as it stands could be described as the cornerstone of educational processes from the traditional education and the formal education.

In conceptual terms, education has received so many definitions. According to Berg (2012) education implies a process of attaining and assisting others to attain optimal attitudes that enable a person to perceive accurately, think clearly, and act effectively according to self-selected goals. Berg maintained that self-selection of goals is not merely the result of the efforts of a single ego, but the result of the interactions between the minds of many or all of the members of a caring community.

Therefore, by educating an individual we attempt to give him/her some desirable knowledge,

understanding, skills, interests, attitudes and critical 'thinking. That is, he/she acquires knowledge of history, geography, arithmetic, languages and sciences. He develops some understanding about the deeper things in life, the complex human relations, and the cause and effect relationship and so on. He develops some interests in and attitudes towards social work, democratic living, cooperative management and so on. As an individual in the society on this note has to think critically about various issues in life and take decisions about them being free from bias and prejudices, superstitions and blind beliefs (Swastik 2012). Thus, he/she has to learn all these qualities of head, hand and heart through the process of education which made education a lifelong process manifesting in formal and informal directions.

However, Musgrove (1979) observed that education is a social institution with profound social effects quite apart from the intellectual and moral truths it may reflect, it can divide society or it can help to unite it. Drawing experience from the American cultural transformations Kennedy (1994) mournfully noted that in many of America's great universities, brightest young men and women are no longer educated in the great traditions of western civilization; instead the campuses have become virtual concentration camp, intellectual gulags, for indoctrinating destructive ideas of political correctness and historical revisionism. And because they have no sense of history, they are easy prey for radical beliefs and practically any political theory being palmed off by their liberal teachers (Sykes 1991). Most scholars believed that American liberalism has dislodged America from its historical foundation and heritage of "believe in God"; it has rather enthroned promulgation of aberrant legislations like homosexuality, and legalization of abortion. This underscores the importance of traditional education in every society in order to keep in touch with the historical foundations and heritages that speak volume on the character of the society.

### **3. Features of Historical Foundations and Heritages in Nigeria**

Everybody sees tradition as crucial to his/her place in the societies (macro and micro) and lay claims to its knowledge. Majority of the Nigerian people could base their claim to present state on the past achievements of their ancestors (Erim 2004). Apparently to the Nigerians, the past merely lives on in the present. It is on this note that the idea of historical foundation and heritage is strongly upheld in ensuring peace and harmony in the community from generation to generation. Therefore, oral traditions form the major feature of historical foundation and heritage in Nigeria.

Oral tradition refers to past human actions reported through speech and handed down from generation to generation. In other words, oral traditions consists of all verbal testimonies which are reported statements concerning the past (Vasina 1961). Oral traditions provides the tradition of origin of families, clans and communities, socio-cultural organizations, achievements of the individuals in the community, expertise, taboos and list of leadership or political systems (Fadeyiye 1986). These formed the fundamentals of historical foundations and heritages in every community.

However, the attainment of oral traditions in a society is a combination of many traditions which represent the life wire of Nigerian societies for example idiom, proverb, art, totem, myth, song, crafts and so on. On this note Ajayi and Smith (1956) and Alagoa (1986) maintained that Nigerian non-literate societies have always used the oral mode of transmission of general knowledge, history and customs without any feelings of inadequacy. Many had evolved various devices for the faithful transmission of those ancient traditions essential to maintaining the identity, integrity, peace and security of their communities. Invariably the ingredients of oral tradition are the bedrock of the historical foundation and heritage of the society.

In addition, families and societies are recognized by one special skill/craft or another, like weaving, carving, dying, leather works, and blacksmith. These crafts or skills were held in high esteem, thus professionals of the crafts take special interests in ensuring that their forebears in the event in which they have participated are not left out of reckoning (Erim 2004). In other words, these crafts/skills are passed from one generation to another which provides source of livelihood to the family and society.

The transmission of oral tradition and extension of crafts/skills are believed to be done basically through traditional education where every reasonable adult is a potential teacher while the conventions, norms, values and expertise of the people serve as the curriculum. In the light of this, it is prominent to underscore the basis of traditional education in the advancement of historical foundations and heritages among Nigerians.

#### **4. Basis of Traditional Education in Nigeria**

Traditional education is the type of education which is indigenous to the people of Nigeria. According to Bello (2008) traditional education is that system of education that prepare a generation on how to live as members of their groups, their cultural values, norms and beliefs of the society. This form of education has long been in practice before the advent of western and Islamic educations in Nigeria. In earnest, traditional education is the foundational pillars of Nigerian society because it is upon it that historical foundation and heritage are nurtured and expressed. This could be observed in the basis of traditional education, like formation of character, intellectual development, skill acquisition, social integration, service for common good of the society and leadership training.

In virtually all the Nigerian communities' traditional education was geared towards molding the character of children to be worthy ambassadors of their respective families and society. Basically the child is educated on the need to respect elders and those in authority, manners and ways of doing things as allowed by the society and those things forbidden in the society (Bello 2008). Methods of getting the desired character were often attained through intellectual works.

Taiwo (1980) noted that traditional education stimulates the intellectual potentialities of its recipient through the mastery of local history, geography and literature. Other sources of intellectual developments facilitated through traditional education include proverbs, riddles and jokes, dirges, poetry, games, incantations, myth and discussions (Obasi and Erundu 1997). These intellectual works carry along with them powerful messages of rights, wrongs, heroism, sacrileges and reward for hard work (Majuk 2001).

Hard work could be described as the watch word in all the traditional education. Hence, young people were trained in skills acquisition in form of vocations and trade. These include agriculture, art and craft, building, blacksmithing, herbal medicine and trading skills (Bello 2008). Against this background, everyone in the society is given an opportunity of been gainfully employed through skill acquisition, hence, idleness was anathema in the society.

Peace and security in traditional societies were achieved through educating the young ones on the virtues of social integration. Traditional education grants sense of belonging to every member of the society and members were taught how to empathize with and love one another. The virtues of honesty and justice were inculcated (Obasi and Erundu 1997). In almost all the societies this gesture was extended to strangers.

At this point it is important to note that the culmination of all the basis of traditional education amount to leader training. Every good leader is expected to be of good character, understand the history and ethnologies of the community, and has been excellent in specific skills recognized by the community. But it is discernible that these bases of traditional education that amount to historical foundation and heritage seem to be under serious threat in the contemporary Nigerian society.

#### **5. Factor Strangling Historical Foundation and Heritage in Nigeria**

Historical foundation and heritage could be said to be presently at a moribund stage. These days there are changes in attitudes, morals, taste, ethics and value system in the society. Many factors have been identified as strangulating to the basis of historical foundation and heritage.

Traditionalism in Nigeria is profoundly affected by modernization, which has prepared the

young ones for a different kind of world from the one in which their parents grew up. Therefore, there is discontinuity in the historical foundation and heritage. Discontinuity in the life of a child occurs when an abrupt and dramatic change takes place in his/her roles as he/she progresses steadily to mature adult behavior (Okoh 1983). Modernization is also facilitated by other factors like the rapidity of information and communication technology, religious fanaticism, mass media and materialism (Bidmos 2003, Closkey 1967). These factors from all indications have generated negative influences in the overall spheres of life in Nigeria most especially leading to insecurity.

## **6. Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria**

Present nature of crime in Nigeria has remained a source of confusion to many sociologists, psychologists, criminologists and other scholars in the faculty of arts and social sciences. It is this frustration that spur Arizona-Ogwu (2008) to query "I hardly denote these people to be Nigerians; they behave like strangers". Apparently the nature of insecurity in Nigeria negates every value or norm Nigerian peoples are known for. Most of the crimes we see in the televisions or hear on the news about far distance places are now found in almost every corner of Nigeria such as kidnapping for ransom, terrorism, organized crimes and so on. All in all, major causes of insecurity are evident in poor character formation, belligerent nationalism, laziness and corrupt leadership.

Kennedy (1994) observed that crisis of character is capable of undermining every aspect of a nation's life. Thus, ethical and moral fallout threatens not only the political, economic and intellectual well-being but the "destiny" of a nation in its entirety. Those moral values traditionally put in place to ensure social control is no longer fashionable in Nigeria. There is lack of respect for elders and constituted authority (Cookey 1970). Therefore, the citizens are always at war with one another and violent constituted authorities.

Belligerent nationalism is among the factors that have helped to breed insecurity in Nigeria; this has come in form of ethnicity, tribalism, sectionalism, and religious bigotry (Agi 1986, Gowfen 2004). Availability of "human instrument" to perpetrate these anti-social activities is generally believed to be the aftermath of laziness or societal induce unemployment, largely encouraged by capitalistic perception of educational qualification (Attah and Bukar 2009). In earnest, vacuum created by the downgrading of crafts and skills in Nigeria have been occupied by laziness and turn young people into viable "weapons of mass destruction" in the hands of corrupt leaders and politicians.

Considering the level of corruption among public office holders, Erim (2004) asked some rhetoric questions, could it be that the evil we complain so much about in many of our public men could be due to the total absence or the low level of historical consciousness in them? Could the maddening struggle for power and wealth show regard for history? It would appear that the transient nature of power which is implied in Pareto's dictionary that history is the graveyard of the aristocracies is lost upon the people involved. This has clearly indicated the relevance of reviving Nigeria's historical foundation and heritage through education to prepare young Nigerians on the task of nation building devoid of insecurity.

## **7. Relevance of Historical Foundation and Heritage to Peace and Security in Nigeria**

The relevance of historical foundation and heritage to peace and security in Nigeria was captured by Professor Chinua Achebe words, "In a universe of beings intimately related, this nation is our family, and that family has family values. The family values of this Nigerian land are gratitude - respect for nature's cycles - the sacred - harmony - and above all, reciprocity - don't take something without giving something back. What needs to happen is a return to these traditional Nigerian values" (cited in Arizona-Ogwu 2008). By returning to the historical foundation and heritage the values that project economic advancement and socio- political stability will be largely promoted into achieving the desire peace and security.

Nigerian indigenous economies operate to sustain individuals, their rulers and constituted authority. These economies are generally rural-based. In any case, every adult male or female, married or unmarried is expected to participate in the local economy to sustain himself/herself and his/her family. Land is generally available, and where it is short, rural migrants find resources in host societies where they use their indigenous technologies to exploit well known and familiar economic niches (Adetunji 2012). This implies that the principles guiding the historical foundation and heritage demand that everyone be employed. Everyone is socialized to feed himself, wife or wives, and his children. Against this backdrop, there is hardly idleness or beggars. In fact begging is generally regarded as despicable, and shameful to the family. Not even the very elderly or the sick and insane people are allowed to beg for their living in the locality in many of the cultures. Such people are cared for or hidden away from the public while receiving medical treatment (Ottite 1979). The economic involvement of everybody in the society will reduce youth restiveness, and other forms of crimes, just like it is popularly said "an idle mind is the devil's workshop".

On the other hand, historical foundation and heritage to a large extent provided Nigerian people with necessary political system that guaranteed checks and balances. Tyrants and dictators are deviant authorities and there are practical, constitutional, and symbolic ways of demonstrating in the politics that such rulers are not wanted. This point also implies that the people are not passive respectful followers; they take part in governance with democratic features, and abide by the decisions of their rulers. The indigenous political structure and family organization have mechanisms for controlling recalcitrance and tendencies towards disintegration and criminal acts (Adetunji 2012). Consequently, embezzlement of public funds that impoverish the people will be checked and power mongering will be controlled through traditional means than the present defective oath taking.

## **8. Conclusion**

It is permissible to conclude that presently Nigeria is lost in the League of Nations. Nigerians cannot even ascertain what they are capable of because they have deranged from those historical foundations and heritages that distinguish them from others. Before the escalation of terrorism in Nigeria, U.S government officially declared that there are terrorist groups in Nigeria, but Nigerian government officials living under the shadows of the past refuted that claims. Today keen observer of all the events taking place in the southern and northern parts of Nigeria will definitely concur that Nigeria is indeed lost. It is only the compass of the historical foundation and heritage that is proficient to bring Nigerians back on track. This could be achieved mainly by sincerely embracing traditional education in families and the society at large.

## **9. Recommendation**

From the foregoing, this paper is aimed at proffering solutions to the malingering insecurity caused by the reversal state of historical foundation and heritage in Nigeria. The following recommendations are hereby outlined;

Parents should start the process of educating their wards on the nitty-gritty of traditional education.

School curriculum should be design to capture some of the principles of traditional education especially emphasis on vocational and entrepreneur skills.

Communities should endeavor to use necessary medium to revival their various healthy historical foundations and heritages.

An indigenous political system should be intercreatively fashioned out that will check the excesses of political leaders in power and common wealth management.

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