

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE and DEVELOPMENT in AFRICA



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Exploring Indigenous Religious Tenets for Democratic Sustainability in Contemporary Nigerian Society

Akiti Glory Alamu

Introduction

The thrust of this chapter is the exploration of indigenous religious tenets or traditional moral values as catalysts for democratic sustainability in contemporary Nigerian society. The chapter appraisingly evaluates indigenous governance in the pre-colonial era and the contemporary dimension it has taken in the colonial and post-colonial periods. As a result, this chapter adopted historical, analytical, political and religio-ethical approach leading to the fact that the democratic tendencies occasioned by the West have woefully failed the masses, because of their wrong application as well as their foreignness. The chapter, therefore, postulates that re-integrating, internalizing and implementing traditional religious tenets would guarantee democratization process and democratic sustainability in Nigeria. To this end, the chapter concludes that democratic sustainability in Nigeria can only be possible as the only game in town when these indigenous religious tenets are faithfully applied with an African eye bird's view.

The 21st century Nigeria has failed in her democratization process. As a matter of fact, Nigeria who joined the League of Nations to practise democracy has vehemently refused to internalize or domesticate the supposed democratic ethos. To an extent, some political feelers believe that Nigeria is benefitting from democratic dividends one way or the other since 29th May, 1999 till to date because there is no military intervention. While some social feelers strongly believe that the democratic values are far from

being implemented since the unholy bedfellow of democracy which is corruption is a landlord in Nigeria. In another development, some indigenous believers hold on to the fact that integrating traditional religious tenets or traditional moral values as means of governance would bring about a vibrant and sustainable democracy that has become an issue in Nigeria.

This democracy notwithstanding, Nigeria is far from consolidating a vibrant and sustainable nation because the much needed domestication of democratic values is abysmally and wrongly applied if at all they are even applied. Thus, these Western democratic values become strange to Nigeria as a result of improper implementation, which have greatly retarded development, democratization and sustainability. Therefore, the thrust of this chapter is to explore indigenous religious tenets or moral values as catalysts for democratic sustainability in contemporary Nigerian society.

Indigenous Religious Tenets: An Overview

It would be worthwhile to start this section by giving account of indigenous religion before showcasing its tenets. First and foremost, it is proper to state that indigenous religion is as old as the people. Indigenous religion is a religion that had been handed down by our forefathers to this present generation. It is orally transmitted from one generation to another. It does not possess sacred scripture yet it is written in memory of the very world we live and transmit orally as the occasion demands (Awolalu and Dopamu, 2005). Indigenous religion is not proselytizing religion, nor does it guzzle for membership. Yet, it is tolerant, it accommodates, it socializes, it embraces and remains autochthonous. Awolalu and Dopamu again assert that we are born into this indigenous religion, live it and die in it. Rolling out the tonality of indigenous religion, Dopamu (2005: 3) has this to say:

This is clearly seen in African (indigenous) religion which encompasses all aspect of life. Africans (Nigerians) do not know how to live without religion. They celebrate life religiously and they

never embark on anything without bringing in religion. Thus, at birth, marriage, death, warfare, healing, the foundation of any project, planting, harvesting, enthronement of chiefs and kings and other areas of human endeavour *Afrel* plays important roles.

As a matter of fact, *Afrel* is an acronym of African religion, and the concept is coined by Dopamu (2006).

It is germane to state based on the aforementioned tolerance that indigenous religion embraced and tolerated; still embraces and tolerates the proselytizing religious of Islam and Christianity since their incursions. Again, Dopamu (2006: 30) consistently maintains that:

Afrel (indigenous religion) has maintained a long history of co-operative interaction with Christianity and Islam in Africa. In the face of ever-troublesome and discouraging history of contact between *Afrel* and the imported religions, *Afrel* was able to exercise itself in the style of activity for which it has existed from time immemorial.

Nevertheless, this indigenous religion has suffered a setback in the 19th and 20th centuries in the hand of Christianity and Islam in the wake of their incursions. Christianity and Islam condemned indigenous religion as devil worship, pagan worship, animism, fetishism and among others. In addition, a handful of people also boycotted the Indigenous religion especially those who have access to western style of life and subsequently embraced either Islam or Christianity (Alamu, 2014). Also, some indigenously educated people also attacked this indigenous religion, while some of the custodians who possessed or possess the indigenous traditions did or do not help issues as they conceal vital information from younger generation, and also the potency of the traditions from those who are ready to continue with them. However, the eclipse of the religion does not mean a total demise. Dopamu (2006) asserts that indigenous religion has staged a powerful comeback in this global age. The resurgence is becoming monumental and all-embracing now because the religion is speaking the language of the

people as well as their worldview. The religion will continue to survive the test of time.

Tenets of Indigenous Religion

Despite the current trends, many values of indigenous religion will continue to survive and be instrumental to the emerging democratic ethos of the west. To this end, tenets have to do with moral values of the indigenous people which have so far helped to better the lot of the community at large especially in the pre-colonial period. These indigenous tenets or moral values find expression in Oath-taking, selflessness, honesty, integrity, utilitarianism, tolerance, impartiality, accountability, transparency, chastity, communal humanity and brotherhood, proverbial philosophy and among others indigenous tenets would be fully explained later when we are reconciling both the tenets and democratic sustainability together. As a point of fact, these indigenous tenets are rich African cultural heritages that have distinguished the indigenous people and made the people unique in their environment. It is as a result of the abandonment or subjugation of these indigenous tenets that make indigenous people to face a plethora of problems that they could not solve till to date. Thus, the western democratic values are embodiments of setback because of their foreignness and improper implementation.

Nevertheless, these indigenous tenets are full of indigenous expressions, which are embedded in the uniqueness and ingenuity of the people. Through their assimilations and internalizations of a wealth of experience, local wisdom and moral techniques, good governance and democratic sustainability can be attained. The truth is that indigenous tenets are acquired informally, of which proverb, local wisdom; indigenous philosophy and local maxim are moral sciences that convey truths, based on common sense or practical experience of humanity. Often times, these indigenous religious tenets are expressed through traditional and cultural embodiments vis-à-vis metaphor and sentiment. As earlier stated, that indigenous religion is passed from generation to generation, usually by word of

mouth, so also these indigenous religious tenets which are indigenous credentials, are transmitted orally from generation to generation by conserving the truths and sentiments of the community. Even, the international labour organisation recognizes indigenous people with their religion and values thus:

People in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or geographical region to which the country belongs at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of their present state boundaries and who irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institution (ILO convention 169).

Although, indigenous people are strikingly diverse in their culture, religion, social and economic organization, yet they are subjected to a stereotypical way of life by the world around them. Unwaveringly, this stereotypical way of the native is depicted by some people as the embodiment of spiritual values and political progress.

It suffices to state that the majority of people may probably ask the source(s) of indigenous religious tenets? Gyekye (2002) has helped a great deal to depict that the 'messages' purported to be received occasionally by priests from the deities they serve have moral import and relevance for the people of a community. He further adds that the people are in possession of some moral values before those 'messages' descended on them. The interesting thing here is to first and foremost attempt a conceptual clarification of democracy before exploring these indigenous religious tenets for sustainability and consolidation.

Democracy: A Conceptual Clarification

Democracy as a concept originated from Greek-city state or the *polis* around 5th century B.C as "demo-cratia" meaning "rule of the people" (Eyinla, 2007: 66). Democracy emerged as the government

of the masses or the government of the majority with collective participation. Thus, this concept represented the interest of the people either directly or indirectly in the *polis*. As a result of civilization in the city-state, representatives at a public forum were recognised to articulate the interest of the vast majority. By and large, various dimensions came to expound the meaning of democracy and its set objectives. Despite the fact that a handful of scholars such as Eyinla (2007), Madison *et al*, (1987), Rustow (1985) and among others, have written about democracy, it is difficult to satisfy its definitive quest. Be that as it may, the concept remains the best option to ensure understanding of its very meaning between the leaders and the led with a view to regulating and appreciating the instrument of power control among the leaders (Alamu, 2011: 4).

Schmitter (1992: 35) sees democracy as the “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decision in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”. Howell (1999) posits that democracy is a political process where rulers are held accountable to the ruled by a variety of political arrangements, which include regular security of tenure. However, Eyinla (2007: 65) argues that two fundamental elements in this definition are crucial and prevalent. “They are contestation and participation”. Eyinla (2007: 66) buttresses further that “a polity is democratic to the extent to which the collective decision makers are selected or displaced through free, fair and periodic elections based on universal adult suffrage and where candidates freely compete for votes”. Madison *et. al* (1987: 71) describe democracy as a set of institutions, including the three tiers of government, each of which is supposed to check and be checked by the other two, in order to maintain liberties and avoid tyranny, even of a majority against a majority. Applying cultural approach to the meaning of democracy, Rustow (1985: 82) defines democracy “as a problem-solving formula for power-sharing in which significant groups in society, either directly or through representative elites, negotiate from time to time over issues that are important to them all.”

Of paramount importance in this definition are the bargained interests that are entered into or reached that suffice for the time being. Often times, new issues arise, as old ones are replaced or even atrophy as groups’ need change. Where negotiations are properly and honestly conducted, groups make concessions in one area in order that they may win concessions in other areas. In which case, any agreement worked out is the best possible for the whole society at the time; it is at most the second best for any of the negotiating groups (Omoruyi 1994: 54). Having considered the various definitions of democracy, the most widely acceptable and enduring is the one given by the 16th American President Abraham Lincoln (1809-65), “as government of the people, by the people and for the people”. This means total representation, full participation and flawless accountability to the people by the electors because the people are the government entrusted to the few who represent their interest at the top. Thus, the implication of the three conditions of representation, full participation and complete accountability traced back to city-state, is indicative of its level of democratization (Alamu, 2011).

Indigenous Religious Tenets and Democratic Sustainability in Nigeria: A Symbiosis

It is instructive to note that some of the indigenous religious tenets are also indigenous values that are identified as African cultural heritages and indigenous credentials. Thus, some of these tenets are oath taking, selflessness, honesty, integrity, utilitarianism, tolerance, impartiality, proverbial philosophy, accountability, transparency, anti-wickedness, chastity and among others. These indigenous credentials are not new nomenclatures, inventions and engagements rather they are viewed and discussed with an African eye’s bird view.

Ogunade (2010: 63) argues that despite the fact that indigenous religion is not given official recognition like outlandish religions of Christianity and Islam; its not being recognized does not in any way diminish its role, its function and relevance in the nation’s democracy. In other words, indigenous religion has prominent and

relevant role to play in the modern socio-political dispensation in Nigeria since Christian and Islamic values have abysmally failed. Having established the relevance of indigenous religion, it is certain that indigenous religious tenets would have tremendous impact for integral development of the citizenry and more specifically, the method of harnessing and fostering the enduring values of the indigenous religious systems of the various Nigeria's groups in our present-day democratic process in order to ensure that political power remains humane both in its understanding ideology, moral values, social justice and equity (Ibid). To this end, some of these indigenous religious tenets will be exhaustively discussed.

Oath taking

Oath taking is a process whereby solemn allegiance is being taken or entered into by individual or group of individuals. This oath taking or oath of office is sacred and it requires steadfastness, truthfulness and loyalty without which the individual or group of individuals lives are at a risk. In which case, the paraphernalia of office must be respected by the chosen or appointed leader. In the traditional setting, this oath taking is very sacred and religiously upheld with corresponding effect if not religiously and truthfully upheld.

Therefore, in the political arena, indigenous oath taking should be encouraged at all the three tiers of government for political office holders and political leaders. This process would reduce abuse of power and office. Ogunade (2010) supports the fact that traditional ritual oaths by politicians vying for nomination and election into party office at the ward, local, state and national levels should be encouraged and promoted so as to have responsible and responsive, less-corrupt, and god-fearing leadership whose major preoccupation is selfless service to the people. From all indication, it is crystal clear that indigenous oath taking should be encouraged henceforth for leaders who are selected, elected or appointed.

Selflessness

Selflessness as the act of governance is also described as altruism. Altruism talks about concern for others than one's. In the traditional Nigerian setting, egoism is rejected because the egoist is considered to be a person who is insensitive to the needs, interests and plights of others. Gyekye (2002) presents an Akan Maxim which speaks directly against the unethical behaviour of the egoist. The Maxim goes: 'When it sticks into your neighbour's flesh, it is as if it sticks into a piece of wood.' This Akan maxim relates to the behaviour of a person who shows no moral concern whatsoever for the miserable or pitiable state in which another person finds himself or herself. The egoist does not care about the feelings of other persons. Insensitivity or lack of sympathy for others has its roots in egoism or selfishness. African social morality, thus, has no place for selfishness (Gyekye Ibid). Contrary it is what holds in present-day Nigeria and its political leadership. Therefore, the leaders and the led should internalize transformational selflessness in this modern age.

Utilitarianism

Indigenous utilitarianism implies seeking good for the majority of the people. In fact, their comfort becomes your watchword and happiness. This is the true sense of utilitarianism in the traditional communal Nigeria. Again, Gyekye (Ibid) opines that the social morality of the indigenous society enjoins its members to seek the good for the society as a whole, for in so doing they not only seek their own good but also build a firm basis for their own lasting happiness. Hence, the highest good according to African moral thought, is the welfare of the whole community. To this end, this should be integrated into our political system.

Justice

Justice is all about being just, fair and equitable. The indigenous religious tenets should be incorporated into our political culture so that fair play, justice, equity, will endure in our democratic process. The present adherents of indigenous religion should be adequately

acquainted with the essentials of the religion, which is justice to God, divinities, spirits, ancestors and humankind. Justice demands respect and toleration of political opponents and their view. Justice is summed up in these words "live and let live" (Ogunade 2010: 68). Thus, the spirit of "live and let live" is fostered by unity when the society is just and subsequently built on fair play.

Good Character

Traditional cultures place a high premium on good character. Good character is the essence of the African moral system or religious tenets, the linchpin of the moral wheel. In the context of moral life, in the struggle to do the right things and to lead a moral life, the quality of a person's personal character is of paramount importance (Gyekye 2002). For it is from a person's character that all his or her actions spring. Yoruba maxim has it: 'Gentle character is that which enables the rope of life to stay unbroken in one's hand'. The intention to carry out one's moral duty, the decision to obey moral rules, the way to achieve happiness; all this depends upon the quality of one's character. Similarly, the intention and ability to refrain from pursuing the morally wrong also depends on the quality of one's character (Ibid).

Tolerance

Indigenous people are widely known for their high level of tolerance. Despite the incursions of Islam and Christianity into Nigeria with their attendant attacks on indigenous religion, it remained and still remains tolerant. Tolerance is an embodiment of the Nigerian people until the seed of intolerance was sown by the proselytizing religions of Islam and Christianity as a result of membership drive. This spirit of intolerance has been directly or indirectly watered and cultured by subsequent Nigerian governments who are either Muslims or Christians. In the fourth Republic, former military Head of State Major Gen. Muhammadu Buhari was quoted as saying during electioneering campaign that the Muslims should not vote in the incumbent President Olusegun Obasanjo because he is a Christian. Christians in churches urged

their members to register and voted en mass for the incumbent President and started casting aspersion on Major Gen. Buhari. While Islam and Christianity remain intolerant of each other especially when it comes to politics, which is not healthy, because indigenous religion seems to be the most tolerant, there are cases of the followers engaging in religious conflicts for political reasons rather than ensuring stability and peace through rituals and sacrifices to gods and goddesses for polity (Ogunade 2010: 67). To this end, the most surviving virtue today in Africa and perhaps Nigeria in general is tolerance that has a long history of the people.

Accountability

Accountability is regarded as commitment required from public officials; individuals and collectively to accept public responsibility for their own action or inaction (Kwassonko 2010). This also means responsibility of government and its agent towards the public to achieve previously set objectives and to account for them in public. In the traditional African setting, checks and balances were being infused through appointed leaders. Awolalu and Dopamu (2005) talk of Ogboni cult as a medium of checking the excess of the kings in those days and this was a mechanism for accountability. This accountability with the help of checks and balances in social organization and governance is discernible from the fact that these were set out for community. It was democratic to the extent that these rules or laws were well structured and strictly followed. This process of checks and balances became social order which was not only clearly stated and enforced, but also worked harmoniously for the progress of the society. This accountability coupled with checks and balance should be revisited urgently by our political leaders as a desideratum for emerging democratic nation.

Transparency

Transparency comprises the legal, political and institutional structure that makes information about internal characters of a government and society available to actors both inside and outside political system (Bernard and Lord, 2000). Again, transparency is

the increased flow of timely and reliable economic, social and political information which is accessible to all relevant stakeholders but is also reliable and accessible to a range of potential agents (Baudr and Grimics, 2009: 150). To this end, Nigeria as a democratic nation needs transparency for good governance.

Honesty

In the traditional African setting, honesty is manifested in trustworthiness, truthfulness, sincerity and fairness. It also means lack of deceitfulness and falsehood. Honest people are dependable and can be counted upon to honour their duties, obligations, promises and contracts. Thus, this indigenous religious tenet does not create room for deception, cheating, misappropriation and embezzlement. However, in contemporary Nigerian society corrupt practices misappropriation and embezzlement have become endemic, endless and a way of life for the nation. Dzurgba (2000) observes that an honest person is found to be faithful in taking care of what belongs to other people or nation. The sermon of the indigenous religion is that honest people are honest in both little and big acts and this is because "he who is dishonest in a very little thing is also dishonest in much" (Ibid: 73-74). Therefore, honest people are urgently needed to govern the nation for democratic sustainability.

Impartiality

Impartiality means not being partial in the treatment of people. It also goes to mean not showing too much favour to one person or side. An impartial person is not biased and does not show favouritism in the treatment of others. Dzurgba (Ibid) argues that in social relations, honour both the rich and the poor. In work situations, an impartial person values merit, efficiency and productivity as against nepotism, favouritism and ethnic considerations. While he recognizes his duties to the family, local community, the state and the nation, likewise he recognizes that specific merits of one or the other of his services are not transferred to another. Thus, the indigenous message of impartiality is

equivalent to federal character in Nigeria. Therefore, federal character should be strictly adhered to.

Divination

In the traditional and indigenous setting like Nigeria, divination is very handy in order to save human lives from being wasted because of politics. In indigenous religion, divination helps to choose a leader or a community leader without much ado. This method forestalls assassination of prominent people, destruction of life and struggle for political power. Ogunade (2010: 67) has argued that through consultation of *Ifa* oracle, continuity in the interrelationship of indigenous religion and politics has been much more enduring at the local community level. Leadership in many lineage segments remains in the hands of people who are obliged to discharge both traditional religious duties as well as administrative one. The use of divination to choose leaders especially political leaders will remove or lessen the act of do or die affairs which our people now take for granted. If this is encouraged, our democracy will endure, strive and live long enough to bear virile and solid fruits and dividends which this present generation and generations yet unborn will continue to savour (Ibid).

Integrity

Integrity was the watchword of African community leaders in the pre-colonial era. In the traditional African setting, Kings could die for their integrity without mincing words. At times, the traditional rulers could commit suicide in order not to betray or compromise their integrity. Therefore, it is not out place to re-address and incorporate integrity into the socio-political systems in Nigeria. Thus, this integrity would make leaders outstanding in performance, and such should also be rewarded appropriately. Instead of people of integrity to be celebrated today in Nigeria they rather become the vermin while the corrupt and questionable leaders are the beloved. These beloved ones who have dubious and questionable characters are celebrated today everywhere with traditional and religious titles.

Communal Humanity and Brotherhood

In the indigenous African setting, this is the unrelenting pre-occupation with human welfare. This implies that African society appreciates and thrives on harmonious social relationships. What is morally good is what promotes social welfare, solidarity and peace in human relationships. Interestingly, this communal humanity is thus identical to the welfare of the individual member of the society (Gyekye, 2002). In addition, this communal brotherhood includes kindness, compassion, generosity, hospitality, faithfulness, truthfulness, concern for others and the action that brings peace, justice, dignity, respect, and happiness. These are all considered humanistic because of their consequences for human well-being or social welfare. Gyekye (Ibid) opines that they are conducive to cooperative and harmonious living, having been fashioned out of the experiences of the indigenous people in living together in society.

On the contrary today, the indigenous people are swinging and promoting the opposite. This finds expression in selfishness, backbiting, lying, stealing, adultery, rape, incest, murder, suicide, assassination, kidnapping, reckless killings and among others. Nevertheless, Gyekye (Ibid) again asserts that the reason why two deer walk together is that one has to take the mote from the other's eye, which underlines the fact of reciprocity, togetherness, and well-feelings. Therefore, Africa is the centre of communal humanism. In addition, Francis (2007: 26-28) explores the concept of *Ubuntu* as indicating not only peace but also holistic conception of peace. The essence of *Ubuntu* is to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, peaceful co-existence and mutual development. Equally speaking, it is the principles of symbiosis, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between peoples and communities. In exploring *Ubuntu* conceptualization as relating to African Religion, peace in Africa is not only the absence of war, conflict, violence, fear, destruction and human suffering, but also the absence of unequal and unjust structures and cultural practices, about security, democratic participation, respect for human rights, development, social progress and justice (Francis 2007; Alamu 2012).

Chastity

Chastity is one of the moral principles or values that portray fidelity in all its totality. Among the deities in the indigenous religion, some gods are saddled with the responsibility of chastity, uprightness, steadfastness, forthrightness and among others. As moral guardians of the society, they ensure total compliance of all human beings. As moral custodians, they checkmate the conduct of the individuals in the society. However, they descend heavily on the recalcitrant in the community. At times, they may be struck with thunderbolt or be allowed to receive calamitous consequences. With chastity, everybody is mindful of what he or she does in the community. They serve as sense of reminder. In the larger community like Nigeria, leadership and responsibility should be channelled towards fidelity.

The above has showcased the indigenous religious credentials upon which the life of the people hinges. These moral and religious tenets of the indigenous people have distinguished the people and still distinguish them because they are barriers that cannot be easily destroyed or condemned. No doubt, these religious tenets of the Nigerian people were hallmarks of governance in the pre-colonial era, until after independence in 1960, when governance was based on militocracy and democracy.

Proverbial Philosophy

No doubt, Awolalu and Dopamu (2005: 31-32) describe proverbial philosophy as formulation of human experience and reflections from time immemorial. Much of the people's religion, beliefs and practices can be learnt from these. They probe further that proverbs are used to settle quarrels, to teach people, to warn implicitly or explicitly against evil conduct or an impending doom, to encourage people, to praise, to criticize people, to indict people and among others (Awolalu and Dopamu, 2005: 32). Idowu (1996: 5) equally opines that the religion of the people permeates their lives so much that it is expressed in multifarious ways. It finds vehicles in myths, sayings and is the basis of philosophy.

An Appraisal of Western Democratic Values in Nigeria

The chapter has explored the indigenous religious tenets as catalysts for democratic sustainability in Nigeria. Thus, these religious tenets are so much cherished on the platform that they are intergroup values that have identified Nigerian people to be unique and special. In addition, these religious tenets are indispensable. They are indispensable because they lifted up Nigeria in the pre-colonial period of which there was understanding, harmonious co-existence and tolerance.

Nevertheless, the recognition of the colonial masters in the 1900s vehemently and radically changed the socio-political systems. Thus, the failure of our social and political systems have often been blamed on moral decadence, indiscipline, corruption, intolerance and among others occasioned by the colonial masters who introduced western style of leadership under the disguise of democracy. With the incursions of Christianity and Islam, intolerance becomes the honey of madness that has been orchestrated and perpetuated by them till to date, under the guise of membership drive. Furthermore, the introduction of western democracy has plagued us in the ever-with-us problem of leadership. In fact, we find it excruciatingly and extremely difficult to digest Western values, which are foreign to the Nigerian enclave. The case of corruption which has become endemic and endless in the society was a foreign phenomenon which was never in the Nigerian dictionary or vocabulary. But today, we have become champions than those who introduced this social virus. In the pre-colonial period, we only understood lobby not financial inducement that has become a commonplace rehearsal in the Nigerian society. Virtually all the republics we have had in Nigeria so far, corrupt practices have wrecked both Military and Civilian leaders alike. This social virus has become 'institutionalized' to such an extent that it has become a way of life in the polity. Since independence in October 1st 1960 till to date, this monster called corruption has been soaring in proportion. The political leaders in the second republic till of recent have been described thus: "They breakfasted

in London, lunched in Madrid and dined in Lisbon. While Nigerian Naira nose-dived in worth, they coursed their path to the vaults of the Swiss and became notorious for stashing stolen money abroad... Therefore, the political corruption centre seems not able to hold. Subsequently, government gave fillip to the bug" (Sunday Tribune, 2002: 3). The concept of democratic breakdown is familiar with Nigeria, because corruption has been elevated to the status of gold and adorned purple as a carnival without rules and limitations. Everywhere, one wonders if "corruption is not a Nigerian person" (Oyeshile, 2000: 5). Corruption in Nigeria soars like fern in the open field. To this end, avarice which is the root of all evil according to Swahili maxim should be avoided by all means so that our democratic sustainability will not become façade or sham.

Before the introduction of the British law, the indigenous people were at home with their customs and conventions, not conservative law which cannot be abrogated. Today, it is difficult to review this extant and conservative law that came from conservative environment to a communal environment. In an attempt to understand this conservative law, we are faced with many problems and interpretation lapses. As a matter of fact, customary law and Shariah Law have their peculiar problems in Nigeria. All in all, these invented laws are incompatible with communal environment like Nigeria.

Democracy as a concept was not given birth to in Nigeria that is while some politicians prefer to kill in the name of politics. Politics today has become do-or-die affairs in Nigeria because the people as well as the government have made it lucrative, whereas, in the traditional Nigerian society, life was sacred and mystic and money was de-emphasized. The people believed in divine theory of leadership. Moreover, the modern oath taking or oath of office by Bible and Qu'ran is worthless because these holy writs are no longer feared, sacred and mystical hence everybody freely uses them and refuses to abide by them. In the traditional Nigerian society, ritual oath taking was sacred and everybody must abide by it because any deviation can bring about calamitous consequence.

Nonetheless, all these aspects of western ethos are alien to us, hence we find them difficult to implement. They have so far retarded our democratization process and political sustainability in Nigeria. To this end, the major and paramount concern is how to explore and harness the inherent religious values and other good teachings of indigenous religion in a bid to lay new Nigerian democratic foundations of solid and sustainable political order. When we successfully incorporate indigenous religious credentials into our democratic and political epicycle, then we shall begin to entertain sincere hope of having many people endowed with true religious conscience running public affairs of Nigeria.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored indigenous religious tenets as catalysts for democratic sustainability in Nigeria. These rich religious tenets and cultural heritage of the indigenous Nigerian people sufficiently emphasize the significance of the basic instinct in human beings to lead or rule very well in the society. It is of interest to note that when these indigenous religious values were implemented and infused into our structure power in the society, governance was at its best as everybody was tolerant, accommodating and fostered with the spirit of 'live and let live'. In fact, the Nigerian society began to experience spiritual and physical progress until the arrival of the British colonial Masters vis-à-vis the importations of Islam and Christianity. Since then, things have dramatically and radically changed for the worst. Governance has been at the lowest ebb, thereby retarding progress and development. Even, today the democratization process is sick because corruption which is its unholy bedfellow has been threatening its sustainability.

Therefore, this chapter advocated the re-entrenchment and internalization of indigenous religious tenets into our democratic system so that we can have and enjoy solid and virile democratic base indispensable for sustainability in Nigeria. This can only

sustain our democratization process and make it the only 'game in town'.

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