



NIGERIA
Development *or*
Underdevelopment



(Selected Seminal papers)

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Chapter Fourteen

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION:

It is generally agreed by economists, anthropologists, sociologists and other scholars that culture plays a role in the development process (Hagen 1962; Zuvekas, 1979; Lauer, 1977). The role of culture is usually perceived as either inimical to or complementary to economic development. However, if we understand culture to mean the material, mental and moral acquisition of a group of people then its role in any society must be seen as dialectical. Consequently, development implies the attempt to constantly increase the well-being of persons in a society regardless of status, class, ethnic, religious and other affiliations. It is customary to examine culture as distinct from other activities within a social formation. To most people culture echoes traditional beliefs, dances, periodic celebration of certain ancestral events, ways of dressing, etc. Frequently, policy makers perceive culture as synonymous with tradition and hence allows occasional observance of such, for example, Nigerian festival of Arts and Culture.

In this paper, we argue that it is the existing or prevailing economic system that shapes the culture of the society. Any attempt to understand the culture of the people must emanate from dissecting the economic relations within that society. Hence, our aim is to analyze culture in the development process drawing on some experiences from Nigeria.

In addition, we posit that a change in the economic system will bring about a change in the culture and this variation in culture will sustain the life of that particular economic system. Part I of the paper sketches ex-ante the theoretical under-pinning, which will serve as a framework, while in part I we re-examine some evidence of the phenomenon on the Nigerian scene and present our conclusion.

PART I:

A PRIORI THEORIZING ON DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

Economists define economic development as involving the process of enhancing the quality of life for all persons. The other aspects of development as captured by this definition include:

1. raising people's incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education, etc. through appropriate economic growth processes;
2. creating the atmosphere that is conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem by establishing institutions to promote human dignity and respect; and;
3. increasing people's wish to choose by widening the range of goods and services (Todaro, 1981, p.524).

Inherent in the above definition is the notion that if there is increase in gross domestic product within an economy, then that economy is experiencing economic development.

It ought to be stated that orthodox economists have modified the usual emphasis on increased (gdp) as an index of development by invoking issues of basic needs and the eradication of poverty. The conceptualization of development by orthodox economists is faulty because emphasis is usually placed on strictly "economic" factors which can be quantifiable or measurable. As a result, culture is viewed as distinct from other activities in the society. Culture, ideology and religion are often dismissed by orthodox economists as non-economic factors and that such factors do play less important role in a country's development matrix. It is also orthodox economists who shy away from serious issues like class, ethnicity, relations of production, and politics. See, for example (Higgins, 1968, Herrick and Kindleberger 1983, Zuvekas 1977, Youtopolous and Nugent, 1977).

Culture must be seen as the sum total of the knowledge, ways and means of doing things, beliefs and values which a society possesses for sustaining itself. Since production is not just the basis for man's existence but also the basis for defining man as a special

being with a certain consciousness, it follows that the relations which occur between people during production gives birth to culture in a specific economic system. That is, culture like ideas is derived from social relations. It is the material existence of man that forms a particular culture and this culture then sustains the economic system. Without man, there will be no culture.

The attempt by orthodox economists to mutilate social reality has led to a search for an understanding of the dialectics of culture in the fields of anthropology and sociology. Anthropologists have identified various cultural patterns that could lead to social changes: (i) evolution; (ii) diffusion; (iii) acculturation; (iv) innovation or invention.

Innovation is considered "the most incisive form of cultural addition . . . the finding things out or, etymologically, "coming into something new" (Kroeber, 1948, p.352). Accordingly, innovation becomes the basis for cultural changes.

The materials used by the innovator come from two sources, his culture and the non-artificial aspects of his experience such as nature and his own physical and mental characteristics (Lauer, 1977, p.283).

This anthropological view of cultural pattern is not fundamentally different from the manner in which orthodox economists perceive the same phenomenon. Some sociologists would argue that "cultural change begins with the process of innovation, the formation of a new habit by a single individual which is subsequently accepted or learned by other members of his society" (Murdock, 1956, p.250).

The stress on invention illuminates some differences between anthropological approaches to the study of cultural patterns. Lauer (1977) argues that the anthropological approach is essentially micro, x-raying particular items that are incorporated into a culture and that these items have become responsible for changing the erstwhile culture.

On the other hand, the sociological approach is macro with emphasis on institutional changes over time. Sociologists, for example, will study innovation in the context of its implications for inter-group and interpersonal relations rather than for its influence on the pattern of culture.

Despite the difference, both approaches complement each other. Both have utilized such concepts as evolution, diffusion, invention and social structure in understanding the dynamics of change. Other approaches are examined in (Murphy, 1967; Wolf, 1970). Though social scientists do not generally agree on the meanings of the above concepts, we will however attempt a brief but broad representation of the anthropologist's position on evolution, diffusion and acculturation.

It was in the latter of the nineteenth century that social anthropologists identified evolution in terms of a schema of development from lower to higher forms of cultural life. There is the notion that evolution is either unilinear or multilinear (Jacob's and Stern, 1952; Murdock, 1949; Steward, 1955).

The linear anthropologists who applied the concept of evolution to social development sketched the evolution of human culture through the successive stages of savagery, barbarism, and civilization. It was then discovered that as man improved control over his life through new techniques, his culture also developed. Hence movement from savagery to civilization reflects cultural progress.

Put succinctly, the evolutionists position is that culture is "a symbolic, continuous, cumulative, and progressive process" (White, 1949, p.140). Culture is thus a recurring thing that engulfs the existence of each individual and therefore explains the totality of man's behaviour.

The concept of diffusion refers to the spread of some aspect of one culture to another. It is also the channel by which inventions spread throughout a society or within a section of society. Several empirical studies have confirmed the existence of diffusion (Kroeber, 1948, p.412; Linton, 1936; Beals, 1967). The usual problems associated with diffusion theory are the rate of diffusion and socio-cultural variables that thwart or facilitate diffusion. A vivid example of diffusion is that Africans who were taken to far away Americas during the slave trade still possess some aspect of their indigenous African religion despite conversion to Christianity and other influences.

On the other hand, acculturation connotes the influence exercised by one culture on another, that is, the mutual influence of

two cultures which could lead to cultural change.

Put precisely, acculturation is "culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems" (Barnett, et al, 1954, p.974). Two cultures could meet through colonization, war, military conquest and occupation, migration, missionary work, trade, tourism, travel by businessmen and contiguous boundaries.

The concepts of culture discussed above contain explicitly or implicitly that cultural changes lead to societal changes and hence economic development takes place through cultural variations. This view is usually used in explaining the underdevelopment for the Third World Countries.

However, if economic development is perceived from the non-orthodox position then the economic relations between persons will create a culture that will serve such a system. "A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding to practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organised (Rodney, 1974, p.4). thus, there has always been economic development within human society and people have always attempted to conquer nature in order to survive.

Since culture represent the material, mental and moral acquisition of a group of people, it (culture) becomes determined, influenced and changed by the development process. In the long-run, when development represent movement to higher levels of social formations the inherent culture will reflect that specific social formation sustaining such information. That is, a specific social or economic system creates a specific culture and that culture in turn keeps alive the system.

DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS:

Development is universal because the conditions, which necessitate economic progress, are also universal. Human beings faced with the task of survival have always used nature and relations between man and nature have lead to further advances

especially in expanding their available goods and services.

Africa being the original home of man was obviously a major participant in the process which human growth displayed an ever increasing capacity to extract a living from the environment (Rodney, 1974, p.4).

Consequently, Africa can point to an era of economic development. In fact, she is still developing for under-development is indeed a process of development.

Historically, the expansion of the economies in Africa or in any continent brought about changes in the form of social relation. The changes were both qualitative and quantitative. For example, primitive communal societies gave way to slave society which eventually changed to Feudal societies. Under primitive communalism, property was collectively owned, work was commonly divided and goods equally shared. This relation created a culture of togetherness. However, traits of domination within the family led to the slave relation. The slave society represented a qualitative change in that it was higher than primitive communalism. But it was expansion under primitive communalism (quantitative process) which led to the slave form of social relation (qualitative). Essentially, we are alluding to the fact that a slave economic system creates a slave culture. A feudal economy brings about a feudal culture while a capitalist economic system gives birth to capitalist culture. A socialist economic system will create also a socialist culture. Each succeeding system represents both a higher form of social organization and therefore implies economic development. This is so since each new system represents increased ability to control the material environment and creates more goods and services for humanity.

In pre-capitalist Nigeria, the cultures discussed above were quite apparent. They did not occur at the same time throughout the country but each group experienced the different stages. For example, the slave economy and implicitly the slave culture thrived in Calabar and other parts of Nigeria (Rodney, 1974; Tessler et al, 1973; Abasaiddai, 1989). It is a fact that the capitalist economic system was imposed on Nigeria by our erstwhile colonial master, the

British. Although, scientifically, Nigeria would have had to "experience" the capitalist mode, even if she was not colonized. The laws of societal development manifest themselves independent of our will.

Available evidence indicates that when the British "left" in 1960, the Nigerian rulers continued to build a capitalist economy. It is also factual that she is not a dependent and peripherized capitalist economy. Our task is to try to examine whether a developing and dependent capitalist Nigerian economy has created or is creating a capitalist culture, which sustains the present Nigerian system.

PART II:

NIGERIA: CULTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy-makers in Nigeria view economic development as involving significant increases in income per capita sustained for some years as well as some improvement in the provision of basic needs. Hence, the concept of development in Nigeria is along the orthodox line. Consequently, the various policy options as enunciated in the country's plan documents and other pronouncements by government have indicated a specific direction which is that of accelerating the development of capitalism (see 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Development plans)

During the period 1960-1986, efforts were centered on changing the pre-capitalist culture to that befitting the development of capitalism, that is, the attempt at developing a modern economy. In order to maintain, reproduce and propel the dependent capitalist nature of the Nigerian economy, we have observed the existence and/or the desire to create the following: (1) the culture of government; (2) the culture of percolation; (3) the culture of greed; (4) the culture of individualism; (5) the culture of production, time and work; (6) the culture of favouritism, and the culture of social vices.

Since 1960, two experiments of government have existed. The first being civilian which some scholars usually classify as; (a) parliamentary and (b) presidential and the second, military rule. The frequent changes in government depict the desire to create a culture of government - the intention is for this culture to sustain the existing economic relations. Since independence, no government in

Nigeria has altered the dependent capitalist economic relations. On one side, changes within the ruling hegemony has not affected in any reasonable degree the existing mode of production.

On the other hand, the prevailing mode of production has been able to lure people to waiting to participate or move close to the corridors of power. The once concluded political Debate on Nigeria's future government presents a vivid example of how an existing economic relation (dependent capitalism) tries to alter and/or create a culture of government!. We hasten to note that the attempt to alter and or create a culture of government in the short-run may drastically change the existing economic relation. The new economic relation will in the long-run create its own culture which will sustain and propel the economic relation.

The culture of percolation implies the existence on a wider scale of corruption, bribery, fraud and embezzlement of public funds. This culture is usually referred to as an element in the stage of primitive capitalist accumulation. In Nigeria, every new government accuses the former of corruption and pinpoints individuals who have embezzled funds and other negative activities. For Nigeria, contract awards and the inherent over-invoicing as well as real estate merchandizing intensifies or fuels this culture of percolation

In the attempt to create a modern capitalist economy, surplus funds are needed for production and further accumulation and one way of getting the funds is through percolation. The Nigerian economy must be able to produce first and second generation millionaires if she is to build a modern capitalist economy. We have argued elsewhere that corruption adversely affects the economy a reduction in national output. Also, every Nigerian unconsciously aids corruption (Ekpo and Agiobenebo, 1985). The culture of percolation needs no emphasis; the reader is urged to read the country's various newspapers where daily reports of corruption, bribery, fraud and embezzlement are frequent.

In the process of building capitalism, the stress on competition results in the creation of the culture of individualism and greed. The individual sees himself as separate from society. His abilities and ideas must be fully exploited- the survival of the fittest syndrome. Consequently, he/she becomes lonely and selfish. In

Nigeria, this development occurs when the individual tries to identify with someone or a family that has "made it". While these cultures (greed and individualism) are fully developed in places like Britain and United States of America (USA); in Nigeria, such culture are fast becoming entrenched especially in areas where pre-capitalist economic relations are quickly disappearing.

Under capitalism, the worker sells his/her labour power; therefore labour becomes a commodity which attracts a reward, that is wages. The worker must work to earn enough to maintain himself and family and also generate surplus in order for the capitalist to be able to retain him (worker). The surplus accrues to the capitalist who has bought the worker's labour power.

Consequently, a culture of production, time and work (PTW) gets created which inherently sustains the system. For example, the imposition of capitalism by the British meant the existence of factories, going to work for hours (either 8 a.m to 4 p.m or in any form) and a different notion of time. In pre-capitalist Nigeria time did not mean looking at clocks or wristwatches. Time was decided by interpreting nature. For example, the rising and setting of the sun, etc. Presently, a worker must report to work at a specific time, perform a specific task, closes at a particular time and gets paid (salary or wages). This of course, was and is still a culture that is still developing. The development of the PTW culture is not all positive. The negative aspects include:

- (a) the worker being paid a subsistence wage or salary;
- (b) the worker loses his job when profits decline (unemployment); and (c) the alienation of the worker. In the present day Nigeria, the organic composition of capital in the production sphere is increasing hence the utilization of labour is declining.

The other cultures we have observed in Nigeria are that of favouritism and social vices. It is not uncommon to find citizens being charged of nepotism and ethnicism (tribalism). The high accumulative instinct present at this stage of Nigeria's development fuels favouritism. The individual, who offers such favours, anticipates assistance from the person who receives the favour. The assistance could be in the form of monetary payments or in kind (a

car, house, etc). If the Nigerian economy develops "positively" along the capitalist line then the culture of favouritism will either disappear or at least be minimized.

The evidence of armed robbery, robbery, drug peddling and prostitution are elements of the culture of social vices. The high degree of competition that characterizes capitalist relations marginalizes individuals who are unable to compete. The problem of unemployment, which is a paramount feature of capitalism partly creates the culture of social vices. Consequently, in Nigeria, despite the attempt to reduce such crimes as armed robbery through public execution, armed robbery continues unabated. The culture of social vices never disappears under capitalism. Rather, the form and sophistication of such vices will change. For example, there is still armed robbery in the United States but the methods used by the robbers are different from those utilized by their Nigerian counterparts.

There are other aspects of culture, which not only exist in Nigeria but are also unproductive. They include ceremonies associated with funerals and weddings. In most part of Cross River State, funerals are becoming very expensive. It is usually a period for feasting and merry-making. It is quite usual to borrow huge sums of money from banks and friends to finance funeral rites. In pre-capitalist Cross River State fan-fare during funerals depended on the age and status of the dead; even the expenses then were minimal (Abasiattai, 1989). The development of capitalism has introduced an element where death is a commodity. Weddings are also very expensive and in some parts of the country, it has become a commodity attracting high monetary payments. The imposition of capitalist economic relation meant the introduction of foreign culture- a kind of acculturation

For example, in wedding, it is usually to satisfy important aspects of pre-capitalist marriage tradition and at the same time respect either the legal system which is an out come of Nigeria's erstwhile colonial status and /or appear before a church minister. As the development of capitalism intensifies, the legal and approaches to marriage and funerals will overtake the former pre-capitalist (traditional) approaches.

It is important to note that religion is an aspect of culture. The

major faith in the country was introduced externally. The Christian faith came through. European missionaries while Islam was introduced by the Arabs. While the controversies on the rule of religion in an economy still exist we recall that Marx Weber once wrote that Protestant Ethics facilitated the development of capitalism (Weber, 1958, p.64). In the Cross River State, there is no sign of the Protestant Ethic despite the infinite number of churches. It seems to us that the recent occurrence of spiritual churches impedes production on one hand while on the other hand allows the petit-bourgeois class to accumulate. Moreover, a careful scrutiny of the weekly events of any spiritual church will definitely show that in five out of seven days in a week members must be spiritually productive but not materially productive.

Any discussion of culture and economic development in Nigeria must include the role of women. In recent times women have echoed their desire to be part and parcel of the development process.

WOMEN, CULTURE AND NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

The development of capitalism in Nigeria relegates women to the background. This is so because under capitalism a woman is an object as well as a commodity -she is subject to all forms of exploitation. Any serious observation in the rural and urban areas of Nigeria will show that women constantly engage themselves in productive (economic) activities yet the existing economic relation exploits them. Under capitalism, women are object of pleasure for men- this is one of the negative culture of capitalist societies (developed or primitive stage), prostitution constitutes a serious problem. This is not to suggest that prostitution does not exist in other social formations. Women who perform the same task with their male counterparts are usually paid less. For example, in the USA, one of the demands of the women group, is equal pay for equal work. In Nigeria, before the construction of capitalism, women were exploited under both Slavic and feudal economic relations. Even under capitalism, the exploitation of women as in pre-capitalist relations still persists. This negative role of women is one of the cultures of dependents capitalist development. The ruling class (state) in Nigeria has attempted to implement certain policies, which

will incorporate women into the mainstream of the economy'. The state insists on the education of women, opposes early marriage and legally prohibits prostitution. However, the objective laws of capitalist development are diametrically opposed to government policies. What role was played by the state in Nigeria?

THE ROLE OF THE STATE AND CULTURE:

The building of capitalism recognizes that the culture of capitalism must be developed. The role of the state is in ensuring that the aspects of culture favourable to their class are encouraged in various forms. For example, in Nigeria, there is usually a government department that is responsible for culture. In Cross River State, there is the Cultural Centre Board. The state in Nigeria views culture as the preservation and furtherance of archaic beliefs- especially those that will not affect negatively the development of capitalism.

The state thus organizes annual festivals of culture where guests are entertained through dances, concerts, and other acrobatic displays. Therefore, the state views culture as distinct from the economy. When an economy is at its primitive stage of capitalist accumulation, for example, Nigeria, this notion of culture is more often unconscious to the ruling class. The state ensures that whatever is culture within a country is portrayed externally in order to make the country "proud"-more seriously to elate the ruling class. It is interesting to note that while the state perceives that what is culture must be static, changes do occur no matter how little. For example, in pre-capitalist Nigeria (most part of the Cross River, at least), it was common for young girls to dance "ancient" tunes without brassier. In recent times, the girls not only use brassier but the entire event is usually video-tapped and / or televised.

The ruling class through its various organs demands that the various networks (Radio and Television) provide cultural hours. This is usually to register that the country has not been suffocated with foreign ideas or culture. The impact of this on the development process is difficult to measure. What is clear is that there is still the appearance of foreign culture. Let us briefly examine this notion of foreign culture since it is more than just acculturation.

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM:

We will define culture imperialism as a situation in which the culture of an economy is influenced externally by another country, which is superior economically. That is, a country that is imperialistic economically also transfers its culture.

The receiving country is dependent economically and implicitly culturally on the imperialist power. For example, the Nigerian economy is dependent on the economies of Western Europe and the United States of America therefore the culture of both must manifest themselves in Nigeria.

The traces of such a culture may range from the mannerism of a top business executive, a rich man in Nigeria having the most sophisticated telephone system from the USA to finding a rural dweller wearing a T-shirt with the inscription "United State Postal Service". Any keen observer of the Nigerian scene will notice the fast progress made by Nigerians in mirroring European and American lifestyle though the latter seems more obvious.

CONCLUSION:

We have attempted to analyse culture and economic development drawing on some evidence from Nigeria. We argued that in the long-run, the existing economic system will shape a particular culture and that culture will then sustain the system. In the short-run, culture could affect an economic system but once that system has been determined the role of culture is in ensuring the system's survival.

In Nigeria we identified seven elements of culture which characterized the stage of the country's capitalist development. These elements were: the culture of government, the culture of percolation, the culture of greed, and the culture of production, time and work and among others. The growth of these cultures would accelerate the pace of capitalist development in the country. We also did posit that, for example, the attempt to create the culture of government may alter the prevailing capitalist development in Nigeria to a different economic relation and the new economic relation will ultimately create its own culture.

We noted that the growth of these cultures exhibited certain negative aspects of capitalist development-problems of armed

robbery, prostitution, exploitation of women, and other vices. The conclusion, therefore, is that if any economy wants to minimize the negative aspects of capitalist culture then a people's oriented economic relation becomes imperative.

NOTES

1. The Government in 1986 created the political Bureau and charged it with the responsibility of finding out the type of future social system Nigerians desire. The report of the Bureau, following a countrywide debate, led to the formation of the Directorate for Mass Mobilisation, Economic Recovery and Self-reliance popularly known as MAMSER. MAMSER is supposed to raise the political consciousness of the citizens so that the Third Republic will be better administered. The present military Government is slowly disengaging itself from politics and civilians are to take over completely by October 1992.
2. When this paper was written, Akwa Ibom State, which was created on September 30th, 1987, was part of the Cross River State. Thus, Cross River State as used in the paper includes the new Akwa Ibom State.
3. There is the Better Life for Rural Women Programme created in 1987 under the presidency. One of its objectives is to uplift the rural women by training them to acquire better skills as well as modernising the rural areas.