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AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AS AN UNEXPLORED TOOL FOR ACHIEVIING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT
African Traditional Religion as a religion of the Africans has suffered terribly in the hands of western culture, colonialism et cetera. The worse is what it suffers today which neo-colonialism as a problem is coming from within. She has struggled to untie itself from the problems imposed on it by the western culture, colonialism and neo - colonialism. And this, it has done and is still doing. In this work, the researcher X-rays the different tools for achieving human development and national restructuring. The researcher used social-cultural theory in the work. However, it was discovered that African traditional religion has suffered in the hands of the western culture; it was also discovered that African traditional religion has been making effort to free itself from this through creating awareness in the media, organizing seminars to teach people the relevance of African traditional religion to humanity. It recommends also that the practitioners of African traditional religion should not relent in championing this course of its positive aspects. Also, they should carry out crusade especially to the schools where we have African traditional religion students to create an awareness of what African traditional religion has achieved in the building of a nation.

KEY WORDS: African Traditional Religion, Unexplored Tool, Human Development, Restructuring, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION
African Traditional Religion (A.T.R) is the religion of the African people. The African world is united such that you cannot really extricate his religion from the rest of his life like political, economy, social, education *et cetera.* Hence when one talks of the African religion, it implies everything about the African man's world. However, African people have not been the same since the advent of Christianity, Islam, colonization and indeed any form of contact with the western world. According to Nweke (2017:3), Western ideologies on religion, culture and worldview have seriously downplayed the African concept of religion, community and worldview.

Before our contemporary time, Africans were noted for their religiosity, community centred life and respect for human life among other cherished religious cum social values. African worldview took a new turn when it met with the western world. Hence, what Africans were known for as mentioned by Nweke above, for instance, were taken for granted by the western world; the prominent Africans were brainwashed by them and they joined their train of which gave rise to neo-colonialism.

Originally, Africans were known as problem solvers with the values and education available to them, they used all these to better the lives of the Africans who were equally comfortable with their conditions before the encountered alien cultures and orientations. However, like so many other African states, Nigeria is the creation of European imperialism. Its very name after the great Niger River, was suggested in the 1890's by Governor Fredrick Lugard. It was initially known as 'Niger area' before it was changed to what is now known as Nigeria *(http//en.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/ history of Nigeria).*

Okpe (2014:71-76) in *NetJournal of several sciences* vol. 2(2) opined that the history of Nigeria has been characterized by series of religious crises that have greatly impeded the nation building (p. 1). Rather than exploiting the values in our Religion as Africans (Nigeria) towards sustainable nation building, the religious crises have by no small measure promoted disunity among Nigerians of diverse religious backgrounds. According to the dimensions of these crisis especially between 1980 Maintatsine

religious crisis, through the 2000 Kaduna Sharia religious crisis and the 2008/2010 Jos religious crisis into the present Boko Haram insurgency show that much is left to be desired from the potentials of religion especially A.T.R (p. q 1)

Thus, it is in this religious crisis in Nigeria has African Traditional Religion found itself, it is also in it that it is struggling to make an impact as it concerns restructuring and national development.

This paper sees A.T.R as a solution to the human development and national restructuring in Nigeria but does not outrightly rule out the contributions of the Western cultures. It also sees A.T.R as one religion that has not accomplished its task of national restructuring due to neglect by the Nigerians. For Nigeria to be on the path of National restructuring there must be a conscious effect to inculcate the values of A.T.R fully into the people of Nigeria. The practitioners of African Traditional Religion should develop the theology that affirms human person in order to remould into shape the original identity of Africans. The advocacy here is the need for the media to be educated on the study of African culture since a lot of information pass through the media.

CLARIFICATION OF THE MAJOR CONCEPT AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

This is the indigenous religion of the Africans. It is the way Africans worship their God. This religion is found in almost all the activities of the African man. Awolawu and Bopantu (1979:26) stated that this is a religion that has no written literature yet it is everywhere for those who care to see and read. It is largely unwritten in the people's myths and folklores, in songs and dances, in their liturgies and shrines and in proverbs and pity sayings.

UNEXPLORED TOOL

According to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, tool is a mechanical device intended to make a task easier. Therefore, unexplored tool is now a mechanical device intended to make a task easier but not yet discovered or used.

HUMAN

According to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, it is of or belonging to the species of *Homo sapiens* or its closest relatives.

NATIONAL

To understand the word "national", we must understand it from its noun "nation". The term was used in the medieval universities to describe the colleagues in a college of student who were born within a "pays", spoke the same language and expected to be ruled by their own family law. However, the term as used contemporarily, emerged about the end of the 18th century and was defined by the Franco-Americans as "political nation" in the terms of geographical consideration. Thus, the *Webster's New College Dictionary*, defines nation as a stable historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and a language in common. Furthermore, the Thesaurus Dictionary defines nation as people in a land under a single government, a community or people living in a defined territory with organized authorities.

RESTRUCTURING

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines it as changing an organization. It is a corporate management term for the act of organizing the legal, ownership, operational or other structures of a company or nation for the purpose of making it more profitable or better organised for its present needs. *(http//cem.m.wikipedia.org.uk).*

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AS A TOOL UNEXPLORED

As earlier said African Traditional Religion is an embodiment of values which are yet not explored and if explored will help to better the human life and improve national integration in Nigeria. Tools are enshrined in the Igbo-world view or their cosmology. Ejizu (1986) made some inferences which serve as the tools for African Traditional Religion. They are:

1) Unified view of reality.

2) Sense of community.
3) Value of human life.

Ejizu (1986:142) observed still, that as it concerns African Traditional Religious world view that in daily life, the values and attitudes which people aspire to and exhibit are the direct expression of their dominant beliefs. The traditional Igbo cosmology is essentially a religious one. Religion provides the basic and unifying vision through which everything is perceived. It is therefore not surprising that the traditional value system and the attitudinal orientation of the Igbo are prevalently religious.

Ejizu's position is very vital and if Nigeria as a nation will critically view the nation the way the original African world viewed things, especially the way they valued religion and have serious respect for the values that are in the African Traditional Religion.

1) United view of reality:
   The world of an African man are the same; the material and immaterial are connected. There is no demarcation between the two worlds. Madu Wonder (2004:21) succinctly said that it is no wonder, therefore, that we can appreciate the overall principle behind the non-demarcation of the material from the nonmaterial, the sacred from the profane, and the religious from the non-religious in the mechanics of the Igbo life.
   The two worlds are linked and related and they complement each other. Metuh (1987:76) equally corroborates with Madu's assertion by saying: "Beings in the world are linked by a network of relationships. No being is an island or are beings juxtaposed of independent forces, each operating on its own. All creatures are found to be in relationship.
   Metuh's accretion when critically viewed is ad rem and presents the African man's life. Hence, Nigeria as a nation if cued in into this system of having connections with the immaterial reality where the gods reside at least the fear of the gods will be a deterrent to some of the ills in the nation
2) Sense of community: The African world view is centered on the human person who lives in the community.
3) The communal living which African world is known for is no more. Individualism has taken over. In community life of the African, moral, social life and some values are learnt when people live together and interact. In today's world however, the ICT has taken over. The companions are now communication gadgets like phones, television, computers, etc. Maliki (1961:164) has this to say:
   > "The impact of secularism on social and cultural aspects is seen to be related to the role of media and ICT, like TV and internet, which occupy a central position in contemporary living. Both have adverse effects on the major religions we have, primarily because they are completely controlled by people who are not sensitive to religion, introducing various values that are completely alien to the teachings of religion. A new generation has been exposed to all kinds of modern western fashions and lifestyles".

   The people who are being referred to by Maliki are the Africans and the sorry aspect of it is that the new life style has been packaged by people who are not friendly with religion.
4) Value for human life:
   Madu (2004:23) opined that "Because of the heavy accent which the traditional Igbo, as many other African peoples place on human life, its enhancement and community, Igbo traditional religion like those of other African groups, has perhaps been rightly dubbed 'heavenly anthropocentric'. Human life is therefore believed to be the prime value, and every other thing is expected to serve its realisation".
   Nwala (1985:144) went further to buttress the meaning of life *(ndu)* which to him can mean the following:
   a. The dynamic quality of material and human existence
   b. Life *(ndu)* is also existence itself and existence could take various forms, either materially or pure spirit. Then even at death, which is the dissolution of the flesh, the spirit enters a separate existence maintaining the "ndu" of the individual in another sphere or form of existence.

   Thus Madu and Nwala made efforts in their own way to explain what life is in the African world-view and how it should be valued. The question is – do we value life in our world today? The answer is NO. We have many cases of kidnapping, assassination etc. in the country because we have derailed from what we are known for. We have to go back to the root and start the healing

from the root *(sanatio a radice)* for us to have a renewed restructuring. Subsequently, when we have taken cognisance of the three tools mentioned above; namely unity of reality, community life and value for human life, we can now see that the evil in our country like insurgency, secularism, cultism, kidnapping, embezzlement, gay practices, abuse of authority and stealing will be reduced to the nearest minimum.

PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA AS IT CONCERNS NATIONAL RESTRUCTURING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Nigerian society is seriously threatened by secularism which according to Shorter and Oryancha (1977:14) is a situation in which religious faith, for one reason or the other, is felt to be superfluous. It is the state in which religion loses its hold at the level of human consciousness.

The summary of what Nigeria is suffering today could be seen in the definition above. Some of the problems are:

POLITICS

Politics is termed dirty because of the way people carry it out. Politics is not dirty but the people playing it are corrupt and dirty. Clark (1995:125) in his view about politics and Nigeria asserts that "corruption, though a universal phenomenon, appears to have become so endemic in Nigerian politics that most discoveries about the country here and elsewhere, center more on the high ascendency of corruption in our public life".

Corruption in politics of Nigeria has become endemic and needs to be given maximum attention. The question comes, why do people go into politics? To serve or to be served? Politics and what it is all about is a problem that needs to be tackled.

MORAL LIFE

Secularism advocates that morality should be separated from religion, that religion should have no control over the code of behaviour. There is no need to refer to any guidance of religion in the sphere of social morality. As a result of this removal of God's guidance, people are faced with crisis of an unstable system of morality with no standard of judgement. However, man should not be allowed to formulate the system of morality because of his limitations and weaknesses like prejudice, greed, selfish desires, etc. in Nigeria, the African gods have been relegated to the background and man taken the centre stage in the formulation of the system of morality and that is where we got it wrong.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education is one of the most important cornerstones of all human societies. The impact of secularism on educational system is considered serious and dangerous since it is directly responsible for the intellectual quality of human beings. The importance of God is completely eliminated from public education and such secular education has failed to inspire the new generation and meet up with the questions being posed about holistic education. Sorrel (1954:136) asserts that:

In secular system of education, knowledge is gained through certain methods like the experimental method, experience, rational thinking and the scientific method. Scientism is one of the intellectual challenges posed by secularism. Scientism is the belief that science, especially natural science is the most valuable part of human learning and that the scientific method is the only reliable and valid way of acquiring knowledge.

The above by Sorrel has no place for God or the supernatural and if education is only what he said, what can we say about informal education which a child gets from his family, peer groups, kindred, age grades etc. as we have in Africa?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The topic: African Traditional religion as an unexplored tool for achieving human development and national restructuring in Nigeria is a thought-provoking issue which everyone should be interested in its discourse. The work is divided into subtitles namely; clarification of concept, the unexplored tools and the problems in Nigeria. In the paper, it was discovered that African Traditional Religion has a lot

of values which were upheld before the coming of the western culture. These values are enshrined in the world-view of the Africans. These values were equally seen as the tools which are yet to be explored. The paper suggests equally that Nigeria as a nation, if they are thinking of positive and fruitful restructuring, should look at these tools - unity of reality, value for human life and community living. These three tools can be used in different areas of human life in Nigeria that need restructuring. However, if the right peg is placed in the right hole, national restructuring and human development in Nigeria will be achieved in the way that all and sundry will benefit from it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research, the following recommendations were made:

- That the awareness should be created through the media about the tools of A.T.R since everyone has access to the media.
- Seminars should be organised to teach people the values of A.T.R and how it could be harnessed for human and national restructuring in Nigeria.
- The A.T.R adherents should not relent in championing this cause, they should carry out crusades especially to the schools where we have A.T.R students and equally to different places to make people aware of what A.T.R has achieved in the building of the nation.
- Africans should develop the character of self-acceptance as against self-rejection.
- There is need for Africans to develop a theology that affirms the human person in order to remould the original identity of Africans.

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