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## AFRICAN CULTURE AND MIGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY TIME

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### ABSTRACT

African has a long history in terms of population mobility both regionally and internationally. Over the years African people have migrated in response to demography, economic, political and other factors, including environmental disasters and conflicts; Africa migration has been intra and inter (internal) movements of people within the region; movement of people from outside the region into the African continent and otherwise. The migrants have always considered the various sub-regions as single economic units within which trade in goods and services flourish. But more importantly intra-regional migration sustained by poverty, economic recession and the consequences of macroeconomic adjustment measures. The paper shall examine the impact of culture in African migration and the dominant trend of internal migration in recent times for economic purpose. It shall recommend that the import of migration of our intellectuals to other continent in search of economic power has reduced our empowerment and in promoting our African cultures and thus promoted neo-colonization in Africa. Furthermore, the migration of rural to urban areas is the hallmark of decency in our traditional heritage as it relates to culture and cultural

values, conflicts, norms in our contemporary society by the future generation.

**Keywords:** Migration, Culture. Economic Factors, Conflicts, Contemporary Society.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are millions of Africans in the globe who migrate across the national boundaries on the African continent in search of economies and livelihood. African has a long history of population mobility both region all and internationally. The large scale of modern migrants of workers in general is one of the elements of wider transformation of the economic, political and communal life of the peoples of Africa. This has led to an increasing involvement with external economic cultural forces. The dilemma that Africa states are facing with migration affects their cultural heritage, values and norms in relation to labour migration and emigration during the colonial period. For instance labour migration contributed to under development of African regions to the global economy. Thus African migration benefits the labour exporting regions and recipient states, and that labour migration will continue until basic economic change overtake the African culture. It cannot be overemphasized that, because migration is mainly responsible for the low productive levels in rural areas or communities and the shift to urbanization of mobility of labour.

### **Historical Background of African Culture and Migrations:**

Africans in the pre-colonial era find it difficult to move from one place to another or work outside their local communities. African culture is expressed in its arts, crafts, folktale, and religion, cooking, cuisine, music and languages. The cultures of

African continent are widely diverse but it has many similarities. For example, the morals, norms and the respect of their cultural heritage. Africa has influenced and been influenced by other continents. This is in the event of adopting ever changing modern society rather than remaining in their own culture or trying to acculturate. Africa is made up of different ethnic groups and culture.<sup>1</sup> The continent of Africa's regeneration has also been an integral aspect of post-independence nation building on the continent, with a recognition of the need to harness the cultural resources of Africa to enrich the of education, regaining the aeration of an enabling environment for economic activities. In modern times, the need for greater attention in the cultural dimension in all aspects of development has become increasingly vocal.<sup>2</sup>

In recent times, migration crisis in the African region and Mediterranean region in Europe has sustained attention in the process of migration and displacement in contemporary Africa; sub-Saharan Africans host the largest members of refugees (UNHCR 2015). Moreover, most international migrants migrate in Africa move within the region, making intra-regional migration an important phenomenon (UNDESA, 2015). There are cultural difference in migration and the bridges of intra cultural dialogue.

### **The Concept of Culture and Cultural Identity:**

Culture according to E. Tylor (1871) was defined as a complex whole which includes: knowledge, belief, arts, customs, morals

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<sup>1</sup> Khair El-Din Haseeb Et al, *The Future of the Arab Nation: Challenges and Options*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition (Routledge 1991) pg. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Tajudeen Abdul Raham, ed. *Pan Africanism: Politics, Economy and Social Change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Plato Press, London, 1996.

,law and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of a society and transfer from generation to the other. In Sociology and Anthropology, it includes the beliefs, behavior, language and entire ways of life of a particular group of people at a particular point in time ( Otite and Oginonwo,2007 ).Culture is shared by the member of a society and also learned through the process of socialization. Note that socialization may be viewed as a process whereby one learns and internalizes the norms and roles of the culture of that society. It includes the norms of the society. It is an aged long phenomenon which is passed down from generation to generation. However, the advent of technology has a great influence on culture thus, changing or modifying it. It is important to state that as society developed so also the culture of that society changes and adopts to new development. Furthermore, culture is learnt without any effort on the part of the learner, if a child is born a Yoruba family or culture, he is bound to dress like the Yoruba's and to speak the Yoruba language and vice-versa. The learning of a culture is continuous for life. When one accepts new roles and responsibilities, he learns to meet the demands of the new position or environment he finds himself.

Culture is said to be dynamic and not static. It changes all the time as new things come into place. The African culture has developed from what it used to be during our forefathers to the present economic developments and there are cultural traits within the continent when compared with developed economies. Culture is featured shared and learned among people of different ethnic background and orientations within a society.

Social identity can be thought of as the culturally defined personality characteristics, which are ascribed to social roles, such as the role of being a father, mother, friend, employer, employee, etc. Ethnicity is a source of social identity. Ethnic groups are composed of people who may or may not share the same race but do share common cultural characteristics, including history, beliefs, values, food and entertainment preferences, religion and language. Ethnicity typically incorporates both race and culture

### **Ethnicity and Culture in Perspective:**

Identity and culture are two of the basic building blocks of ethnicity. Through the construction of identity and culture, individuals and groups attempt to address the problematic of ethnic boundaries and meaning. Ethnicity is best understood as a dynamic, constantly evolving property of both individual identity and group organization. The construction of ethnic identity and culture is the result of both structure and agency—dialectic played out by ethnic groups and the larger society. Ethnicity is the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture; however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions. This paper specifies several ways ethnic identity and culture are created and recreated in modern societies. Particular attention is paid to processes of ethnic identity formation and transformation, and to the purposes served by the production of culture—namely, the creation of collective meaning, the construction of community through mythology and history, and the creation of symbolic bases for ethnic mobilization.

**Migration and Urbanization:**

Migration can be defined as the process of going from one country, region or place of residence to settle in another. The duration of this new settlement varies, but for the purposes of this paper the focus is on individuals who relocate either semi-permanently or permanently to another country. Also, urban-rural migration within the same country is not being discussed here. Migrants may move en masse or singly. For example, people who migrate for economic or educational reasons may move singly and at a latter date be joined by their families, whereas people who move due to political reasons may move en masse but with or without their families . Although not all people who migrate are from ethnic minority groups, it is of note that a significant proportion is.

There is a large volume of internal migration within the continent caused by the scarcity of land, soil erosion, etc. among others. The acquisition of some level of education or skills as well as training is also important factor that prompts migration. Internal migration takes different forms and shapes, but the most significant is the movement from rural areas to urban areas or centers. Rural- urban migration is responsible for the depopulation of some rural areas and the influx of people into towns and cities. Furthermore, the exodus of people into cities for economic life has caused our cultural values and heritage to be in sharable. The political instability and economic recession in the contemporary African society has witnessed level of emigration This is responsible for the rather worrisome of intellectual brain detrain from Africa to other continent of the world especially Europe and America. It is also germane that most of our

scholars from Nigerian descent have migrated to South Africa and neighboring states for better economies.

Migration can be classified in a number of ways; e.g., by the reasons for the migration, the social class and education of the migrating people, the duration of relocation and the geographic distribution of the resettlement. Further, a distinction can be made in the classification of migrants according to whether their contact with the 'majority' or 'dominant' culture is deemed voluntary. Migrants can be classified as immigrants and sojourners when the change in their location results in contact voluntarily, whereas refugees are deemed to change their location involuntarily. For example, immigrants choose to migrate, and thus be in increased and regular contact with the 'majority' culture in preparation for migration, for potential economic and/or educational advancement, whereas refugees are forced to migrate, and thus be in contact with the 'majority' population involuntarily, to escape persecution. Additionally, rural-urban migration has been associated with economic and educational reasons for relocation, whereas migration across nations has been associated with economic, educational, social and political reasons.

The process of migration has been described as occurring in broadly three stages. The first stage is pre-migration, involving the decision and preparation to move. The second stage, migration, is the physical relocation of individuals from one place to another. The third stage, post migration, is defined as the "absorption of the immigrant within the social and cultural framework of the new society". Social and cultural rules and new roles may be learnt at this stage. The

initial stage of migration may have comparatively lower rates of mental illness and health problems than the latter stages, due to the younger age at the initial stage of migration and the problems with acculturation and the potential discrepancy between attainment of goals and actual achievement in the latter stages. It is worth noting that the stages are often not discrete and merge into one another.

### **Cultural Congruity:**

Migrating people come from diverse cultural backgrounds, with already formed cultural identities. As noted above, cultural identity is influenced by various factors both during and after the migration process, and cultural bereavement is a potential inherent consequence in people who have migrated. Cultural identities interact, as people who have migrated come into contact not only with people of the majority culture but also with immigrants of both similar and disparate cultures. Resultant feelings of a sense of belonging and comfort or a sense of alienation and distress may occur among the people. African culture sometimes conflict with each other's. The African migrants may now face with cultural inferiority on which aspect of their cultural values will be retained in their new homes or place of abode.

### **Cultural Effects on Migration:**

In African palace, the impact of culture on migrants in intra or internal migration within the continent may be based on ethnic or tribes within a geographical area. In many states in West African sub region, there are the Yoruba and Hausa who speak not the same language and practices not the same belief and culture. Citizenship in those countries is based not on ethnic grounds but on a different sort of national identity in



which commitment to certain values and ideas is paramount. But for many European countries, the nation is often defined in a cultural way—by a common language, heritage, and ethnicity. This raises important questions for countries that do not have long traditions of immigration. How long does an immigrant have to live in Nigeria to become a Nigerian? Can a person be French without speaking French? Should immigrants be forced to take citizenship classes that teach them “how to be Nigerian or Any States in African continent”?

Indeed, cultural issues are significant factor in the response of Europeans to global migration. In recent years, the European public has questioned the effect of immigration on culture and national identity. Fear and distrust of immigrants has fueled the creation and success of anti-immigrant political parties in several European countries. Many of these parties have linked social ills, such as unemployment and crime, to immigration. But in African continent issues of immigration on cultural issues does not concern the government except a crime is occurred then they may now start tracing the tribe or group of ethnic people that committed the act to ascertain whether they are migrants.

However, migration as a concept has some effects on the societal culture which this paper shall be looked into from the Models of ethnic integration.

## **MODELS OF ETHNIC INTEGRATION**

**ASSIMILATION:** this denotes the abandonment of the immigrants' original customs and practices, moulding their behaviour to the values and norms of the new place. The approach to this new place is that ,the immigrants change their lifestyle, dress, language and their cultural outlooks as

part of integrating into a new social order. United States of America for instance, the generations of immigrants were subjected to pressure to become "assimilated" in this way and three children ends up became completely an American due to this. Despite the efforts of the minorities to get assimilated, many of course are still unable to do so if they are racialised or if their attempts are rebuffed-whether it be in employment or dating or any other context.

### **Contemporary Times and Globalization:**

In modern society, culture has played a great role in transformation of the social relations and transaction generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity interaction and power. Globalization involves social, political and economic activities across political frontiers, regions and continents for both migrants to participate within the society. It also suggests an intensification or increase in magnitude of interconnectedness and flows of trade, investment, finance, migration, culture, etc.

In conclusion African culture has been developed in other parts of the globe where Africa cultural heritage has become part of the system through inter-marriage by the African migrants who settled within the continent and outside the continent such as Europe, America and Latin America. The desire for a better and humane life has also led to mankind dispersing over the surface of the earth in pursuit of different livelihood options. Migration in Africa is an age -old practice propelled by many factors as stated above. This migration however, goes along with the migrants' culture .In

other word, culture is an important tool for human survival, though fragile but migration is its vehicle.

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