AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGION AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY:
A BETTER INITIATIVE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of traditional religion in sustainable democracy and good governance in Nigeria. It first of all defines key terms used in this paper including an overview of Nigerian Democratic experience. The paper further discusses the place of indigenous religion in the Nigerian society. Finally, it examines the role of indigenous Religion in sustaining democracy and good governance in Nigeria. The paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach in gathering information. Findings from the study have revealed that Nigerian democracy has experienced many challenges that make the country almost democratically ungovernable. The persistence of religious violence and terrorism in the country has raised many unanswerable questions among patriotic Nigerians. The paper recommends among others, that indigenous religion should be emphasised to enhance democracy and governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Indigenous Religion, Democracy, Good Governance, Leadership and Sustenance

INTRODUCTION

Since Nigeria's independence, attempts to entrench democratic rule and good governance have over the years have been truncated prematurely. The reasons are not farfetched. For one, the attitudes of the political class are often devoid of basic religious moral principles which are pivotal for democracy and good governance to flower. Religious moral principles are inevitable for our present nascent democracy and good governance to thrive as it is in advanced democracies of the world (Akintola, 2007). Secondly, democracy and good governance have become a household name in Nigeria but it is very clear that our understanding of the concepts is very narrow. Orhungur (2005) opines that a civilian government cannot claim to be a democracy unless it produces truly good leadership that offers freedom for the citizenry to elect their leaders. When this is absent, any nation that truly aspires to practice democracy must, as a matter of urgency, revisit its democratic practices to ensure that they are in line with the dictates of its religious moral principles and values. In other words, without these religious values and conditions, the dream of free and fair elections, justice and the rule of law will remain a distant illusion (Ekpo, 1999).

Democratic culture is an important ingredient of the political life of every nation. Good governance is also a serious pre-requisite of political authority and the sustenance of democracy. For Nigeria to achieve sustainable democracy and good governance for the realization of its national goals, indigenous religion must be involved in order to realize the set objectives. These national goals aim at translating democracy and good governance into dividends for all and sundry in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For a better understanding of the issues under discussion, some key words need to be clarified. These are Indigenous Religion, Sustainable Democracy and Good Governance.

INDIGENOUS RELIGION

Religion is a difficult subject of inquiry due to its complex nature. The attempts made at its definition and conceptualization has not been easy. However, Ade (2007) sees religion not only from the viewpoint of the problem of objectivity one encounters in defining it but it is also emotion laden, even more so because of the difficulty of penetrating the "inner essence" of religion. Thus, Pratt (1947) listed seventeen definitions of religion which can be organized into theological, moral, philosophical, psychological and sociological perspectives. Bilton (1977:6) described religion as:

The attitude of self focus towards an object in which the self genuinely believes what is true; a serious and social attitude of individuals or communities towards the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies. This attitude is mechanical, coldly intellectual, or faint touch of social quality which we feel in our relations towards anything that can make response to us.

Ekpo (1999) posits that religion is the attitude of the mind which covers motives and beliefs that are expected in acts of worship such as prayer and ritual. Gana (2007) defines religion as the feeling, conduct and belief which are essential in all adorations in human morality. Its essence is the means by which God as spirit and man's essential - self communicate. Idowu (1973) adds that religion is man's intuition of the ultimate reality and expression of that awareness in concert life. For Bilton (1977) religion is a system of belief about the individuals who provide order and reason for existence in the world. It is the only way by which people comprehend reality. Thus, Aper (2007) opines that religion is a system which relates man to ultimate value epitomized in God and embodying worship or communion. In the context of this study therefore, indigenous religion simply refers to "Institutionalized patterns of beliefs and worship practiced by various Nigerian societies from time immemorial in response to the supernatural as manifested in their environment and experience" (Ushe, 2010).

SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

Democracy may be a word familiar to most, but it is a concept still misunderstood and misused in a time when totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships alike have attempted to claim popular support by pining democratic labels upon themselves. Yet the power of the democratic idea has also evoked some of histories most profound and moving expressions of human will and supreme power vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. Lincoin, in (Mbakwe, 2007) defines democracy "as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people". The word "Democracy" is coined from Greek words: "demos" (people) and "Kratos", meaning "people's rule". It is said to be one of the concepts in political science in which there is no agreement on definitions.

According to Mbakwe (2007), Joseph Schumpeter defined democracy as a system "for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquired the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people vote". Yusuf (2002), quoted Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as "…government of the people, by the people, and for the people". According to him, democracy is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and

exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. This means that in democratic government, the masses determine who should govern and have a say in the governance of their country by their elected representatives. They have a say in the passing of the laws of land and can to some extent control and contribute to the decision taken by their elected leaders. Consequently, in a democratic setting, there should be freedom of speech, of the press and of opinions, as people are used to expressing their views and to questioning decisions taken by their leaders. Aper (2007) asserts that freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of a set of practices and procedures that have been moulded through a long, often tortuous history. In short, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. For this reason, it is possible to identify the time tested fundamentals of constitutional human rights and equality before the law that any society must possess to be properly called democratic. He maintains that democracies fall into two basic categories, direct and representative. In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively small numbers of people in a community organization or tribal council, for example, the local unit of a labour union, where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote.

Today, the most common form of democracy, whether for a town or nation, is representative democracy, in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programs for the public good. Whatever the method used, public officials in a representative democracy hold office in the name of the people and remain accountable to the people for their actions. Olanipekun (1985) also opines that the common definition of democracy is that "it is the government of people, by the people for the people". According to him, this definition is of universal applicability. Both the mighty and lowly make it their anthem. This notwithstanding, it can be argued that the term "democracy" may not lend itself to an easy definition, as it has been ascribed different meanings and interpretations. Olanipekun (1985), drawing inspiration from Thomas Jefferson says "Democracy is cumbersome, slow and inefficient, but it is due in time. The voice of the people will be heard and their latent wisdom will prevail".

Thomas Jefferson in a speech delivered in Maryland in 1809 said that "the care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government". He further argued that Plato in his book "The Republic" says that "democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder and dispersing a kind of quality to equals and unequal alike". One basic truism that permeates each of these definitions or any definition of "democracy" is that if truly analyzed and practiced, it should be a "government in which the people through elections freely choose their leaders who will represent and govern them well". Thus, "democracy" is a philosophy of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly. Kaur (2002) asserts that, etymologically, "Democracy" means government by the people", and therein lies the big problem. According to him, there is no country today that can claim publicly that its government is not government by the people. However, the question is, what do we mean by people? There is not and there has never been a state or city where "the people" means every individual in the state due to either social, economic, religious or political factors.

Even in Athenian city direct democracy did not mean every person in the city had the right to participate in decision making. According to Salim (2002), in a public lecture, he asserted that a democracy is a country that has government that has been elected by the people of the country…It is a system in which everyone is equal and has the right to vote and

make decisions. The rise and widespread acceptance of democracy as a universal system of governance is largely as a result of the 20th century enlightenment and its growth was fascinated by the final collapse of communism. It is obvious that people from various cultural backgrounds have come to admit democracy as "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Olanipekun, 2007). It is a way of life that concerns itself with how power is acquired and lost, exercised and shared. It ensures social, political and economic equality, periodic elections, freedom of the press, participation of people in social and political activities, enjoyment of fundamental human rights, rule of law, respect for government opposition and free judiciary which are basic features of true democracy. Jason in Orhungur (2005) defines democracy as "the rule of the people, by the people, for the people".

By "the rule of people", he meant that "the people are supreme and sovereignty resides in them always" (Kukah, 1999). Democracy involves a social process which means people-centered system of rule. Awolowo in Ishaya, Pratt (1947) opines that democracy exists when the adult citizens of any state freely elect a group of people from among their members to represent them or be their agents for the purpose of administering public affairs for the benefit of the entire populace. Pratt (1947) opines that democracy is a system of government in which every citizen in the country can vote to elect its government officials. Diamond (1999) agrees with Della's presentation that the central tenet of democracy is the active participation of people in governing themselves. A civilian government cannot claim to be a democracy unless it is produced truly as the choice of people and there is respect for the rule of law. Sholdfield (1975) affirms that democracy is a system based on comparative-parties in which the governing majority respects the rights of minorities. Salim (2002), further states that democracy is a particular type of political process in which power, its conduct and limitations are determined by the majority of the citizens of the state through the established political institutions; democracy implies that there should be a sustained degree of equality among men in the sense that all adult members of a society ought to have that measure of equality as far as possible.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The word governance refers to the democratic manner of governing, guiding or directing people. Thus, good governance in the context of this paper refers to the conscientious manner of governing, guiding or directing people.

THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA

Many unsuccessful attempts have been made to democratize Nigeria. This is a proof that Nigeria has not been insulated from the prevailing democratic aspiration of those days. This is largely because, since the collapse of communism in Africa and transition from military dictatorship to civilian rule, democracy has become fashionable in almost all the parts of the Africa and a measure of progress in most Nigerian societies. However, our collective experience shows that we are still far away from a truer democratic culture. Some recent experiences in the Nigerian society seem to suggest that we are one step forward today and ten steps backward the next day. The attempt to democratize Nigeria and other African nations is either a farce or an attempt to take leadership by hook or by crook, which has often resulted in wanton destruction of lives and property. This has been the tale of so many communities in Africa, including Nigeria. O'Neil (2006:67) notes that:

With regard to the failure of democratic advancement, Nigeria appears to be in a class of its own. Here is a country, which as far back as 1979, when large number of African nation were under various kinds of dictatorships, organized a

free and fair election which successfully transferred governance from the military to elected civilian rulers. Before the applause of such a singular event died down, the Nigerian military decided to plunge the continent into diehard obscurantism. Democratic concern among the military has all but completely atrophied with postponements and cancellations of elections which are perceived as mere ploys to perpetuate incumbents in power. Nigerian nation was at the forefront of the liberation of South Africa from the darkness of the apartheid system to a modern democracy. Today, the democratic credentials of South Africa are a distant dream of many well meaning Nigerians. In the sixties and seventies, when dictators of various shades and colours were having a field day, African countries were among the few countries in the world in which continuous change of government (even though mostly through military coup) was a constant feature, and in which no self-perpetuating oppressive ruler could take root.

The failure of democracy to take root in Nigeria and the Nigerian inability to transit from one democratically elected government to another until of recent, have resulted in frustration, cynicism, fatalism and lack of confidence in the democratic process. Kukah (1999:1) notes that:

If one were to conduct a survey on what ordinary Nigerians imagine democracy means to them, there are many chances that the researcher will be met with great derision. This is irrespective of whether it is on the streets or the classrooms. Most of the respondents will, proverbially, do what Nigerians love doing best: answering questions by asking other questions. Thus, in responding to a question like, what is democracy, most Nigerians would simply shoot back, na democracy we go chop? (Can democracy feed us?) or wetin be dat? (What does that means?).

He (1999:3) further states that:

The tragedy of this lies in the fact that this climate of cynicism has become an all-encompassing phenomenon. For example, even among the so-called politicians themselves, there is so much self-deprecation, self-immolation, stone-throwing, name-calling, buck-passing, bickering, treachery, blackmail and wangling that there are many who would argue that it is their incoherence, more than anything else, which has made the epileptic military interventions become so much part of our nation's life.

In some Nigerian societies the annulment of June 12, the sacking of the Interim National Government, the failed Abacha transition programme and our current democratic experience teaches us that democracy is an expensive project, in terms both human and material resources. It requires discipline, patience, vision and commitment. Kukah (1999) observed that; "so many years of experiencing the traumas and layers of oppression from the colonial and the neo-colonial states rendered many a Nigerian too weak to fight both in defence against (sic) and for democracy. As such, no sooner had new democracies emerged in Nigeria that they began to crumble with ease, threatening to return to the state of nature for many". However, the Nigerian case seems to be unique. The frequency and manner with which one government is replaced by another leaves much to be desired. Democratic processes have been brought to an abrupt end by military coups and counter coups. Meanwhile, the politicians manipulate their way to power only to be manipulated out again. The first Republic took off on the 1st of October 1960 and came to an abrupt end by the infamous military coup of Major Chukumah Kaduna that eventually brought Aguiyi Ironsi to power from 1966-1967. His reign was short lived and he was

ousted by General Yabubu Gowon. Only to be purged away by Murtala Mohammed. Like Aguiyi Ironsi his reign was a matter of months from 1975 to 1976. He was murdered in a coup attempt led by Lt. Col. Bukar Suka Dimka.

The drama eventually led to the enthronement of Olusegun Obasanjo as military head of state. Olusegun Obasanjo tactically handed power to a civilian administration in 1979 and gave Nigeria her first executive pesident in the person of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The situation took on a dramatic turn with the re-election of Shehu Shagari in 1983. He was barely settling down when Major General Mohammed Buhari in another military coup chased him out of power. Within two years of his reign, General Ibrahim Babanngida in 1985 toppled Mohammed Buhari. As the drama unfolded, this led to Babangida's controversial "stepping aside" on 23rd August 1993 to make room for the Interim National Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan. General Sani Abacha cashed in at this confusion resulting from the nullification of the presidential election of June 12 1993 (alleged to have been won by Chief M.K.O Abiola) and the illegitimacy of the Interim National Government and sacked the Interim Government.

He was still perusing and perfecting his self-transition programme when death struck. This saw the emergency of the "child of necessity" General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Abdulsalami Abubakar. He eventually handed over leadership to another ex-military head in the person of Olusegun Obasanjo through the ballot. With Obasanjo we have at least passed the first hurdle that is transiting from one civilian administration to another. The fact that Christianity is one of the main religions in Nigeria makes it pertinent to ask what role can and should the Christian leader play in the sustenance of democratic culture in Nigeria. But before we answer the question on what role should the Christian leader play in the sustenance of democracy; let us first of all understand what a Christian leader should be.

AFRICAN DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP CRISIS

The past independence political history of leadership experiments has shown that democracy is viewed by most people as a "game of smartness". The prevalent Machiavellian philosophy held by many Nigerian politicians who tried to separate morality from politics informed the negative attitude with which they go into politics. Thus, the view widely held by Nigerians today is that politics is a "dirty game". This presupposes that there are no moral laws governing politics, if there are, they are not meant to be observed by those who practice it. Thus, from Plato in the 4th century BC to John Loace in the 19th century AD, philosophers and political scientists have tried to show that justice and the rule of law are the most essential ingredients of good governance. Although many Nigerian political scientists and politicians seem to disagree with the negative philosophy of the Italian pragmatic political thinker, Niccolo Machiavelli, who tried to separate morality from politics and advised rulers to ignore morality and the rule of law if they want to be successful in their political game; his "grabbing of it by all means", becomes justified.

Many Nigerian ambitious leaders still behaved as if this is the best way of perceiving the game of politics in Nigerian societies. For them, the most important thing in politics is to grab power by force and once one has succeeded in doing that, his grabbing of it becomes justified. In this case, "the end justifies the means" (Aristotle quoted in Ushe, 2010). It is a pity that cultural factors have also contributed to the apparent lawlessness associated with democracy in Nigeria in the face of demand for an ideal political leadership. Corruption is endemic in Nigerian democracy. The attitude of the average Nigerian towards money, fame and leadership is questionable. These values are often constituted into ends rather than means to the end. Consequently, it becomes a case of "the end justifies the means". It does not matter whether you kill or dupe to become a political leader or rich over night (Kukah, 1999).

What counts and makes your act noble is that you attain your end. This obviously demonstrates crises of values and calls to question one's whole understanding and appreciation of the meaning of life and political good governance. The Nigerian political game and leadership crises, therefore, is a reflection of the cultural and moral situation which hinders political leaders from meeting up with the demands of an authentic good governance in Africa. Many Nigerians have a deep conviction that you must be a cheat in order to succeed or bribe your way to get what you want. The philosophy prevalent in Nigeria today is that "if you cannot beat them, then join them" (Akintola, 2007). These kinds of philosophy at best heighten materialism and secularism as counterproductive. It does not certainly bring any sanity to national life and political governance. Since Nigerian politicians live and breathe in Moral Ocean, they are invariably influenced by the Machiavellian ethics which dominate national political life and leadership.

 The high rate of political ills and lawlessness has resulted to the breakdown of laws and order in Nigerian society in contemporary times. The uneasiness of Nigerian political leaders to fully implement constitutional prescriptions for sustainable democracy and good governance has put to jeopardy the very relevance of the rule of law to the existential situation of contemporary Nigerian citizenry. By implication, it follows from the foregoing that Nigerian politicians who are part and parcel of the socio-political experience, should actively participate in the tasks of nation-building through "federal servant" model of leadership in democratic dispensation.

Democratic good governance enables citizens of any nation to achieve their set objectives, goals, values and aspirations that help them in moving their country forward. And for them to achieve this, the leadership must be knowledgeable, pragmatic, responsive, emotionally mature, diligent, committed, accountable, consistent, prudent, and God fearing. Since the crises of political leadership in Nigeria are not necessarily an epistemological inadequacy but an indication of a moral malady, there is need for a re-conceptualisation of sufficient solutions to the nation's problem. What is needed now is not sermonizing on what ideal political leadership entails, but rather putting into action what is conceptualized. It seems reasonable therefore to suggest that if the record sheets of Nigerian politicians and elected leaders must be credible they should resolve to make the moral values their guide of life. This is the only way that the crisis of political leadership in African and Nigeria can be resolved.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE SHOULD BE IN NIGERIA
 In the world today, democracy and good governance are topical issues which occupy central place in contemporary debate (Warren, 1998). In Nigeria, democracy and good governance have created a vacuum in human relations which makes the history of political leadership to be incomplete without mention of the periods of disagreement, discord and war. There have been different unsuccessful attempts by European Powers to democratized Nigeria as proof that Nigeria was not insulated from the prevailing democratic aspirations of those days. This is largely because, since the collapse of communism, democracy and good governance have become fashionable in almost all parts of the world. Democracy came with new game of western political democratization, which in the words of Kaur, (2002) can be described as "liberal democracy", based on western culture as opposed to African multi-cultural society. Nigerian political and democratic developments can be traced to as far back as when the different kingdom leaders governed the whole of African nations. There were numerous kingdoms in Africa such as the kingdoms of Egypt, Carthage, Kush, Axum, Songhai, Ghana, Mali, Benin, Mwenemotapa, Zulu, Bamba and Chewa, just to mention a few. These kingdoms were

represented and governed either by monarchies, were they had centered political authority such as in old Yoruba kingdom, Benin kingdom and the Hausa states.

When there were no central political authorities such as in Tiv land and Igbo land decisions affecting lives of the people were taken by councils. Membership of such councils was by kindred and family representation. In most cases the eldest member of that family or kindred usually represented the family or kindred in the council. The religious beliefs of the people moderated the conducts of the leaders. There were established norms and values that guided the conducts of the leaders and people in the society. Violation of these laid down taboos and norms resulted in their consequences. For instance, among the Tiv of central Nigeria, it was reported that during the first republic, the late Senator J. S. Tarkar, the founder of United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) went into alliance with Chief Obafemi Awolowo Action Group (AG). He was reported to have sworn to an oath (Swem) declaring that he would not mislead his people (the Tiv) by joining Northern People's Congress (NPC). The politicking that followed resulted into the killing of thousands of Tiv sons and daughters who belonged to the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in what was referred to as "Atemtough".

However, when the second republic came into being, J. S Tarkar, who was the sole leaders of Tiv people at that time, abandoned Chief Awolowo and joined forces with elements of defunct NPC to form the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) on which plat form he was elected Senator J. S. Tarkar spent barely a year in the senate when he suddenly fell ill and died of swollen stomach and legs. The oral tradition has it that the ailment was as a result of the breach of the oat he had sworn. Similarity in Yoruba land, it is said that Yoruba political leaders prefer to swear on the Bible or Qur'an than swearing by their local deities such as Ogun, Sango and Orisha. These are few of the many examples of the influence of African indigenous religious beliefs and practices on the conducts of their leaders and peoples.

Between 14th and 17th centauries AD, the entire land of Africa was bombarded with intrusion of foreign ideologies following the many European voyages of discovery and exploration. Some of the people who had great influence on the whole discovery journey around Africa include: Prince Henry the Navigator and Vasco Dagama, Bartholomew Diaz (Warren, 1998). In the hinterland, missionary explorers included people like William Murray, Richard Lander, Henry Molton Stanley, Robert Moffat, Dr. David Livingstone, John Speke, Richard Burton, among others. These people made great impacts in the spreading of what could be called the "new western culture". Some of these people came to Africa as Christian missionaries and later worked for their government (Sholdfiled, 1975). It was this inland exploration and the western influence upon the entire people of Africa that led to the partition of the continent in 1885-1888 (Ekpo, 1999).

This partition of Africa brought about the dividing up of African land among various European nations, such as: Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and Germany. Each of these nations took control of one part of Africa or the other and established their own political administration. Thus, the governments in Europe took control of the continent of Africa. British colonies for example were controlled from London, while all French colonies were controlled from Paris. The partition and colonization of Africa led African continent into a period of political struggle and democracy. The desire for Africans to rule themselves brought the strong idea of African nationalism. This resulted in the independence struggle from the white colonialists. The struggle for independence finally paid up because all African nations got their freedom with the exception of South Africa which remained under the apartheid regime until early 1990s.

The last move of western democratization was seen from the late 80's and the middle of 90's when the western rich nations forced many African nations to adopt the western form of multiparty democracy if they were to receive any economic support. No wonder, wa Mutharika (1995), blames the western colonialists for the destruction of African economy, culture and democracy. The adoption of western form of multi-party democracy by many African nations, especially Nigeria, witnessed different unsuccessful attempts to democratize the citizens. This was a proof that Nigeria was not insulated from the prevailing democratic aspiration of those days. This is largely because, since the collapse of communism and transition from military to civilian rule as earlier mentioned, democracy has become fashionable in almost all parts of Africa and a measure of progress recorded in Nigerian is not an exception.

Many years of experiencing the traumas and layers of oppression from the colonial and neo-colonial states rendered many African peoples too weak to fight both in defences against undemocratic culture and bad governance, and Nigerians are not an exception in this regard. As such, no sooner had new democracies emerged in Africa than they began to crumble with ease, threatening to return to the state of nature for many. The transition from military dictatorship to civil rule is now a thing of the past in many Africa societies. However, this has thrown a new challenge to every meaningful African. At least we now know that it is one thing to have democracy and democratically elected government and a different ball game altogether to sustain democratic rule, that would eventually translate to lasting democratic culture that is peculiarly Nigerian that is a democracy that will meet the yearnings and aspirations of all Nigerian people (Awolalu, 1987). This means that in democratic governance, the masses should be able to determine who should govern them and have a say in the governance of their country by their elected representatives, be involved in passing the laws of the land, control and contribute to the decisions taken by their elected leaders. Above all, they should have freedom of speech, of the press and of opinion, as people are used to expressing their views and to questioning decision taken by their leaders (Mamman, 2007).

Thus, Abubakre (2002) quoting Kukah (1999: 242) threw more light on how the culture of democracy and governance should be in Africa states thus:

Yet it still remains in the realm of the abstract political scientists have since expanded this into an easier and broader term. It is fashionable to know examine democracy as an ideology and the philosophy of governance which sets a high premium on the basic law, the right to property, free flow of information and the right of choice between alternative political positions. On the other hand, democracy as politics is concerned with the institutions and processes of governance that they elicit, which tend to foster consensus whilst simultaneously promoting and sustaining respect for the ideology of democracy.

The democratic culture and good governance can only yield positive dividends in Nigeria when leadership is modelled on selfless-service to humanity and Nigerian elected leaders begin to see themselves as shepherds rather than masters or Lords. The democratic good leader is a shepherd and his responsibilities as a shepherd include, to love and care for his flock or masses, lead them to greener pastures, to guard and protect his flock from danger (cf. I Sam 17:34-35; Amos 3:12). This revolutionary idea of a leader as the servant of all, and service to humanity are the hallmarks of democratic leadership greatness. No wonder Jesus, the greatest servant-leader said of Himself "If one of you wants to be great,

he/she must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, he/she must be the slave of all". For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people (Mark 10:43-45). Yusuf (2002:4) summarized Jesus' ideal of leadership in these words: "true leadership must be interpreted in the context of servant hood and summed up in total and unparalleled service" (cf. Mark 10:45; Lk 22:20 ff). Jesus is the model of humble service in contrast to the hunger for power and corruption in the world. He washed his followers' feet and taught them to serve in words and in deeds (John 13:13-13). He emphasizes the greatness of servant hood which culminates in self-giving, emptying to the extent of taking a form of a slave and be absolutely available to serve the needs of the people entrusted to you as a leader. In view of our present political landscape ant the fragile nature of our democracy, the tasks of good governance in the sustenance of democratic process cannot be over emphasized in Nigerian society. The vast majority of people who out of frustration have lost hope in the democratic regime are yearning for true democracy that guarantees them the constitutional right to choose leaders who could be accountable to them through voting, which is free and fair.

Our democratic elected leaders enjoy leadership and are trusted by followership. They must continually give hope to their people that their votes count and make a difference capable of determining the direction in which Nigeria should take. This include, giving the people a sense of meaning and belonging in their lives. The cynicism and fatalism that the masses now have can only be remedied by assuring them that as responsible citizens, they have a lot at stake and vital role in the whole process of selecting candidates to stand for election and the organization of elections. Many people, communities and parts of our continent/countries are aggrieved and feel hurt because of the corrupt process of democratization in some African countries which is not free and fair and has often resulted in violence, hatred, destruction of lives and properties and betrayal among others.

Aware of the fact that nothing works without peace, democratic governance must continue to insist on free and fair political game that is the hallmark of the message of peace and reconciliation for the sustenance of enduring democratic virtues. These virtues must be imbibed by the citizenry to positively influence the entrenchment and sustenance of democratic culture in most African countries, especially in Nigeria. The internalization and realization of some of our religious virtues which cut across religious beliefs can form a solid foundation for democracy in African continent. These virtues include, need for peace, forgiveness, accountability, fairness, the rule of law, honestly, selflessness and reconciliation. They are values that contradict the anti-democratic vices that have infested our polity in contemporary times. Nigerian democratic elected leaders must take a leaf from the example of their counter parts in other parts of the world. We are one step forward today and ten steps backwards the next day. The fact that indigenous religion, Christianity and Islam are three major religions in Nigeria makes it pertinent to ask what role traditional religion can play in the sustenance of democratic culture and good governance in Nigeria.

THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS RELIGION IN SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

One cannot adequately discuss the role of indigenous religion in sustainable democracy and good governance without first treating the place of indigenous religion in Nigerian society. This is because religion and democratic leadership have to be established before one can talk of the contributions indigenous religion can make in sustaining democracy and good governance in Nigeria. Indigenous religion is a phenomenon that resides wherever people are found (Ushe, 2010). It is a

phenomenon that is vital for social maintenance and regulation of life-style of members in Nigerian society. O'Neil (2006) posits that the tendency of indigenous religion has opened many fields of study that correlate the human behaviours with the value system of the society. This correlation is dependent on shared system of governance that reinforces, reaffirms and maintains moral development of any nation. Indigenous religion performs major functions in sustainable democracy and good governance in Africa. These functions include:

(1)   To provide support for social norms in the society

(2)   To enhance social integration in the society

(3)   To provide stability in the society and

(4)   To provide motivation and interpretation of important life-cycle in the society.

(5)

These roles help the citizenry to define what democracy is and help in sustaining good governance (Awolalu, 1987). Warren (1998) asserts that indigenous religion possesses moral authority and ethical sensitivity which complements the role of good governance for effective national development. Religion enables citizens to exercise stability and conserving functions which make them to resist change both in their doctrines, policies and secular affairs, having relevance in development of moral standard approved by the society (Ikenga-Metuh, 1985).

This indicates that indigenous religion is tagged to forces which mobilize the hearts and minds of people towards better initiatives for good governance in Nigeria (Adepegba, 1988). Idowu (1973) lamented that the advent of foreign religions (Islam and Christianity) in Nigeria have threatened the religious landscape for sustainable democracy rather than promoting better initiatives for good governance in Nigerian society. Democracy and good governance can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. Nigerian society needs democracy and good governance to function effectively. Haar (1998) asserts that indigenous religion is a potential force for mobilizing, reshaping and inducing moral actions which guides people to define democratic values and good governance in Nigerian society. The norms, laws, values, and indigenous taboos which human beings observe, keep, forbid as moral standard and values comes from God Himself. They are fruits and offspring's of indigenous religion put in human hearts to enable them do just things according to the approved standard of moral norms in the society.

Oguejiofor, (1995) corroborated that morality acts as a powerful aid of social and moral integration enforcing good governance in the society. It has moral codes to energize and motivates people in seeking for democratic good governance as well as in making moral decisions in Nigerian society. Indigenous religion not only functions as a tremendous force of vindication, but also enforces and perpetuates various other institutions of governance in Nigeria. Ushe (2010:24) affirms this thus:

Indigenous Religion relied on cultivation of emotional feelings of identity and harmony with sacred values with the view of turning one to the past more than the future. This tends to integrate indigenous moral values which have suddenly become unacceptable in the wake of modernism into western oriented ones. Indigenous religion enables Nigerian citizens to accept societal values such as interdependence of other people, cooperation, justice, fairplay, good governance and honesty for the development of democracy in contemporary Nigerian society.

Indigenous religion has the capacity of inculcating moral values in the citizens that will not only achieve the democratic culture but also lead Nigerians to the bus stop of sustainable democracy and good governance. The general objectives of indigenous religion were derived from sustainable development of humanity and the society. This implies that indigenous religion should be able to promote national unity, economic development, transformations of people's morals and good characters in Nigerian society. With the tenets of African Indigenous beliefs if there are incorporated into modern political life, some of the sad experiences would not arise. For instance, those who are put in charge of public funds would be conscious of the fact that if they misused such public funds the African religious deities they had sworn to would strike them immediately. Besides, the wanton killings and destruction of properties that is associated in most countries in Africa would be avoided because African religious deities are abhors wanton destructions of lives and properties for whatever reason.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this paper, attempts were made to examine democratic experience and leadership crises in Nigeria. The paper also treated what democracy and good governance should be in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Furthermore, the paper examined the role of indigenous religion in the sustenance of democracy and good governance in Nigeria. The paper discovered that Nigerians are still far away from a truer democratic culture and good governance and for democracy to survive in Nigeria; the issue of religious values cannot be waved aside. Religion values promote fertile soil for democracy and good governance to germinate, grow, flower and bear lasting fruits, Nigeria of all ranks must restate our indigenous religious value systems and jettison such morally undemocratic ethos such as maladministration, corruption, embezzlement, money launching, selfishness, diversion of funds, hired killing, suicide bombing and unemployment. The eradication of these vices will help the nascent democracy and governance to take root in Nigeria like other advanced democracies all over the world. In a panoramic view, the paper therefore recommends the following:

(i) There is need to overhaul the indigenous religion to make it more repulsive to inculcate moral ethos for sustenance of effective democracy and good governance in Nigeria.

(ii) The Nigerian citizen's religious institution and teachers should uphold moral religious values and be disposed in sustaining democratic culture and good governance in Nigeria.

(iii) The moral sanctity should be one of the indispensable qualifications for selecting democratic leaders in Nigeria.

(iv) The government should promote the rule of law as one of the means of trading vices in Nigeria. This will contribute greatly in sustaining democracy and good governance in Nigerian society.

(v) The traditional beliefs have sanitizing effects on adherents. Consideration should therefore be given to inculcating these values into our modern democratic experiment.

(vi) There is need for African political elected leaders to swear to oaths specified by their indigenous religious.

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peace, development and sustainable democracy. Political instability has led to military interventions in governance in Nigeria in the past. Thus, the National Conference on stability of the Third Republic had this to say on political threats: We are all aware of the methods that were adopted by many politicians in the First and Second Republics. Nigerians in opposing political camps saw themselves as real or battlefield enemies. Therefore, they felt there was no basis for seeing a situation in a realistic manner, but in the form of antagonism to anything done by their political opponents. This Notably, the current good governance agenda is mainly a democracy cum neoliberal framework. Some plainly call this chaotic electoral system of corrupt governance 'African style democracy', while some scholars attribute Africa's governance failures to African cultural values which, they argue, are inimical to democracy. Even now, African indigenous institutions are preferred by African rural people because these institutions have been found to be comparatively more transparent and responsive. African cultural democracy has got features that make it suit African people. Most importantly, these features are at variance with the Western-style democratic arrangement implemented in Nigeria, the homeland of the Yoruba. In Good Growth and Governance in Africa: Rethinking Development Strategies, edited by Noman, Akbar et al., 80–113. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Mkandawire, Thandika. Abuja, Nigeria: Youth Media & Communication Initiative. El-Rufai, Nasir. 2009a. "Nigeria: Political Dynamics and Prospects for Reform." Presentation at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 10. El-Rufai, Nasir. Dictators and Democracy in African Development: The Political Economy of Good Governance in Nigeria. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xix + 282 pp. Appendix.