

Full Length Research

Creativity in Artistically Uninformed Environment: Nigeria Perspective

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Creativity is considered to be ability to bring into existence something new or original. The study observes that Nigeria has more than 600 ethnic groups, yet lacks the potential for originality or something new politically, economically, culturally, technologically and educationally. Creatively and artistically, Nigeria should be the greatest on planet following a long history of creative and artistic creations from prehistoric times till date – Igboukwu, Nok, Esie, Benin, Ondo examples. The study situates Nigeria as retrogressive and retarded in creative, cultural, artistic and technological breakthroughs. Participant observation including primary and secondary sources of data collation were used to achieve the objectives of the study. Some of the findings include that if the needful has or is done, Nigeria would have been bigger and greater nation than what she is presently. Greed, corruption, lack of vision, planlessness take precedence over the needful. These and more are followed by conclusion and recommendations.

Keywords: Creativity, Nigeria,

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the notable countries in West Africa and is acclaimed the largest and giant of Africa. In the contemporary times, particularly, from (2011) till date, this assertion appears to be an illusion and what the study could describe as history today. Egonwa (2017) asserts that Nigeria is situated in the West Coast of Africa and has about 160 million people in population, however, today from all indications, Nigeria is estimated to be slightly more than 200 million in population. In the opinion of Egonwa (2017:97), the vast geographical area called Nigeria today presents a greater diversity of ethnic groups of about 275, which produce a diversity of arts and culture. In contrast to this view, Duruaku (2011:14) opines that the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Nigerian society is over 250 ethnic groups. In another development, Anyakoroma

(2011:11) posits that, it is believed that Nigeria is made up of over three hundred (300) ethnic nationalities.

From the above submissions, the study may be safe to suggest that there are more than six hundred (600) ethnic groups in Nigeria, because there are sub-groups within the ethnic groups. However, culture evolves. The study observes there are different cultures or groups within the same geopolitical zones, local government authorities, villages and clans. Southeast and Abia State examples. One may clearly observe that within Abia State, Ohafia Local Government Area, has diverse cultures and ethnic nationalities. The study submits that there are ethnic groups within ethnic groups, cultures within cultures. When these ethnic groups are effectively summed Nigeria may be having more than six hundred (600)

ethnic nationalities. Examples, Arochukwu, Nkporo, Ohafia, Abiriba, Igbere, Old Bende – Item, Ozuakoli, Mkpa from there to Umuahia North and South, Isi-Ala Ngwa, Osisioma Ngwa, Obingwa, Azumiri and others whose cultures or ethnicity vary slightly or totally from one community to another, yet the same state, local government area, communities and clans.

The study observes that despite having more than six hundred (600) cultural and ethnic nationalities, Nigeria is culturally, creatively as well as artistically uninformed, making themselves the laughing stock of the rest of the world in terms of culturally, creatively and artistically developing beyond where it is at the moment. Nigeria is endowed with the natural, human and material resources with little or no natural disasters like earthquake, flooding and others, yet Nigeria is like a sheep without a shepherd, constituting themselves a huge nuisance in national and international communities.

The study is of the view that the problems with Nigeria are greed, corruption, shortsightedness, lacking of creative and imaginative thinking, to the extent that the average Nigerian is beclouded with mentality of fraud, mediocrity, ineptitude, no value for human and children's rights, including human lives, above all, Nigerian leaders [politicians] are creatively and artistically uninformed.

In support of this view, Okafor (2019:15) in contribution to Igbo studies review citing Folola and Heaton (2008) observes that at the time of Nigeria's independence from her British colonial rule in 1960, the nation was composed of a myriad of ethnic groups, speaking over 250 indigenous languages, coalesced into a brand- new nation under awkwardness, incompetence, ineptitude, unsuitability and arbitrarily drawn national border. This has in present day Nigeria amounted to counterproductive, hypocrisy, backwardness, corruption, nepotism, chaos and anarchy.

Okafor (2019:85) in support of the above views observed that in spite of Nigeria's numerous regional, ethnic, religious and cultural differences, and in their haste to gain independence from the British, Nigerians brushed aside concerns about how this newly created country (Nigeria) would be effectively and significantly governed. The resultant effects of these overzealousness and hunger to steal and loot are hunger, mismanagement of the economy abuse of human rights, agitation for secession, terrorism, death of creativity and imagination.

However, because of incessant urge for corruption, looting and quest for power without planning, without vision for tomorrow, coupled with the clamour for self first and greed metamorphosed into the first coup d'état just within only six years of obtaining independence. Following this coup d'état,

(Okafor 2019:85) citing Ihediwa (2010:186-187) and Lewis (1968:13) opines that more than 30,000 people of the Igbo extraction were brutally murdered. Okigbo (2012:13) observes that ndigbo suffered so much violence, bloodshed and destruction of lives and properties. Yet Nigeria has failed to learn and embrace creative and imaginative way of thinking for growth and sustainable development.

Creativity in the context of the study implies novelty situation – a new way of thinking and doing things. However, one could look at creativity as an original way of thinking that results into something new and pleasing. There is creativity in everything. There is creativity in governance, architecture, building, engineering, planning, human capacity, construction, technology, culture and visual arts and others.

However, the study, shares the view that emergence of colonial administrators altered, disorganized and almost destroyed the creative process of indigenous people of Nigeria. Oloidi (2011:8) in support of this view, asserts that what the European administrators, researchers, scholars and anthropologists and others, could not understand at that time, was the culturally unique, potent and conceptually fertile nature of the Nigerian traditional art.

Oloidi (2011:8-9) suggests that creativity does not imply photographic representations of a picture or concept, unlike the Africans who may prefer to distort, disintegrate, integrate, construct and deconstruct ideas to achieve a visual equilibrium yet new and aesthetically pleasing. The study is of the view that photographic representation of a picture is not creativity. This is why Plato in Adams (1996:1-5) recommends that artists should be banished from the society because their creations are capable of inciting destructive passion.

However, before the advent of colonial administrators, Nigeria, indeed Igbo have their already established and organized system of existence which hitherto, projected and catapulted them into international scene. Culture is a significant phenomenon in Igbo communities from prehistoric times till date. The same applies to other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Thurstan Shaw in Gowing (1995:508) acknowledges the excavation of bronze ornaments at Isaiah Anozie's compound in Igbo-Ukwu in the present day Anambra State.

Gowing (1995:508) records that Igbo-Ukwu sites proved to be repository for elaborately decorated objects – vessels, mace-heads, a belt, bronzes, and other items of ceremonial wear. Radio carbon tests agree in dating these objects to the end of the 1st millennium, which makes this the earliest bronze-using cultures in Nigeria. The bronzes are creatively detailed castings with elaborate surface decorations, but, they

differ from other African traditions of casting such as those of Benin, Ife, Nupe, Esie, Nok Arts, Ile Oluji blacksmithing in Ondo State and others.

However, the study does not intend to go into historical analogy of these different traditional Nigeria art cultures as exemplified by Igbo-Ukwu, Ife, Benin, Nok arts and others, but to emphasize to a larger degree that creativity and art cultures have been a monumental part of Nigeria tradition from prehistoric eras till date.

The study may emphatically suggest that 98% of the entire ethnic groups in Nigeria are creative and imaginative in artistic creations and may not be inferior to their European counterparts as demonstrated by Aina Onabolu, Ben Enwonwu, Yusuf Grillo, Bruce Onabrakpeya, Demas Nwoko, Uche Okeke, Felix Ekeada, Jacob Jari and others.

Arts and creativity may not be a photographic representation of an idea or concept but a careful assemblage transformation of concepts into new ideas or new whole.

Creativity

Creativity may be looked at as arts or science of bringing into existence something that is new or original. It may also be seen as a product or process of generating new and innovating ideas that may inspire originality. Ikwuegbu (2010:140) considers creativity as the ability to generate innovative ideas and manifest them from thought into reality. He opines that creativity is borne out of creation which men do out of experiences, interpretation and evaluation of all things encountered that result into something new or novel. Creativity involves original thinking and creation. It is for this reason that Mish (2008:29) considers it as act of creating, especially the act of bringing the world into ordered existence, the act of making, inventing or producing things in a unique, different, and new ways, yet pleasing to sight

Examples;

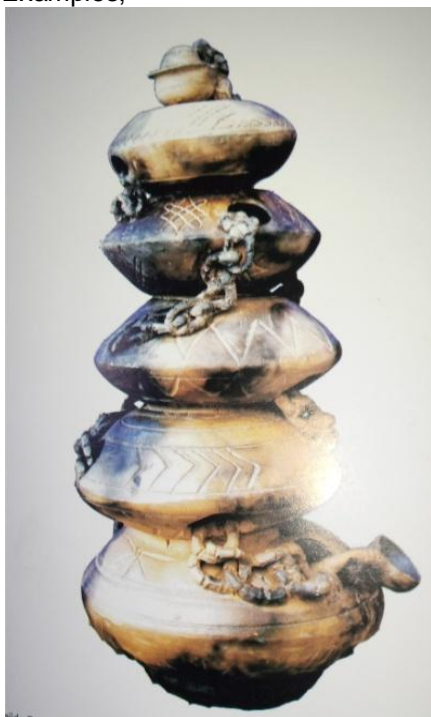


Figure. 1: Artist: Olajide David Ayodele
Title: Our Wealth, Our Strength
Medium: Ceramics Ware
Size: 77X30cm
Year: 2009



Figure. 2: Artist: Chris Afuba
Title: Mbo Agu (The Tiger Asleep)
Medium: Wood and Metal
Year: 2008



Figure. 3: Artist: Joe Musa
 Title: Aso Ebi II
 Medium: Oil on Canvas
 Size: 42" x 60"
 Year: 2007



Figure. 4: Artist: Okpu Eze
 Title: Sacrifice (Birth and Death)
 Medium: Ebony Wood
 Size: 78 x 30cm
 Year: 1984

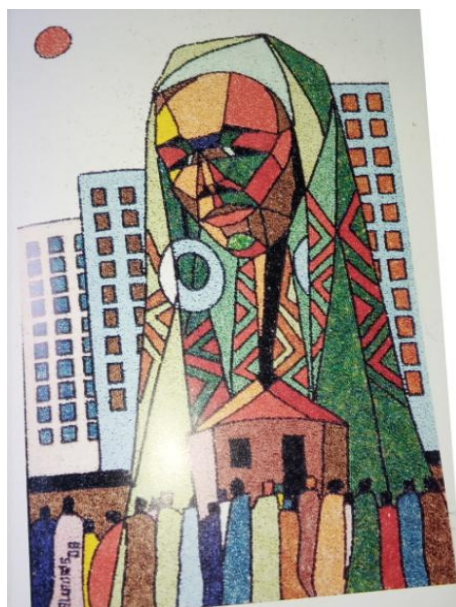


Figure. 5: Artist: Onadipe Olumide
 Title: Aftermath of Civilization and Development
 Medium: Beads on Board
 Size: 82 x 46cm
 Year: 2008

The study posits that Nigeria is creatively and imaginatively endowed but artistically uninformed considering the creative and artistic pedigree showcased from prehistoric times to post independence era. Artistically and creatively, Nigeria should be greater and higher than where she is at the moment following greed and quest for power characterized by lack of vision, empathy, sympathy,

planlessness and clueless for economic and national development.

From the creative and artistic history of Nigeria, blacksmithing in Ile-Oluji in Ondo State, Igbo-Ukwu in Anambra State, Bronze Casting in Benin, Akwette Weaving from Abia State and artistic prowess and ingenuity of different ethnic groups are enough to shoot Nigeria into economic and technological world

power if the needful had been done.

The study shares the view that visual arts and creativity anchor cultural, economic, national and sustainable development. Apart from these, visual arts is sacred and ritualistic in traditional Igbo situation, indeed Nigeria. To prove the importance of creativity, during the prehistoric era and 1960s, visual arts were used in adorning the shrines and representing the deities as well as symbolizing various gods like Ikenga, Njoku, Ogun, Sango among others. In Southeastern Nigeria, visual arts in the prehistoric, colonial and post colonial eras was an effective and significant medium of body and wall decorations as well as medium of visual expression.

Again, Uli/Uri art forms became an important phenomenon in the history and development of Nigeria modern art. The study is of the view that creativity and visual arts represent to a larger degree, Igbo indeed Nigeria culture, essence, values, traditions and civilization which hitherto promote Nigeria cultural values and gained Nigeria, particularly, ndigbo international recognition till date as exemplified by Igbo-Ukwu Arts, Uli/Uri Art, Benin Art, Nok Art, Esie Stone Art, and others.

However, the traditional Nigeria art influences and epitomizes the people's way of life until the advent of colonialism, Christianity and independence which have impacted negatively on the entire systematic social process. From the observation of the study, it appears that independence for Nigeria is rather a curse than blessing, after the independence, Nigeria, instead of moving forward economically, technologically, creatively, and artistically has witnessed retrogression following coup upon coup d'état, corruption upon corruption, terrorism upon terrorism, Fulani against the other ethnic groups making up Nigeria, including fight and struggle for oil and ownership of Nigeria.

However, all these trivial issues put together, have impacted negatively on sustainable national development, including creativity and imagination which could galvanize technological incubation as well as human and industrial development.

The study shares the view that the present Nigerian politicians should have been able to build an artistic and creative dynasty for Nigeria to boost tourism and other areas of the economy, instead of over dependency on oil, corruption and looting. However, if Nigeria had been artistic and creatively viable, the country may not have find herself in the present economic, technological as well as human capacity woes, as it is at the moment.

Conclusively, therefore, one must acknowledge that no nation may grow or develop significantly with total negligence of imagination and creativity as well as human capacity development. Nigeria is endowed with creative intellectuals, mineral

resources, including many talents of high pedigree that could monumentally situate Nigeria as one of the greatest world economic powers. Today, the situation is pathetic and agonizing. Despite all the resources available, Nigeria is backward in everything – economically, socially, politically, creatively and artistically. Nigeria becomes synonymous with retrogression, aggression and terrorism and has failed to apply the concept 'of possibilism' where Chima (2018:2) asserts that man with his science and technology has been able to tame and control his environment Chima (2018:1) also,

Considers environment as the whole sum of the external surrounding conditions within which an organism, a community or an object exists. The physical environment on the other hand includes all phenomena apart from man and the living things

However, Nigeria's situation may be better described in line with Chima (2018) 37th Inaugural Lecture titled '*Water, Water Everywhere But Not Enough*'.

The study recommends that Nigeria should as a matter of urgency develop a blueprint of economic redemption, growth, creativity and a culture of entrepreneurship, human resource and capacity building aimed at massive development as against the backdrop of "I must rule mentality". The narrative in the present times should be "I must develop the nation" or "Nigeria must be developed irrespective of the geopolitical zone". Again, effective combination of creative ideas and cultural values including systematic integration of economics, modern technology, responsive research, human and equal rights, equity and justice as well as proactive planning devoid of sentiments, ethnicity or quota system. Astronomically, these may yield dynamic and massive sustainable economy and national development.

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