

Nigeria: The Giant of Africa

This special issue of *The Journal of Pan African Studies* on the Federal Republic of Nigeria, commonly referred to as 'Nigeria', reflects a need for an extended investigation into the dynamics of this nation of an estimated 120 representing 250 ethnic groups occupying 923,768 sq.km of land in the tropics, aptly described as the 'Giant of Africa'. Thus, this giant can't be ignored in any serious discussion about the future of Africa, because in so many ways, what happens in Nigeria and what happens in Africa are interchangeable. Notwithstanding Nigeria's robust thirst for formal education, Nigeria has over thirty federal and state universities, twenty federal and state university polytechnics, and consequently, an annual graduating class of over 70,000 in a multiplicity of disciplines.

And like the educational thirst of Nigeria, its cultural history is rich and diverse when we discover that: between 500 B.C. and 200 A.D. people from the Southern Zaria and Benue areas of central Nigeria had achieved a high degree of cultural sophistication via their knowledge of iron smelting wherein they adorned themselves with tin and stone beads, earrings, nose rings and bracelets, which became known as the Nok culture; the Igbo-Ukwu people instituted bronze casting of staff heads, crowns, breastplates, pendants, ornaments, anklets, wristlets and chains in a small village near Awka dating from 19th century A.D.; and in about the same time, the Igbo-Ukwu were casting bronze as the ancient Ife were producing works in bronze, copper, and terracotta, which created a great stir among Eurocentric art critics and historians who were unaccustomed to such naturalism in African art. Such as that found among Benin antiquities, which Nigerian legend recounts the Benin learned from Ile-Ife around 1400 A.D.

Considering this diversity of history and culture it is never easy to classify Nigeria or her people into one or even ten categories. Thus this special issue represents some of the issues confronting Nigeria of the present, many are critical, but presented as constructive criticism in an effort to advance Nigeria as a nation, and as a regional center of power. Hence our *first* paper examines the subjugation of Nigerian women with regard to how their political marginalization constricts the public sphere; the *second* contribution establishes that violence is a major obstacle to growth and development and that violence against women in particular hinders progress in achieving development targets in Nigeria in relationship to the Millennium Development Goals; *third* we enter a discussion of elections and democratic survival in the Nigeria with specific focus on the Fourth Republic from the functional perspective of political parties; *fourth* we engage a philosophical justification of punishment in Yoruba legal culture which argues that the institution of punishment is a machinery for facilitating collective conscience as it frown on the impropriety of manners that are capable of being inimical to the development of legal norms and disrupting

social equilibrium; continuing in a Yoruba theme, our next work trace the evolution of traditional Aso-Oke production and its uses to reveals factors responsible for its declining patronage; *sixth*, we have a paper that argues that a recent call that Yoruba traditional medicine should be integrated into orthodox medicine be rejected, and thus the call for the integration of Yoruba traditional medicine into orthodox medicine is unnecessary and lacks any justification; paper *seven* engages the role of the press in managing conflict situations in society with a particular reference to the Niger Delta region in Nigeria; paper *nine* examines ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria in terms of its causes and impacts from 1999 to date and therefore suggests that the weakness of the state has impacted significantly the management of ethnic and religious conflicts because the state has increasingly become less responsive to the security needs of its citizens; paper *ten* posits that beyond the scientific definition of the environment, the religious definition has not received attention, thus the work hopes to offer a new definition of the environment that would encourage religious practitioners to develop a new orientation and positive attitude to the environment that would meet global expectations suitable for religious practitioners which could possibly help to stem the tide of incessant interreligious conflicts in Nigeria, and throughout Africa, and our final contribution examines the structure of Nigeria and its processes of knowledge production which may free the republic from the ‘neo-colonial instruments of intellectual discourse.

In conclusion, I hope you will enjoy this dialogue on Nigeria, our giant African star, shining in all its complexity, as we recall Akinwande Oluwole "Wole" Soyinka’s statement that ‘the greatest threat to freedom is the absence of criticism’.

Sincerely,

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Senior Editor