

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN



**THE NINETY-SIXTH
INAUGURAL LECTURE**

**THE IMAGE OF AFRICA: RHETORIC AND
REALITY OF AFRO-EUROPEAN RELATIONS**

By

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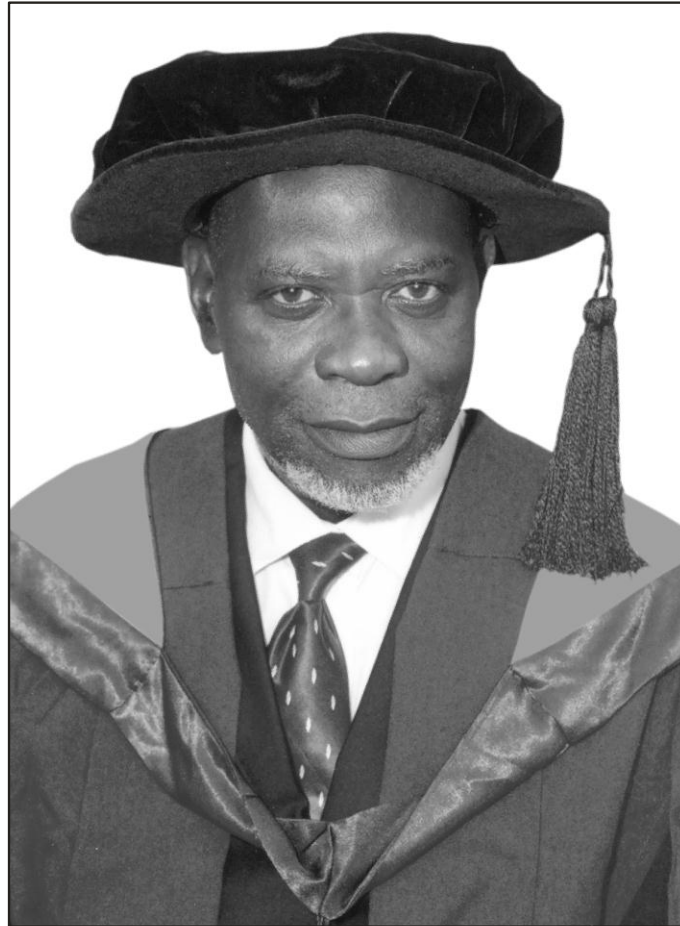
THURSDAY, AUGUST 4TH, 2011

*This 96th Inaugural Lecture was delivered under
the Chairmanship of*

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4th August 2011

Published By:
Library and Publications Committee
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.



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Professors here present,
Academic Colleagues,
Distinguished invited Guests,
Great Unilorin Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I. Introduction

All knowledge belongs to God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth Who gives man part of this knowledge to compartmentalize into science, technology, communication and humanity. Today, I stand before you to deliver a lecture in the humanity field of knowledge and in this case history. This is the ninety-sixth in the series of Inaugural lectures of the University of Ilorin, the best modern University in Nigeria and the second to be given by a historian since the existence of this institution. The first was given by late Professor Ade Obayemi and deals exclusively with human cultural, material as well as political activities within a small area of Africa. In the lecture of today, I move to a larger or macro level of history in which the entire continent of Africa is examined in its relations with the outside world particularly Europe. Our research efforts have shown that in relations between peoples and nations, the perception of each group of itself and of others determine, to a large extent, the qualitative nature in terms of economic and political advantages and disadvantages of those relations.

Perception is therefore important. Perception in the context of this lecture also connotes image. Since perception is not by any way a static action, image is also dynamic and qualifiable. Thus, unlike image in the artistic form, it can be positive or negative. The cause of this is that image in the perceptive mode is subjective either from the point of view of the self or the outsider. These three elements of image - subjectivity, qualitiveness and dynamism informed the title of this inaugural lecture. Fundamentally, however, the title is in the nature and practice of history.

History has always been misunderstood as a body of knowledge particularly by Western-educated non-historian Africans. This arises from a naive comparison of history with science and technology disciplines. In contrast, pre-colonial African societies, either Traditional or Muslim philosophies of human existence regarded history as a necessity not only for political leaders but also for the orderly continuity of society. Even in contemporary Western European and American societies, history is taken seriously as an academic discipline and social necessity in spite of their technological and scientific advances. History, from this perspective, is not only synonymous with society in Africa as first posited by Professor Oloruntimehin¹, but also true of other societies including Europe and America. The misunderstanding of what history is arises out of its complex nature which includes mutability, infinity, omnipresence and universality. This, from my professional and pedagogical experience makes me support its three connotations.

The first takes history to mean all that mankind has done, experienced or suffered since creation. This is an element in its universality. The universality also involves spatiality, which is symbolized by human societies. History and time are also synonymous since it is within specific time that human actions occur. In the latter sense, history often assumes the personality of

a solvent or a judge, hence such statements as “history will judge” and “time will judge”.

However, because of variations in the degree of specific actions, places and time, universality breaks down with micro units of individual or group activities hence we have African History, European History or Chinese history. e.t.c. The identification of this differentiation leads us to the second connotation in which history becomes the body of events which are considered significant to mankind. In other words, history by nature will become a selective or discriminating edifice since not all human actions or incidents can be remembered either by human memories or recorded in whatever forms including the computer.

At this point, we turn to the third sense of history, which is when the scattered human actions in space and time are compiled into records of events that can be studied. Such records become a body of knowledge and of course a discipline. The professional historian is the one who makes historical facts or events stand by giving them prominence through the process of investigation, analysis and integration. In this context, history becomes a science and the historian, a scientist. But it is a science of a distinct category. A science that deals with human actions and inactions in all its ramifications which include thought, ideas and beliefs. History, therefore, is a science of all sciences because other sciences must start and end with it. In other words, it is the mother of all academic disciplines and all human knowledge.

Given this short excursion into the realm of reality of what history is, it is patent that history exists as long as individuals, societies, groups, nations and institutions exist. Consequently, what the contemporary world is today, in its scientific or communication-technology achievement is just part of the chain of human activities since man first lived in society. Therefore, current globalization in whatever form cannot be the termination of history as some scholars suggest². Rather, it is another phase in

human history. It is a phase which some have described as “the transition of human society into the third millennium”.³ The reality, nonetheless, is that the rate and quality of transition is not equal for the different continents. The proper question for us to ask at this juncture is what is the nature of Africa’s transition? One way of getting the answer to this question is to examine the image of Africa from the context of her relations with Europe since the 17th century. This is my mission in this lecture.

As a historian, I know that in the European academic tradition, inaugural lectures are given early in the tenure as a Professor. However, we have moved away from this to have such lectures in the middle or towards the end of the Professor’s career in the university. Both cases serve the same purpose of providing opportunity of showing the extent and import of personal research or presenting perspectives on general academic or societal issues in the Professor’s discipline. Nonetheless, the second approach, in addition, allows for a more holistic appraisal and utilitarian prognosis. This lecture today combines the two – Inaugural and Valedictory. This is in the nature of history which is an embodiment of universalism and parochialism, continuity and change, as well as uniqueness and synthesis.

Now that we have identified history as an inescapable phenomenon both in academic and human activities, we now turn to our major concern today which is the image of Africa over four centuries arising out of her relations with Europe. I discern three types of image of Africa since its existence on the stage of human history. These are the Untainted Image, Derisive Image and Variegated Image.

II. The Untainted Image

Image, as noted earlier, is a creation of man arising from his perception of people and things. This perception itself is also a product of where the perceiver lives, that is the land or the environment and the nature of his or her conquest of it.

Consequently, land is very important. It is on it that man depends for his existence. However, the quality of that existence depends on how far man has been able to control that land. It is because of the importance of land that we examine land and peoples of Africa and the dominant image of the continent from the time it is recognized as a part of the contemporary world up to the end of the 17th century.

Africa is part of the present earth which geologists claim came into existence several millions of years ago. It was originally a compact mass. Geologists and Paleontologists informed us that the continents including Africa that we have today came into existence as a result of crustal changes. What becomes Africa, for instance, is that portion that remained after Europe and America were detached from the original mass. Thereafter, India and Madagascar which then were a single mass split away. Madagascar was later separated from India and moved back to where it is today as an Island and part of Africa again⁴. Africa stands as the only solid land that has remained in its original place. This perhaps explains the less occurrence of earth tremors and earthquakes on the continent.

The land mass which remains after these detachments becomes the continent of Africa. It bears a shape like the shell of a giant snail which is large at the top and narrow at the bottom. It is also the only continent that extends beyond the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and having the Equator passing through its middle. This gives it a predominantly hot climate but with a temperate one at the northern and southern tips. The consequence of these physical and climatic characteristics is that Africa has diversified physical features, flora and fauna. To me, a continent with such a geo-physical evolutionary history with the accompanying flora and fauna indeed represents that Biblical Garden of Eden. This is why man as we have him today evolved from the Garden.

Studies have shown that over three million years ago what was called ape man, Australopithecus, was believed to have appeared in the eastern and southern parts of Africa. It is possible that the ape man also lived in other parts of the continent. The ape man developed through different stages from Homo Habilis, Homo Ergaster, Homo Erectus and finally to Homo Sapiens – the thinking man. Homo Sapiens was noticed in Africa from 200,000 years ago, and from monogenetic theory viewpoint, he began to move to other parts of the earth particularly South Asia from about 50,000 years ago⁵. Of course, this was easy because as we have noted above, the earth was a single land mass before the different splittings and the appearance of the oceans.

The early man in Africa more than his fellows in other parts of the earth began, right from the start, to adjust himself to his environment. He began to make tools first of stone, copper and then iron. Twelve thousand years ago or 10,000BC, man in Africa especially those in the northeastern part began to cultivate grains such as wheat and barley. The advancement of man in Africa from being a tool maker and scavenger to a cattle rearer and agriculturist took place at different times in different parts of the continent. Besides, it did not follow the sequence above. While men in north eastern Africa started to gather grains and raise sheep and cattle, those in Western Sudan started with gathering seeds and nuts while men in South West Africa did not go beyond hunting and food gathering even until today.

About 500 BC or two thousand five hundred years ago, the desertification of the Sahara led to the dispersal of men living in that area eastwards and southwards. This also led to the emergence of settled communities in different parts of the continent. Settled life implied also greater control over the land particularly with the use of copper, bronze and iron from six thousand years ago especially in Egypt, Nubia and West Africa.

With greater control of the environment manifested in the use of metal works technology and food production, societies or

communities of different political and social structures began to appear in Africa about five thousand years ago earlier than in any other continent. These primordial human communities are categorized by historians and anthropologists according to what they consider as the nature of division and location of power or authority as well as social structures. Consequently, communities without identified single authority are referred to by historians as stateless or micro-states and by anthropologists as segmentary or acephalous societies. Whatever name these societies are called, they represented the first group of human communities not only in Africa but also elsewhere in the world. Many of these natural communities developed more complicated socio-political structures which turned them into chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires. When this happened, historians and anthropologists then referred to them as centralised/macro states or cephalous societies respectively.

To me, these societies, whether those which remained at the natural level as mini-states or those that developed into macro states were civilizations because each of them had commonly accepted ways of life, culture, technology of agricultural and metal production as well as food production and processing. More importantly, they maintained law and order and ensure the continuity of their societies. By this simple conceptualization of civilization, I am unhesitatingly accepting the theory of cultural relativism in which early civilizations as presented above are considered unique because they manifest the totality of the existence of those who produced them within the limits of their philosophy of life, technology and values. Consequently, any belief, practice or custom used for supporting or manifesting those civilizations cannot be condemned by any person outside them to be backward or inferior. In other words, there is no superior or inferior civilization because there is no basis for comparison.

Let us take for instance the marriage customs among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Among the Bororo Fulani, young men intending to marry must subject themselves to serious whipping publicly and in the presence of the prospective brides. In other societies, such as Yoruba and Igbo, qualification for being a husband is quantified in material and social terms such as ability to pay dowry, service to the father-in-law or consideration of social class of the bridegroom's pedigree. If one then asks the question which is the best of these practices? The answer from the point of view of cultural relativity is none because each of them is designed to serve a different purpose in line with the existentialist beliefs of the people. We shall return to this issue later in this lecture.

The first known human civilization which emerged over 5000 years ago in Africa was that of Egypt in the northeastern part of the continent. Operating under a polytheistic system, Egyptian civilization was symbolized by technology that produced the pyramids, hieroglyphics (writing using pictures to represent words) irrigation and architecture. Egypt had trade and cultural contacts as well as political relations with other civilizations and peoples outside Europe such as the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. But Egypt was not the only civilization in Africa at that early time. There were more older civilizations though not well known as Egypt but whose achievements were also commendable. They included Nubia which conquered and ruled Egypt for almost a century. The civilization and fame of Egypt naturally attracted political assaults from the early civilizations in Europe and Asia and this led to its conquest first by the Persians, Greeks and Romans before the Christian era.

Apart from Nubia, there were other civilizations existing in different parts of Africa before the end of BC years and since the present Christian era. They included Kush and Axum empires. There was also the Monomatapa or Zimbabwe empire which

emerged more than nine hundred years before Christ and which was noted for its great walls and gates⁶. In West Africa, Ghana which was founded early in the second millennium AD was the first well-known civilization in Western Sudan. It was succeeded first by Mali and then Songhai. In succeeding centuries, we have Kanem-Bornu Empire and the Hausa city-states, the Benin and Dahomey kingdoms and Oyo Empire in the forest regions to the South. The creation of civilizations in Africa continued until the 19th century when the continent's relations with the outside world, particularly Europeans, halted these indigenous socio-political developments.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to examine the relations of this Africa with other lands and peoples. Egypt as we have seen had socio-political and economic relations with early European civilizations of the Greeks and Romans. Such relations were reflected in the names of most gods of ancient Greece which were those borrowed from Egypt.⁷ Other African civilizations such as the Zimbabwe and Kilwa traded and exchanged gifts with non-African rulers as far as China. In North West Africa, Phoenician traders, apart from trading with Berber communities, also founded settlements along the coast. The most important of these was Carthage. Trade and particularly cultural or religious relations had tremendous impact on both African civilizations and those of the outside peoples. For instance, the spread of Islam to Egypt improved the existing technology of production and architecture, as well as the political system. The expansion of Islam southeastwards into Sudan, Ethiopia, and East Africa also had tremendous socio-economic and political effects. These were more profound in North West Africa where the indigenous Berber groups, particularly those along the coast, became Islamized and eventually Arabised. These local African ethnic groups together with their Almoravid rulers successfully invaded Spain and set up Islamic kingdoms in its southern part which

introduced Islamic learning and architectural techniques into Europe.

The establishment of Islamic states or civilizations in North West Africa increased trade between that area and Western Sudan. Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires served as the southern termini of that trade, known as the Trans-Saharan trade. Through that trade, African goods got to Europe and China while those of these areas also reached that part of Africa. One important consequence of this trade, apart from serving as a channel of introduction of Islam, was the growth of Islamic learning. As in Egypt, the major cities of Western Sudan, particularly Timbuktu and Gao, became the centre of Islamic learning and scholarship.

Christianity also got to Africa through Egypt where an indigenous Orthodox Church was set up. From there, the religion spread southwards into Ethiopia, Sudan, Nubia and Axum. In the latter kingdom, great churches were built with burnt bricks and stones⁸. The introduction of Islam later led to a drastic decline of Christian adherents to small communities known as Coptics today in modern Egypt. Christianity also spread westwards into the Berber lands of North West Africa. As in the eastern part, the religion blossomed until the coming of Islam in the seventh century.

These developments showed that African societies were not static. They were improving all aspects of their civilizations in ways comparable if not surpassing those of men in Europe and Asia during the same period. Comments by Arab and European visitors to different parts of Africa between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries confirm this. For example, a renowned Islamic scholar and traveller, Ibn Battuta, who visited Mali Empire in 1352 AD noted that the state ensured good governance by guaranteeing security of all people and upholding justice. According to him, there was “lack of oppression.....the king does not allow any one to practise it”⁹. In the same year, he was in East Africa and visited the state of Kilwa. He noted something

different but which showed the extent of the quality of architecture and sense of aesthetics of that state and its people and indirectly of the Africans in general. According to him, the king of Kilwa was generous and he had “a fine and substantial palace” with complex courtyards and a bathing pool.¹⁰

About fifty years after, a Portuguese, Duarte Barbosa also got to Kilwa. He observed that the city of Kilwa contained many “handsome houses” made of stone and provided with many windows such as those found in Portuguese houses in Europe and very well arranged in streets.¹¹ This innate architectural endowment and sense of planning was noted again when a Dutchman got to Benin City, the capital of the Benin kingdom in about 1600, over a hundred years after Barbosa made the foregoing remarks about Kilwa. He described Benin as a big city with one great broad street which to him was more than seven times wider than the widest road in his own city in Netherlands. In addition, Benin city had thirty other main roads which according to him, were very straight. Here again, he observed that the king’s palace was “very large with plains and many gates”. He was particularly impressed by the personal hygiene of the people. According to him “they wash and scrub their houses so well that they are polished and shining like a looking glass”.¹²

It should be noted, however, that in the period under survey here, the different civilizations, societies and peoples related with one another and the outside world not as Africans but as individual units with different languages some of which were mutually unintelligible. These languages which are believed to be over 1500 in number were later grouped into four major categories. These are Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo and Khoisan. The people did not see themselves as one people with a common name. The name Africa came into general use from the 16th century.

Several etymologists, historians and commentators have tried to explain the origin of the name Africa. Their different

postulations can be classified into two major groups. The first are those that ascribe the origin to foreign languages and peoples arising out of the continent's physical and climatic features. In the first group are those who believe that the word originated from the Phoenicians who as the first seafaring people in the Mediterranean Sea founded Carthage, where Tunisia is today. They used the word *Pharikia* for the coastal strip of this area which means "Land of the fruit". The land beyond the coast which was found to be dry and with little population was referred to as AFAR-RAYK-A which was formed from *AFAR* or 'dust' and *RAYK* or 'empty'. Etymologists of this Phoenician school of origin claimed that *AFAR-RAYK-A* was Latinized to become Africa.

Others in this group hold the view that the name directly came from the Latin word *apria* (which is sunny) and Greek word *aphrike* or "without cold". From these two words, Africa they claimed, was formed. On the other hand, Leo Africanus, believed Africa originated purely from the Greek word *phrike* which means "cold and horror". But when prefixed with 'a' it becomes *aphrike* or "land without cold and horror".¹³

The second group believes the word originated from Africans themselves. This is because, it emanated from the name of an indigenous ethnic Berber group that lived around Carthage who were called Banu Afri. When the Romans succeeded the Phoenicians in North West Africa after the destruction of Carthage following the Punic wars, they named the land of the Afri, Africa. That is suffixing 'ca' to Afri. Consequently, from 99 AD. the Greeks referred to the coastal strip of North West Africa which include Libya, Algeria and Tunisia as Africa. The Greeks and other Europeans did not know the land and peoples outside that their Africa, besides Egypt and Ethiopia or land of the Blacks until well into the 16th century when the Portuguese and other European nations adopted this name.

It is clear from these different origins of the name Africa that it does not portray Africa and its people as inferior to any other group of people in the world. Instead, it is first a name arising from one of the indigenous peoples of Africa and secondly and more significantly is the fact that it was non-Africans who first used the name based on geographical and natural climatic features of the continent. At this juncture, one can then say categorically that since its emergence in Africa, man has been able to control his environment to satisfy his social, economic and political needs. Through appropriate technologies, he was able to create different civilizations that matched if not out-classed those of his contemporaries elsewhere in the world. The African states then participated in the existing international trade and exchanged their products particularly ivory and gold with Europe and Asia through the Trans-Saharan, Mediterranean and Red Seas trade routes. Africans during this period, were owners of their land and its resources. They were also the controllers of the processes of their own development. African monarchs related with their counterparts in Europe and elsewhere on basis of equality. For instance, the Oba of Benin and Mani of Congo exchanged presents and correspondences with the king of Portugal as equal sovereigns. So did Kilwa and Zimbabwe states exchanged presents with Chinese rulers. European visitors to the palaces of African kings acknowledged the royalty of these rulers. In fact, many of these visitors several times were treated as inferior persons. For instance, during the 11th century in Morocco, they were made to stay in the sun several days before being allowed into the presence of the sultans.¹⁴

Given all these circumstances, it is not surprising that the image of Africa as perceived by Europeans and other people was a natural and positive one, that of being a land of great civilizations, sunny, full of fruits and free from horror. This however, was to change from the 18th century AD.

III. The Derisive Image

The change in the image of Africa from positive to negative was the outcome of greater Afro-European relations that began in the 15th century and reaching their peak with the occupation of most parts of the continent and subsequent imposition of European colonial rule on those areas. However, there are two phases of this image. The first was from 1700 to 1799 while the second spanned the period 1800 to 1960s.

Afro-European contacts and subsequent relations may be looked at from two theoretical viewpoints. The first is that of inevitability arising out of the belief that Africa is the “center of the world”¹⁵. By that transcendental location, it must attract contacts from other continents and particularly those closest to it such as Europe and Asia. The second is from the materialistic standpoint of push and pull factors. These two factors have been responsible for human migrations, settlements and inter-state relations over the ages. In the pull factors, apart from the magnetic force of centrality, are the resources of Africa, which initially were gold, salt and ivory. The push factors in Europe on the other hand included the galvanizing force of nation-building and the need for getting easier access to the markets of China and at the same time, obtain new ones in India and Africa.

It was the combination of these pull and push factors that led to contacts between Europe and the Western, Southern and Eastern parts of Africa from the beginning of the 15th century. We must remember, however, that Africa and Europe were not strangers to each other before then. The Carthaginian Empire of 6th century BC whose capital, Carthage, referred to earlier extended to the Mediterranean coast of Spain, Sardinia and Sicily. Carthage contested for political hegemony in the rest of North Africa first with Greece and then Rome. The conflict with the latter, which lasted over two hundred years resulted in the defeat of Carthage, the restriction of its empire to Africa from

202 BC and the final destruction of the capital by the Romans in 146 BC.

The destruction of Carthage did not end relations between Europe and Africa which then to the Europeans was restricted to the coastal strip of Northwest Africa. The Roman Empire inherited and administered the Carthaginian territories in Africa. Christianity was introduced to the Maghribian part of North Africa in about 180 AD as we have said earlier. Roman and Christian heritage, however, was eventually wiped out by the Arabs who conquered Spain in the following century. This conquest led to the establishment of the Caliphate of Cordova in Southern Europe. Of course, this led to reaction by Spanish and other European Christians which in turn led to the Crusades, the establishment of Spanish colonies in the Maghrib and the counter reaction of the Maghribian Africans as well as Muslims. These reactions and counter reactions ended with the conquest of the Maghrib itself by the Ottomans early in the 16th century.

The Portuguese occupation of Ceuta in 1415 certainly had a religious undertone considering the prevailing Afro-European relations in the Maghrib during the preceding years. However, commercial considerations were more fundamental reasons. The significance of this occupation, nonetheless, is that it diverted attention of Portugal and later other Europeans from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Coast and subsequently to the rest of what is Africa of today.

The instigating push factors of European interests in other parts of Africa included growing national consciousness, increasing expansion in financial resources and the necessity to sustain this as well as improvement on existing Chinese and Arab ship-building and sailing technology. These combined factors enabled the Portuguese to explore from Ceuta the West African Coast as far as the Kongo between 1434 and 1482 AD. Before the end of that century, they had rounded the southern tip of Africa and got to India through the Eastern Coast of Africa. For the next

three score years European countries led by Portugal, and followed by the French, English, Dutch, Danes, Swedes and Germans traded with Africans along the coasts by exchanging their metal and other goods with gold, ivory and pepper produced by Africans. Europeans built stations or forts along the coast to facilitate interaction with the African traders and chiefs. The trade was not only from Africa to Europe, but European traders also transported African products such as beads and cloths from one part of the continent to the other. It is instructive to note that up till the end of the 16th century, trade between Africa and Europe whether in the North, West, South or East was mutually beneficial, and based on respect for one another as human beings and as equal partners in a commercial transaction. This was in spite of religious differences. However, when trade in raw materials and manufactured goods changed to one in human beings, the benefits became one-sided in favour of the Europeans which made them began to have a new image of Africa.

Slave trade, especially the Atlantic side of it, is a fundamental issue in Afro-European relations. Consequently, it has evoked diverse views and comments on its role and effects on both Africans and Europeans as well as on relations between them. We shall not bother ourselves about the apologists of the trade and others who believed that the trade removed the “wretched” African slaves to “a better situation under the whites.” Similarly, we shall avoid discussing the details of the relationship between capitalism and slavery or how the trade has laid the foundation of Africa’s underdevelopment. Our concern is the effect of almost three centuries of this despicable trade on the psyche of the Europeans in general.

The inhuman treatment experienced by these slaves during their march to the coast; their incarceration before shipment, and the treatment on the sugarcane, tobacco as well as cotton plantations certainly bred a feeling of superiority on the part of European slave traders, merchants and plantation owners.

This feeling ossified into racial prejudice as the trade led to accumulation of further capital and the development of industrialization in both Europe and America. Industrialization widened the gap in military and productive technology between Africa and Europe to the extent that pre-slave trade equality in relations became one of relations between the “superior white race” and the “inferior Africans.” The European feeling of superiority was consummated into a derisive image of Africa by the first two decades of the nineteenth century at a time when enough capital has been accumulated from the trade. Diverse reasons ranging from commerce, environment, religion and pseudo scientific theories were advanced to explain the adoption of a negative image for Africa and the Africans.

Professor P.D. Curtin was the first to document the different negative perceptions of Africa in his book titled *The Image of Africa*¹⁶. The book has two limitations, however. First, these perceptions represented those of the British and American people. Secondly, they are confined to the 19th century. In this lecture, we are able to look back before and beyond the latter century and to show that the negative image of Africa which reached its peak in the 19th century continued in different forms till today although couched in different humanitarian rhetoric.

It is important to note also that the negative perceptions of Africa noted by Curtin were not limited to the British. All other Europeans shared the feeling of white superiority and black inferiority and consequently accepted the negative image of Africa¹⁷. Undoubtedly however, Britain took the lead. And this was because Britain derived the most advantage from the slave trade and therefore pioneered the industrial production. Industrialization opened the channels for socio-economic and intellectual development which eventually pervaded the whole of Europe.

Let us return to the slave trade, one of the most important factors that led to the eventual transformation of Europe. For

more than two hundred years after the start of the slave trade, Europeans knew little about the interior of Africa until the 1780s when explorations into the hinterland were sponsored by the African Association in Britain. The early perception of Africa was that of the coastal people of West Africa which was now extended to the rest of Africa. The first description of the West Africans they knew was that they were savages only because they were engaged in the procurement of slaves. This was buttressed by the stories and reports of explorers about fetish and other practices by Africans that were strange to Europeans. One of these explorers which we read about in our Civics book as a primary Five pupil in 1956 and which I have kept in my mind since then said about Africans he saw in the central part of the continent:

“the life of an African is simple. He rolls on the ground like a log of wood, wakes up the following morning looking for what to eat or what would eat him”.

This kind of description of an African made many Europeans who never visited the continent to have even more bizarre picture of the African man. One of them Thomax Dixon said “An African left to his own will roam at night and sleeps in the day, [his] speech has no word of love”¹⁸.

Given this type of perception, it is not surprising that the existing belief of a monogenesis evolution of human beings as contained in the Bible was rejected by many European publicists and theorists. For them, African practices which they found strange did not suggest a common human origin. They, therefore, began to emphasize polygenesism which maintained that each race emerged from separate creation and that Africans as well as other non-white people were not children of Adam and Eve. It was easy for them from this point to argue that the African culture was degenerate.

Two of their popular philosophers of the 18th century, Francois Voltaire and Jean Jacques Rousseau had no qualms about insisting that “Negroes were naturally inferior to Europeans in their mental ability”.¹⁹ A lot of Europeans even used the theory of size of the cranium to arrive at the inferiority of the Blackman. To them, the large cranium of the whiteman was a sign of superior intellect while the small one of the Negro was responsible for his backwardness. Following the lead by their philosophers, many Europeans tried to give several explanations for this subjective classification of the African as an inferior human being.

Thus, apart from the factor of separate creation, they attributed it to a combination of environmental causes and lack of Christianity. The favourable environment of the tropics or what they referred to as “tropical exuberance” made Africans lazy, whereas Europeans worked hard and were therefore able to evolve civilization. Africans who did not work did not produce any civilization. Therefore, in their three part theory of human historical progress which was composed of savagery, barbarism and civilization, Africa oscillated between savagery and barbarism. By the end of the 18th century, the image of Africa accepted by Europeans was one in which the Africans were seen as barbarians who had never evolved any civilization.

The 19th century witnessed the ossification of this perception of Africa and the Africans. This was the result of increasing expansion of industrial capitalism in Europe in that century. Industrial capitalism and the transformations it produced in European society engendered a feeling of success, progress, achievement and consequently racial arrogance. That achievement which became synonymous with civilization was built on the substratum of Christianity. Only the Christian white race they maintained could evolve such civilization. Race, therefore, became everything – the determinant of all human activities, history, capabilities as well as prospects.

This explains why F. Hegel held the view that the Negro was not part of human history²⁰. This means that Africans have no history nor civilization. Any civilization found in Africa must be the handiwork of their Semitic or Hamitic rulers. Societies that have no plough and no writing could not, according to them, have history. This is the background of European bourgeois historiographical cliché of “*pas de document pas d’histoire*” (No document no history). In spite of increasing Christian evangelizing activities which dominated the first half of that century, polygenism now became the acceptable theory of human creation. Three major races, each with its own separate progenitor were adopted. These were the Caucasian, Mongolian and Negro. The Negro or Blackman were at the lowest rung of that racial ladder.

As far as Europeans were concerned, the Negro race has always remained in a state of complete barbarism while the Caucasoid of which the Europeans were the leaders were of high intellectual and moral endowment. But the “Negro barbarians” which many of them represented as a living museum of a particular stage of human history, were capable of being Christianized and introduced to certain aspects of European civilization. Evangelization and civilizing became two sides of the same mission. This mission also carried with it a combination of humanitarian and materialistic burden. These elements have become the trade marks of Afro-European relations up till this moment.

The characterization of Africa as a dark continent and Africans as savages, barbarians and of a backward race made Africa to become an object of pity by Europeans. Yet by this time, Africa has become indispensable in the economic calculations of Europe. Therefore, a mixture of humanitarian and economic considerations which we referred to earlier led them to consider different ways of lifting up Africa. Initially, the prevailing approach was conversionism or Christianization²¹. It

was believed that Africans needed Christianity to unchain them from savagery and barbarism. This was the reason for Christian missionary activities in Africa from the 1850s. Of course, conversion to Christianity meant gradual admission to European civilization. Part of this also was encouraging Africans to work on the land. Consequently, stopping the slave trade was not enough it must be followed by political intervention to ensure the success of the civilizing mission. This mission was regarded by them as the white man's burden entrusted on them by circumstances of African backwardness. To many of them however, it was the necessity of their superior civilization that created that burden. The white man's burden which in later years transformed into the trust of civilization became the justification for the imposition of colonial rule on most parts of Africa.

Colonial rule did not change European negative image about Africa. Rather, it extended and entrenched it. This is because in the first place, colonialism implies loss of power and therefore loss of culture and personality of the colonized²². A colonized individual is therefore never a whole person but a caricature of the colonizer or what Franz Fanon describes as "Blackskin White Masks"²³. Certainly, such an African is an inferior person. The colonial political and social structures confirmed this. In political and economic management of the territories, Africans were relegated to the periphery. Where Africans were allowed into the upper and decision making echelons of those sectors as in French and Portuguese African territories, they were very few in number and must have totally abandoned their African culture and assimilated into that of the colonizers. In those latter territories, particularly the French, majority of Africans were *sujets* (subjects) who were subjected to *corvée* (unpaid forced labour) *indigénat* (summary judgment) and many other deprivations of human rights²⁴. In all colonial territories, African traditional political leaders were subordinated to European political officers irrespective of the so-called high

status that some of them were given. The colonial educational philosophy and policy summarized the European perception of Africans. It was their belief that Africans only have the capacity for copying and not thinking. As Africans according to them were of low intelligence, the type of education suitable for them was practical education in agriculture, crafts and hygiene.

In the inter-war years, that is between 1919 and 1939, Africa's bad image was some how globalised with the establishment of the League of Nations' Mandates system. That system confirmed the persistent racial and cultural arrogance of Europeans which has been shown earlier. According to the European originators of Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant which concerned the Mandates System, it was designed for those who are "unable to stand on their own under the strenuous conditions of the modern world". These people were those of former German and Turkish colonies. They were then categorized into A, B and C. African territories such as Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi were in Category B while Namibia was in C²⁵. The former Turkish territories of Syria, Palestine and Lebanon were in A category, because according to the initiators of the system, they had a past civilization.

The pertinent question to ask at this juncture is that what made these African mandated territories which were former colonial territories unable to stand on their own? Could the other existing African colonies stand without support? The simple answer to both questions is that African colonies, mandated or existing, were considered as wards of European civilization. Africans living in the mandated territories suffered the same socio-political and racial discrimination as their brothers under individual European colonial powers. They even experienced greater exploitation of their resources as a result of the open door policy of the mandates system. They also received less opportunity for Western education and that itself was more

practical and elementary than in the normal colonies²⁶. In spite of provision for freedom of worship under Article 22, Africans were constrained from practising their religion especially Islam and African Traditional Religion²⁷.

For the European operators of the mandates system, an African is an African irrespective of his status and where he comes from. This was demonstrated by how Casely Hayford was treated by the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC). Casely Hayford was one of the early highly western-educated Africans from Gold Coast (now Ghana). He was a member of the Legislative Council of that territory. As the lawyer to the Adigo family, he constantly petitioned the League through the PMC for redress of the poor treatment meted out to his client by the French administration in Togo. The PMC refused to take Hayford's petitions after some time because "he is a Blackman"²⁸.

A Black man to those Europeans carried the image of inferiority in everything. This was confirmed in 1933 when some Togolese again petitioned the League of Nations complaining about the killings of innocent people by French Senegalese soldiers during the Lomé riots of January of that year. Instead of objectively attending to the petition, the PMC accepted the conclusion of the French member Monsieur Besson, who said that the riot and the killing were attributable to the fact that

"coloured people are quite frequently liable to sudden fits of madness brought about by excessive sexual indulgence or by abuse of narcotics"²⁹.

This conception of Black people at the international forum in 1933 was not different from how Europeans felt about Africans in the 18th century. They maintained then that as a result of the environment, "Africans were timid, lazy, oversensitive and oversexed."³⁰ The denigration of Africans was not only by individuals, groups or organs of the League of Nations. Rather, it was extended by that organization itself to African member

states. These African states were Liberia and Ethiopia which were admitted as members of the League in 1922.

Liberia was the first to be subjected to a sustained campaign of calumny between 1922 and 1934 when its government was accused of incompetence in all aspects of governance. The European press at the time then referred to Liberia as “a country of Negroes, a country of the uncivilized and a country of savages”.³¹

However, Liberia managed to retain its membership of the League as well as its independence because the League’s attention was directed to the other African member, Ethiopia. Italy had harboured a revenge mentality against Ethiopia since it was defeated by the latter in 1896 at the battle of Adowa. The national and imperialist interests of European members of the League, especially Britain and France, assisted Italy in invading Ethiopia and occupying the capital Addis Ababa on 5th May, 1936. Ethiopia thus lost its independence and membership of the League. All through the discussions on the appeals by Ethiopia for the League to stop Italy’s aggression, Italy continued to tell the members that Ethiopia should not have being a member of the League in the first place, because it practised slavery and was an “uncivilized state”.³²

A little less than four decades after the experience of these two states which had “symbolized the achievement of the Black race,”³³ almost the whole of the colonized territories of Africa were granted independence. From what we have said so far about European image of Africa, that independence could not have been due to any change of mind on that image but to African and international factors. One of the most important of those factors was World War II. The war provided the opportunities on various levels for Africans to vent their accumulated grievances on racism, and denigration of African personality as well as economic exploitation. The reactions were

led by African intellectuals particularly historians and nationalists.

The historians, using European and African historiographical techniques, showed that Africans had a history and a past to be proud of. They then began to write unique micro histories of many African societies. They debunked the Hamitic hypothesis and condemned the idea that race was the only determinant of civilization as simply “an apotheosis of historical irrationality”³⁴. But European colonial rulers were unwilling to give Africans the freedom they desired. Combined forces of African nationalism and international political situation forced them to succumb, although in some cases after more than a decade of military confrontation in which many Africans lost their lives.

That seventeen African states gained their freedom from European colonial rule in the 1960s was indeed a revolution because it was unexpected by the Europeans. This was because to these Europeans, “the civilizing mission” is a perpetual whiteman’s burden. On the other hand to the Africans, independence was an opportunity to show their capacity for self determination and development of their continent and consequently remove the opprobrium of the negative image. To what extent have Africans succeeded in doing this since then? For the answer to this question we turn to the next section of this lecture.

IV. The Variegated Image

The effects that World War II had on Europe and America as well as the rest of the world generally did not provide a favourable condition for Africans to achieve their objective of creating a new Africa. One of these effects and the most fundamental was the emergence of the United States of America as the promoter and protector of European economic, social and political values. These values which include sustained economic

growth resulting from industrialization and improving standard of living are enshrined in capitalism and liberal democracy. All these to Europeans and Americans manifest development. Development from this perspective became the yardstick for classifying countries and peoples. European countries which include Canada and Australia, and the United States are the First World, the Second World countries are those of the Eastern Europe and China (excluding Japan). African and other countries are in the Third World category. Countries in this group are regarded as backward and primitive. This was the same way Africans were perceived since the 18th century.

However this time, the countries of the Third World are considered to be capable of elevating themselves to higher levels if they are made to follow the process of economic, social and political transformations which the First World or Developed countries had adopted. This is why they often times use Less Developed Countries (LCD^s) or Developing Countries as synonyms for Third World. Whatever of these terms are used they portray inferiority to Euro-Americans.

Immediately after the war, the leading members of the First World Countries set up political and economic institutions as well as reached agreements towards sustaining their leadership in “development” or “modernization”. These institutions are the United Nations Organisation (UNO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. At this time, no African country took part in this process, because they were still under European colonial rule. However, they became members of these institutions where especially in the UNO, the African numerical strength in its General Assembly after the 1960s gives it a voice in the decisions of the organization particularly in matters not affecting the direct economic and strategic interests of the major Developed Countries. Since the 1960s, the UNO, IMF, World Bank, Paris and London Clubs as well as the European Union

became involved in matters affecting African and other so-called Third World Countries.

Meanwhile, during the same 1960s Africans wanted to show that they were capable of removing the cloak of inferiority put on them by the Europeans by embarking on policies that would develop the continent and its people. But before doing that, the leaders agreed that unity was a *sine qua/non* for the achievement of that goal. They differed, however, about the strategy and process for doing this. This was resolved through a compromise which led to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The goals of the OAU confirm what has been said earlier that Africans were determined to show that they were capable of self transforming their societies and people positively and taking a respectable position in international politics. The purpose of the Organization which were five summarized the new aspirations of Africans and their leaders. It was in the main to promote African unity and solidarity, defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of African states and accelerate cooperative efforts towards achieving a better life for the people of Africa. The establishment of the OAU is also symbolic because it gives a common politico-cultural and racial identity to hitherto colonially balkanized people. In addition, it created a collective and common goal of development. Ironically, this development was that designed by the First World countries referred to earlier.

Consequently, in the first decade after independence all African countries embarked on programmes of economic development based on import substitution and industrialization approach. A few of them such as Tanzania and Libya adopted African (Ujamaa) and Natural (Jamahariya) socialist approaches respectively. The former did not last long, while that of Libya continued until March this year when Libyans demanded for change. During these early years, newly independent African countries witnessed remarkable economic growth and more

importantly they experienced food sufficiency. However, with the global economic decline of the 1970s, African economy, being mostly monocultural and dependent on vagaries of international market, began to experience decline. Optimism of the 1960s gave way to despondency in subsequent decades until the end of the century.

The economic problem was aggravated by the political situation in Africa. Political unrest and instability had been experienced in the continent even before 1960 and since then it became endemic until even the present time. First, were liberation wars, civil wars, border conflicts and then elections related violence. The civil war in the Congo was the first on the continent between 1960 and 1966 and since then Africa had an annual average of 5 civil wars in the 1970s, 8 in the 1980s which was the highest and 4 each year from 2000 to 2007.³⁵ This was followed by the period of ideological indecision by African states in which capitalist mode of development was abandoned by some of them for either indigenized socialism or militocracy. By the 1980s, there was a general return to European capitalist approach to development.

This return was the product of continuing economic problem in Africa which has resulted in Africa incurring excruciating external debt and the accompanying increasing poverty, high unemployment and decline in human development. Under this condition, Africa became the sick continent subjected to doses of economic and political prescriptions from the countries of the First World and their institutions. These prescriptions first started with the UNO when that body designed its First Decade of Development Strategy for Third World countries in which Africa was at the centre. The Second Decade of Development was in the 1970s. All these did not achieve the desired economic growth. Attempts by the same UNO to create a New International Economic Order was frustrated by the First World Countries. Africa through the OAU also attempted to find

an African solution by designing several Plans of Action beginning from that of Lagos in 1980 but these also failed. By the end of the 1980s Africa had accumulated huge “*odious debts*”³⁶ from Brettonwoods institutions, as well as the Paris and London Clubs.

These creditors, adopting the Neo-Liberal theory of economic development for the Third World countries, recommended the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as the panacea to the economic problems of those countries. Forty African countries adopted SAP which involved currency devaluation, removal of subsidies, privatization and liberalization. SAP rather than solve the economic and social problems of the adopting countries aggravated them because it created widening gap between the rich and the poor, increased poverty and socio-political unrest. Consequently, instead of bringing about development, it perpetuated underdevelopment.³⁷ A collective international approach towards solving the socio-economic problems in the Third World Countries was taken in year 2000 with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Four years to the target date of 2015, no African country has achieved a substantial number of the goals.

Since the 1980s therefore, African countries have been directed in their economic and political affairs by the Developed Countries. For instance, apart from SAP mentioned above, they directed how to settle the debt of African countries either by rescheduling, forgiveness, reduction or buy-back. Then when they believed that the fundamental cause of Africa’s underdevelopment and backwardness was due to bad governance, they insisted, from the 1990s on good governance as a criterion for international recognition, grants, aids and development partnership. It was to satisfy these that African leaders transformed OAU to African Union in 2002. Then the Union consummated the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). This was followed by the

creation of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance in 2004. These actions, though promoting the development agenda of First World Countries, have not cured Africa of its sickness which is manifested in the continent being the poorest in the world, past haven of the largest number of sit-tight and despotic rulers, of highest level of corruption and the largest number of previous debtor countries, highest infantile and maternal mortality, the home of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and where human development generally is low.

This is Africa fifty years after European colonial rule and a decade into the 21st century. Independence has removed the image of barbarism and savagery. But attempts at transforming the continent on the European development paradigm has not succeeded. Consequently, Africa remains in the Third World class, a euphemism for contemporary backwardness. This is why post-independence image of Africa is a variegated one. Should the continent be in this position considering its abundant human and material resources?

V. The Rhetoric and the Reality

In the foregoing sections, three images of Africa have been identified. The first is positive and natural but was limited to the period from creation to the 17th century. The second is expressly negative and existed from the 18th century to the 1960s. The third which persists since then is a mixture of good and bad. The bad part is a continuation of the second image which is now cloaked in global humanitarianism.

The positive image of Africa and Africans before their contacts with Europe from the 15th century stemmed from the reality of African geo-physical environment and the achievements of African peoples in evolving civilizations that were relevant to their time and environment. This has been confirmed by archaeological findings and historical writings by

both Africans and Europeans. That Africans have history and were authentic makers of civilization and not any Hamitic people is no more in doubt. Oral traditions, the embodiment and historiography of that history, are now accepted as a primary source of history and of equal importance as European documents.

From these demonstrable facts, giving Africa that bad image in the first instance is fallacious. Apart from demonstrating lack of geographical and historical knowledge about Africa then, it was purposefully rhetoric. Take first the issue of civilization. As pointed out in the first section of this lecture, civilization is relative and no civilization is superior to the other. This fact was accepted by a few European politicians and writers both in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of them such as William Wilberforce, T. Winterbottom and W.C. Taylor in essence agreed that civilization is natural to man irrespective of colour and that it is not exclusive to any group of people or country³⁸. Consequently, those who held the view that the white race was the only race that created civilization were actually wrong. That use of civilization by Europeans was deceptive was confirmed by the French Prime Minister, M. Clemenceau, when he told his country's parliament in 1885 that civilization has always been used as "a cover for oppression, exploitation and other vices"³⁹.

If the African race made its own civilization, it is therefore not inferior to any other race White or Red. Africans are no Barbarians either. The use of Barbarian to describe Africans has no basis in fact. It is a word that manifests the character of all human societies of proving superior to others that are outside their own group. For example, the Romans called other European groups including the British, Barbarians.⁴⁰ Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe even said that the Romans considered the English so inferior that they could not employ them as mere house maids. However, Dr. Robert Knox was later to say that the Saxons, that is the English speaking people were a great race while the Greeks and Italians

were “weak races”.⁴¹ In a similar manner, Adolf Hitler in the 1930s classified the Germans as the most superior among the European race. Such type of thinking exists among different groups of Nigerian people against one another. Essentially therefore, use of Barbarism to describe Africans was spurious.

This leads us to the starting point of the negative image which was the slave trade. In that trade, Africans were the merchandise that was turned to slaves who worked on sugarcane, cotton and tobacco plantations in the West Indies and North America. Certainly, the master-slave relations created a feeling of superiority on the part of the European slave traders and American plantation owners. But that was conditional superiority based on possession of coercive power. It did not make the slaves or other Africans who sold them as slaves to be savages as the Europeans called them. If they were to be, then the European slave traders and planters were also savages. Africans who engaged in wars and raiding for slaves did so because there were European buyers. They procured these slaves through the use of stronger military power motivated by materialistic interests. The same forces of power inequality and materialism were responsible for European accumulation of capital and subsequent development of industrialization. In view of all the above, the idea of civilizing mission was a camouflage for sustaining European industrialization through securing land whose people would serve as consumers of industrial products and producers of raw materials.

The scramble for Africa that followed confirmed the rhetoric of African laziness but the reality of the African environment. The Europeans had attributed Africans’ lack of civilization to laziness and “tropical exuberance”. Yet, they all wanted a place under the sun because of their belief that the centre of Africa abound in abundant varieties of minerals. This is a fact. We know today that various types of minerals are found all over Africa. Another fact is that Africans were not lazy, for they

worked and produced the raw materials and other resources that led to the expansion of industrial capitalism in Europe. This was why Europeans were not prepared to leave the continent until circumstances forced them to do so. Clearly therefore, all the phrases used to give Africa and Africans a bad image are mere rhetoric, intellectually and scientifically spurious. They were initially meant to justify the imposition of colonial rule and exploitation of African human and material resources.

However, colonial rule was fundamental and therefore epochal in African history. It disrupted if not erased African achievements before the coming of Europeans. It imposed European civilization on Africa and made it the only mode of existence. When Africa is judged from that viewpoint, it is backward but its people are no more savages, barbarians or people without any civilization.

This is the dilemma of African existence. In the post independence era when Africans are expected to be free, they become attached more to European civilization which is now referred to as development. Development which is a natural human endowment has now become another way of advancing European political, economic and cultural values. Judged by the parameters of this Eurocentric conception of development, Africa falls into the third and last category. The same category which Europeans have put it between 18th and middle of the 20th century. In other words, Africa in spite of independence and socio-economic changes, has remained in the same category of backwardness in relation to Europe. What is responsible for this?

There are two major schools of thought in answer to this question. The first, Externalist, believes that European political and economic activities on the continent before and during the colonial period were majorly responsible for Africa's underdevelopment. The other school, the Internalist, is of the view that Africans are by their actions and inactions responsible for the relative backwardness of their continent. It is true that

European colonial rule in all its ramifications was detrimental to the real development of Africa. The whole colonial system was designed to keep the territories as an economic estate⁴² in which the people were to be politically, and culturally subservient to the colonial rulers perpetually. However, independence even if it was given reluctantly, provided the opportunity for Africans to channel an indigenous approach to development and break the chain of wardship and dependency. This was not done. Instead, their leaders hypocritically follow the political and economic development agenda designed for them by Europeans. They worsened this by visionlessness, corruption and parochialism which encourage ethnic confrontations, civil wars, political instability, continuous economic decline and worsening standard of living of the generality of the people.

In human history, it is natural for people who have advantage of military and political power to lord it over others who are relatively weaker. After the ruled have successfully struggled to liberate themselves, they then learn from their past mistakes of weakness and from the strength of their former lords to improve themselves by surpassing the power of their former conquerors and even dominate them in return. Africans have not done that. Therefore, Europeans are not to blame for underdeveloping Africa first through colonial rule and then neo-colonialism but Africans themselves who have allowed the underdevelopment to continue.

VI. Conclusion

Africa started its historical existence with a good image as the birth place of man and where man first created civilizations. However, Europe due to selfish interests imposed a new but negative image on the continent and its people. This image was manifested and consolidated by colonial rule. Although, Africa has liberated itself from that rule, part of the negative image has remained as a result of Africans' inability to

delink themselves from European concept and strategy for development which in reality is an euphemism for European civilization.

Consequently, Africa today remains the most wretched of all the continents judged from the indices of indigenous and European human development. This is in spite of its abundant, human and material resources. It is as a result of this parlous state of the continent that some scholars believe the Garden of Eden, Africa, is in decay.⁴³ That Africa has these resources means it has the potentiality to be a continent on the top of the development ladder. This is why many Europeans refer to the continent as “the sleeping giant”.⁴⁴ The giant can rise from that sleep if the following recommended actions are taken:

1. There must be a change in the nature, character and attitude of political leadership in Africa. African leaders at national, continental and international fora always show, through their speeches, appreciation of economic and political condition of the continent. These are often followed by adoption of economic and political policies as well as programmes which are, however, either implemented shoddily or not executed at all. In this way, resources are wasted and underdevelopment deepens. Consequently, the leaders are more of talkers than doers. Therefore, a new leadership knowledgeable about African past, of vision, determination, consistency and commitment should be insisted upon by the African people.
2. There must be a de-emphasis and demonetization of politics. In Africa, politics has become the most lucrative occupation. Since the 1970s, African parliamentarians have been the most highly paid in the world. This trend has continued that today substantial part of national revenues is used to cater for the salaries and allowances of the peoples’ representatives. Consequently, while the

latter are getting richer, the people who elected them, the real owners of the power are getting poorer. This is one explanation why Africa has the largest number of poor people in the world. This is also why politics in Africa is politics of the belly ⁴⁵ or of sharing the national cake, and its reverberations in undemocratic elections and lack of good governance. In view of this, salaries and allowances of parliamentarians and political office holders must be reduced drastically. Representation in parliament should be a part-time affair and therefore members should receive sitting allowances only.

3. Closely related to 2 above is the urgent need to reduce scale and cost of governance in Africa. This should start first with expanding the size of constituencies so as to reduce the number of representatives. Similarly, the size of government should be pruned down by reducing the number of ministers, advisers, assistants, aids etc. African economy cannot support this. It is a drain on the resources of the continent and it is partly responsible for the inability of most African states to provide the necessary social and transportation infrastructures for the people.
4. As part of reducing cost of governance in Africa, the syndrome of First Ladies should be minimized. A situation where First Ladies operate almost parallel governments with funds certainly from the state and with complements of staff is an abuse of position of the executive, a waste of resources and fundamentally illegal. In Nigeria for example, apart from the First Lady of the nation, there are First Ladies of the thirty-six states if that of the Federal Capital Territory is excluded. Many of the wives of the 774 Chairmen of Local Government and Area Councils also consider themselves as First Ladies. Most of the First Ladies float non-governmental

organizations. These organizations often die a few years after their husbands left office thus showing that they were brought about and sustained by circumstances of political power. Consequently, the whole development is one of the major reasons that account for why many Africans hanker after possessing that power and consequently make politics a do-or-die business.

5. Africa needs to adopt appropriate political and economic institutions and attitude. Following uncritically prescriptions of international financial institutions and organizations such as IMF, World Bank, London Club, Paris Club, European Union and G8 countries will keep Africa perpetually underdeveloped. I disagree with scholars such as Frantz Fanon, S. Amin and others, who advocate that Africa should break away completely from Europe. Instead, Africa should use the knowledge of modern science and technology which is now open to all human beings to produce their own goods, create employments for youths, in order to liberate their innate innovative abilities and create an economy that will surpass that of Europe in level of production, efficiency and quality. Other countries such as Russia, Japan, China and Korea have done this. However, it needs the type of leadership referred to above.
6. Turning Africa from an underdeveloped to a developed or a senior member of advanced continents of the contemporary world also requires vigilant, articulate and organized civil society. The growth of civil society in Africa has been constrained by years of military dictatorship and subsequently by inadequate educational facilities and of course poverty. Civil society and African peoples generally have been neglected in the formation of the OAU and African Union. The latter gives a peripheral involvement to civil society in APRM, but this has no

significant effect. The civil society organizations should be the guardian of the conscience of the people. And to be able to do this, I suggest the formation of these organizations at the national, sub-regional and continental levels. The continental one is to be called African Civil Societies Union. These organizations will constantly monitor governments at all levels and comment on all issues affecting governance in each country and the continent as a whole.

7. In the transformation to a new and respectable Africa, the youths must be more intellectually involved. This they can do by having knowledge about where their continent was coming from and where it is today, its conjectured and real perception by the outside world dominated by Europeans and where it should be if they are going to be accepted as equal human beings in future. In order to be able to do this, I recommend that a course to be titled “The Image of Africa” should be included in the degree programme of African universities. A similar course bearing the title “Africa in the European Imagination” is currently mounted at Birkbeck, University of London. University of Ilorin which is currently the trailblazer of the new generation of African Universities should take the lead in this.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen, if the actions recommended above are implemented, Africa will witness positive and concrete transformation not only in its political, economic and social existence but also in its image. But this requires individual and collective commitment, perseverance and sacrifices.

VII. Acknowledgements

At this juncture, I want to thank my late father, Alhaji Lasisi Akanbi Rufayi, for his interest in sending me to pursue Western education earlier than my peers and before the Free Primary Education System of the old Western Region and in taking interest in all my academic activities and work experiences until his death. Of course, my mother who is still alive loves us her children so much that she toiled ceaselessly to supply our material needs. She was immensely assisted by our late Grand mother. I am indeed grateful to both of them.

I cannot but appreciate all my children both the biological and kinship as well as my siblings both maternal and paternal under the headship of Chief Imam of Oyo, Alhaji Mos'ud Abdul Ganiy Adebayo Ajokidero III for being a source of joy and companionship to me and particularly since 2005 when my wife, Princess Nimat Taiwo Lasisi (nee Adeyeye) passed away. I started writing this lecture intending to give it at the end of 2003 but she fell sick from August that year. I thank all those who commiserated with us then. However, my special gratitude goes to Hajia Aishat Raji who has remained with the children as the mother and guardian for the past six years, Professor Is-haq Oloyede, then Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Professor S.O. AbdulRaheem, former Vice-Chancellor, for staying with me until the early hours of the following day and together ensuring that a post mortem examination was carried out on the corpse as well as organizing the interment activities. My profound appreciation also goes to the former Chairman of Council, Emeritus Professor Ayo Banjo, Professor, S.O. Amali, the immediate past Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and the entire members of the University of Ilorin Management for the financial support for her medical treatment in London and subsequent burial.

This lecture today will not have been possible without the knowledge and training I received from all my teachers right from the primary school to the University. I am particularly

indebted to late Elder Aiyelagbe, my principal at LATTC, Iwo Road, Ibadan, who gave me two pounds in 1966 to sit for ‘G.C.E. ‘O’ Level examination of the University of London, Professor, S.O. Agbi, who kindled my interest in International History, Professors T. Tamuno, Ade Ajayi, Obaro Ikime, late Professor J.A. Atanda and Professor B.O. Oloruntimehin both of who supervised my Ph.D. Thesis and fortified my spirit of patience and humility as well as the technique of critical analysis. My sincere appreciation goes to my academic colleagues in the Faculty of Arts and other Faculties of the University of Ilorin for the intellectual comradeship over the years. I thank also the Vice-Chancellor, Management and Academic Staff particularly that of College of the Humanities Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin

I am also grateful to all my students, past and present especially those of Oro Grammar School, Oro, former Kwara State College of Technology, Ilorin, Universities of Ilorin, Old Ondo State, Ado-Ekiti, Delta State, Abraka, Ajayi Crowther, Oyo and Al-Hikmah, Ilorin. They have been the source of my academic strength, satisfaction and happiness. I thank members of the Muslim Committee of Friends Oyo and Committee of Friends of Late Dr. Jelil Amoloye both for the spiritual encapsulation.

Finally, I give all gratitude, praises and glory to Almighty Allah for His mercy and blessings on me right from the beginning of life and making it possible for this lecture to be given today and for all of you here to be the audience. He is the Designer and the Maker of all things. He is the one Who created us as Africans. We cannot change our race but with His mercy we can change the present unsavoury image which our relations with Europeans have created for us and ourselves have perpetuated by acts of omission and commission.

Thank you.

Notes and References

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