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REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND THE IMPERATIVE OF CULTURAL REHABILITATION: A PHILOSOPHER'S RESPONSE TO THE ISSUES OF DEPENDENCY AND INTEGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

Kolawole Aderemi Owolabi

Introduction

The appreciation that economic integration is the ideal strategy for development motivated the formation of many integration institutions in Africa. One of these institutions is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which was formed with the objective of integrating the nation-states of West Africa and thereby serving as the "vanguard integration scheme for other sub-regional groups in Africa."¹ But ECOWAS, like other such institutions that have preceded it in Africa, has not realized the objective of integration. According to many, the failure of integration processes in Africa is fundamentally due to the situation of the continent as a dependent one.²

There is an irony and circularity surrounding this problem. The aim of integration in the first instance, "is to free the continent from external dependence,"³ yet, this process of integration itself is being frustrated by the dependency situation. To resolve this dilemma, there is a need for us to get to the root of the problem by analyzing the policy of cultural imperialism operated by the imperial powers during the pre-colonial and post-colonial era. The argument of this paper is that the problem of dependency and underdevelopment can only be resolved if we appreciate it as basically a

¹ Adebayo A. Adedeji, quoted by M.I. Abutundu, "Under-Development and Collective Self-Reliance in the Economic Community of West African States" Doctoral Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1988, p.11.

² Many Scholars have expressed this fact, prominent among them are: Samir Amin, "Under-Development and Dependence in Black Africa: Origins and Contemporary Forms," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 10 (1973): 503-524; Claude Ake, "Explanatory Notes on the Political Economy of Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14 (1976): 1-23; O. Nnoli, "External Constraints on Pan-African Integration," *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs* 4 Nos., 1 and 2, pp. 60-70.

³ M.I. Abutundu, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

product of cultural imperialism put in place by the metropolitan powers in Africa.

Our objective in this paper is to argue that the aim of economic cooperation among West African nations can only be realized if we neutralize the effect of cultural imperialism by a process of cultural rehabilitation. By this, we mean a reorientation of the mental attitude of the people in order to make them appreciate the essence of cultural dependence and the effect of it on their development. We desire to put in place a philosophy of integration that shall delink the people from the metropolitan countries and make them look inward and appreciate the need for integration with other peoples of the sub-region.

This essay is a philosopher's response to the issues of dependency and integration as they relate to West Africa. The work is therefore an exercise in the philosophy of culture. It aims at making a critical analysis of the problem of cultural dependence and how it affects the development of the society. For the sake of integration and development, the attitude of the African people(s) need to be transformed such that they can become conscious of the effect of their dependency and how to delink in order to attain development in every aspect of life.

Cultural Imperialism: Conceptual Clarification

The concept of culture that we will employ here is wider than that used by some scholars. We intend to see culture neither in the narrow sense of a "Folkloric epiphenomenon"⁴ nor in the elitist connotation, but as "the sum total of the original solutions that a group of human beings invent to adapt to their natural and social environment."⁵ Culture, therefore, for us, is the totality of communal epistemology originated for the survival and progress of the community. The appropriate definition of culture that we intend to use in this essay is the one supplied by Thierry G. Verhelst in his book: *No Life Without Root: Culture and Development*. He defines culture as the totality of:

⁴ Thierry G. Verhelst, *No Life Without Roots: Culture and Development*, trans. B. Cumming (London: Zed Books, 1990), p.18.

⁵ De Varine, Quoted in *Ibid*.

...know how, technical knowledge, customs of food and dress, religion, mentality, values, language, symbols, socio, political and economic behavior, indigenous methods of taking decisions and exercising power, methods of production and economic relations and so on.⁶

On the basis of this conceptualization of culture, we can deduce that cultural imperialism is the attempt by one society to dominate the entire operation of another society. We can see on the basis of this wide definition of culture that all ramifications of imperialism, whether economic or political can basically be subsumed under cultural imperialism. Thus the political and economic systems of any society are aspects of the culture of the society. Cultural imperialism has been described as purely cultural invasion by Paulo Freire. According to him, "all domination involves invasion."⁷ He goes further to say that cultural imperialism is the process whereby a society loses its culture and its originality to a foreign one.

In this view, the effect of such an imperialism on the culture of the people is that it stifles the authenticity and virility of the invaded culture. This is the most tragic aspect of the whole phenomenon, for according to Freire, "the more the invaded mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes."⁸ This tragic experience was described by Baba Miske as an "assassination of civilization." The invaded societies, according to him, "remain in a state of shock like a body without a soul."⁹

The submission of a society's spiritual foundation to an alien culture, which is precisely the essence of cultural imperialism, is the reason for the dependency and underdevelopment of African nations today. The issue of cultural imperialism and how it produces underdevelopment is the theme of Verhelst's seminal book which we quoted earlier. Verhelst argues that the third world countries become subservient to the metropolitan powers because of the erosion of their indigenous cultures. He argues that these countries would have developed if they had been left to operate on the basis of their indigenous cultures, because such cultures "contain within them the seeds necessary to give birth to societies which differ from the

⁶ Verhelst, op.cit., p. 18.

⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 121.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁹ Verhelst, op. cit., p. 19.

standardized and devitalized model that has spread over the world."¹⁰ This essay agrees with the premise of Verhelst: that cultural imperialism is at the root of present day underdevelopment in the third world. We will go further to maintain that part of the strategies of cultural imperialism is to divide such peripheral nations and prevent them from interacting with one another. The reason should be very clear; such integration of the victimized nations will not only breed solidarity among the nations, but also encourage them to refocus their attention from the values of the metropolitan powers and make them appreciate their own culture and that of their neighbors.

Cultural Imperialism In The West African Sub-Region

The sub-region of West Africa extends from Mauritania in the northwest to Nigeria in the southeast. The sub-region, according to Asiwaju, "in strictly economic questions formed a complex whole which dates back to antiquity."¹¹ But the semi-homogenous nature of West Africa was seriously disturbed by the colonial experience. As it has been emphasized by many scholars, the purpose of this European penetration was to exploit the resources of the colonized nations for the development of their own nations. Like other African societies, the West African sub-region, according to historical evidence, possesses a unique socio-economic and political behavioral pattern which rests on the spiritual ethos of communalism and cooperation among groups and individuals. There was a tradition of agriculture and the various societies cultivated crops favorable to their geographical zones which were exchanged among themselves. It is this factor that motivated the establishment of many trade networks (the most popular of which was the trans-Saharan trade network) where food products and other articles from the arid zones were exchanged for those from the forest regions.

Historical evidence also establishes the presence of well-organized, though pre-modern, industries for the production of textile materials, pottery, leather materials, etc. Such local industries were in existence in places like Akwette, which is noted for Kente textile materials, Awka

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹ A.I. Asiwaju, "Socio-Economic Integration of the West African Sub-region in Historical Context," in Akinyemi and Falegan, eds., *Readings and Documents on ECOWAS* (LAGOS: NLLA, 1984), p. 34.

(Eastern Nigeria) for her iron industry, Kano (Northern Nigeria) for her clothes and leather work. We know for instance, that clothing materials from as far as Kano were in vogue in the Ivory Coast of the nineteenth century.¹² The position that we want to underscore here is that this culture of economic and political interaction of the West African sub-region was seriously disrupted with the coming of the Europeans, especially with the commencement of colonialism and the balkanization of the sub-region into nation-states. The artificial barriers totally frustrated and terminated the existing sub-regional interaction.

Colonialism has been devastating in West Africa because it seized the initiative from the colonized people. It was a period of culture crisis. The whole cultural ethos that had sustained them for so long was assaulted and the people could not put up effective defense. As Professor Ajayi opined, the West African sub-region during colonialism lost its "right to self-steering, their freedom of choice as to what to change in their own culture or what to copy or reject from other culture[s]."¹³ The sub-region then had to depend on the foreign invaders to dictate new standards and new values for them. All these were imposed by the colonizers. The totality of the spiritual and material ethos supplied by the Western countries were those that would favor maximum exploitation of the sub-region rather than those that would be beneficial to the colonies.

The fundamental objective of the policy of cultural imperialism of the European powers was precisely to "look for surplus value whenever it [could] be extracted."¹⁴ For the sake of European industries, new markets for raw materials and excess products were sought throughout the world. West Africa, like other African regions, was seen as a ready victim for this because of her susceptibility. But the West African market needed to be re-oriented for this purpose. It was in the bid to realize this objective that the whole package of cultural imperialism was delivered to Africa. To achieve this objective, the imperialist had to alienate the people totally from their culture. The Western society mobilized all ideas to achieve this valued goal. With this, the spirit of imperialism, which started in Europe during the

¹² Richard Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman* (Westminster: Achibald Constable and Co., 1988), pp. 238-241.

¹³ J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions under Colonialism," in T. Ranger, ed., *Emerging Themes of African History* (Nairobi, 1968), pp. 190-191.

¹⁴ O. Nnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

Renaissance, made a debut in West Africa. With the commencement of this spirit, the intellectual culture of Europe was directed towards this goal. It began with philosophy and a new philosophy of culture that was very ethnocentric was developed.¹⁵ A new scientism was propagated that would further their goal of cultural imperialism and derogate the culture of the colonized. The Western culture was also presented as the superior culture and the need was created for its universalization. The propagation of this cultural imperialism then became the dominant theme of the entirety of Western social science.

This cultural imperialism for the sake of the exploitation of weaker countries has been called many names. Recently, Professor Amin tagged it Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism, according to him, is a distortion "...albeit a systematic and important one from which the majority of dominant social theories and ideologies suffer."¹⁶ Eurocentrism, he continues:

...is a paradigm, which like all paradigms, functions spontaneously, often in the great areas of seemingly obvious facts and common sense, it manifests itself in a variety of ways, as much in the expression of received ideas, popularized by the media, as in the erudite formulations of specialists in different areas of social science.¹⁷

The objective of cultural imperialism is precisely to remove the cultural foundation of the society. When such a policy is effectively carried out, the entire collective consciousness of a people is eroded. The society, therefore, submits its independence to the external nation from where all its values and aspirations will be determined.

The most devastating aspect of cultural imperialism in the West African sub-region was the reorientation of the people's agriculture. In actual fact, agriculture has even been said to be synonymous with culture in

¹⁵ Virtually all Western philosophers of the time contributed their quota to this ethnocentric philosophy. Prominent among them are Jean Jacques Rousseau, Hegel, and Nietzsche. Even the radical philosophers Karl Marx and Engels encouraged this imperialism.

¹⁶ Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), p. VII-VIII.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

the etymological origin of the world.¹⁸ When the Romans of old spoke of culture, it was as an agricultural phenomenon. The artistic connotation, according to Hannah Arendt, even "concerned the incomparably close relationship of the Latin people to nature."¹⁹ We can therefore argue on the basis of this fact that the onslaught on the agricultural sector of West Africa marks the collapse of the indigenous culture. In fact, reorientation of the traditional agricultural practice in West Africa went a long way to influence the overall change in the totality of the culture of the people.

We know for instance, that European penetration into Africa introduced the spirit of mercantilism to our farmers. The farmers were by this development oriented to place their priority on how to maximize their profits and thereby enrich themselves through the growing of cash crops. In this way, farmers neglected their social responsibility to their society by failing to grow food crops for the sustenance of the community. We know specifically that the government also employed taxation to discourage food production and encourage crop production.²⁰ Thus the yam, maize and cassava growers of the forest zone became growers of cocoa, rubber, and coffee, while the millet, sorghum and rice-growing people of the savannah became cotton and groundnut growers. This in the long run accounted for the change in the people's nutritional habits. They now desire food crops imported from European countries. The people became producers of what they cannot consume and consumers of what they cannot produce.

The impact of this colonial domination on the totality of the culture also manifested itself in the industrial and trade sectors. For instance, the local industries were frustrated because they had to compete with colonial nations' advanced industrial technology. As a result, local industries collapsed. They also gave way because of the policies and activities of the supposed umpires in the competition, the colonial governments, who were very partial. The trading network that was hitherto in existence in the sub-region collapsed because of the artificial barriers that discouraged inter-regional trade and promoted a uni-dimensional and vertical trade pattern

¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises In Political Thought* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961), p. 212.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ G.D. Webb, "Culture and Environment," in Lloyd Thompson and Dapo Adelugba, eds., *Culture and Civilization* (Ibadan: Afrika-Link Books, 1993), p. 41.

between the West African people and the Europeans, with the latter deciding the terms of trade.

We need to discuss emphatically the effect of colonialism on the African mode of commerce because the impact of the European method of commerce was so negative. With the penetration of this region by the Europeans, the spirit of mercantilism, which is purely egoistic, was introduced to pollute the commercial operation of the region. Hitherto, commerce in Africa was carried out not for profit maximization alone; neither did it operate on the basis of cut-throat competition. Rather its essential objective was communal sustenance. The interest of the society in this type of indigenous commercial operation is more important than the interest of the individual. Every trader in the African pre-colonial society ought to be aware of his responsibility not to his pocket alone, but also to the community; enrichment of the individual is not as important as the overall welfare of the community. All aspects of this commercial ethos disappeared with the coming of the Europeans. In its place, we have the vices of egoism and absolute maximization of profit at the expense of the community and humanity.²¹

The impact on West Africa of the Western Nations' cultural imperialism can be seen in two stages. First was the stage of colonialism when the active connivance of the missionaries uprooted the cultural ethos of Africa. During this stage, the seed of dependency and underdevelopment was sown, which later yielded fruits in the days of political independence. These fruits of cultural imperialism matured during the post-colonial period and were sustained with Western propaganda. In light of the above, the West Africa of today is quite different from pre-colonial West Africa. The sub-region today can hardly lay claim to any cultural foundation; rather, it is floating on the surface, seeking support from diverse cultures. This cultural confusion suffered by the sub-region as a result of the colonial experience has had a deep-rooted negative impact on the entire society.

Cultural Rehabilitation, Cultural Integration and Economic Cooperation

The basic argument of this present discourse is that the desire to form regional integration in West Africa and any other sub-region of Africa

²¹ Samir Amin, "Underdevelopment and Dependence," *op. cit.*

can only be fully realized if we first embark on the conscious effort of cultural rehabilitation. It is only when there is a total rehabilitation of the people of this region after the experience of cultural imperialism, that the basis of unity which is cultural homogeneity and cultural identity can be restored. This is the argument that we intend to amplify in this section.

Regional integration has been conceived of as an attempt by nation-states to foster economic cooperation through the breaking down of barriers that hinder the free flow of goods and services. It is believed that the integration of nations' economies will promote rapid economic development. The ECOWAS treaty says that the body is "to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity." The question that we are asking now is this: Are the people of West African states prepared to cooperate and unite their markets? The answer to this question, judging from the state of things in ECOWAS, is that integration has remained at the level of sloganeering. The "will" appears not to have squared up with the "wish." Integration, we must emphasize here, is not effected by treaties and policy statements of government officials alone, but by the conscious efforts of the people that constitute the nation-states interested in cooperation. Unless there is the conscious desire for unity, integration will remain at the level of rhetoric.

Our position, specifically, is that there is the need for the people of this sub-region to be rehabilitated after the liberation from the shackles of cultural imperialism. It is only this rehabilitation that can untie the strong psychological bond that ties each nation of the sub-region to the metropolitan powers of the West.

Economic integration, conceived of from the philosophical perspective, like all economic issues and problems, can be a value problem. The failure of the nations of West Africa to integrate is because the values and desires of the people of the sub-region are not for products within the sub-region, but for products from the metropolitan nations. Unless there is a change in value, what I shall call "transvaluation of values," the benefits of integration shall be reaped only by the foreign companies and not the people of the sub-region.

It is imperative to point out that the same value problem that hampers regional and sub-regional integration is also responsible for the failure of national integration. It is the same problem that will prevent a Nigerian citizen from buying the rice grown in Sokoto that will also

prevent him from buying rice grown in Sierra Leone. The same reason that will prevent the Nigerian elite from buying local textile materials made in Abeokuta will also restrain him from buying those from Ghana and Ivory Coast. The reason is psychological; it is a product of many decades of orientation towards Western values and Western goods and services. To reverse this situation there must be a conscious reorientation of the tastes and desires of the people for the locally produced goods. This can come only through the process of cultural rehabilitation.

Put differently, there must be a conscious effort to "transform the externally induced pattern of wants and consumption which are not related to the needs of the majority and the resources available locally...."²² This will involve a deliberate process of undoing the impact of cultural imperialism on the people of the sub-region. Cultural imperialism, as we have consistently maintained, alienated the people from their cultural roots and thereby eroded the basis of their unity. Cultural rehabilitation, on the other hand, aims at taking the people back to their cultural roots. It aims at fostering cultural identity and homogeneity which is the only path to economic cooperation in the sub-region. Cultural rehabilitation includes a process of enlightenment. The people should be made aware of their situation as alienated people and the effect of such alienation on the totality of the sub-regional society. Cultural rehabilitation should make the people appreciate their past. It is a realization of the present predicament, and a rigorous analysis of it for the purpose of attaining a different and more viable future.

The discussion of the cultural aspect of imperialism has been a dominant theme of many disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences in Africa this century. Unfortunately, however, this discussion has been dominated by the myth that cultural unity exists in Africa. Granted that a sort of identity existed in the pre-colonial Africa, the experience of colonialism was devastating enough to erode this foundation. It was, in fact, the popularity of this belief in African identity that gave the impression that integration could be attained without a proper appreciation of the effect of cultural imperialism. Our own submission is that both cultural rehabilitation and cultural integration must go hand in hand with the quest for economic integration.

²² O. Nnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

Historical experience has shown that cultural homogeneity will always precede any form of integration, political or economic. Unless citizens of diverse societies are already culturally integrated, that is, share the same cultural affinities, they do not clamor for integration, political or economic. The experience of Germany before their recent second unification is a clear example of the fact that when there is cultural homogeneity, it is very easy to forge economic or political unity.

The choice of the word "rehabilitation" in this essay is deliberate; we are employing it to describe the next stage in the bid to culturally emancipate the culturally-disoriented people of West Africa. The first stage is cultural liberation. Just as a prisoner needs rehabilitation after gaining his freedom, so do the people of Africa deserve to be rehabilitated back to their culture after the liberation brought about by political independence. The process of cultural rehabilitation is similar to the process of "rerooting" advocated by Verhelst for all the culturally-alienated people of the third world.²³ "By rerooting itself in its collective memory, a people which has been dispossessed of itself can then try to reconstruct its identity and find necessary assurance to fight urgent battles and make a new start."²⁴

Our concepts of cultural rehabilitation and cultural integration should not lose sight of the earlier conceptual clarification of culture. Therefore, cultural rehabilitation involves the act of bringing the people of this sub-region back to fully appreciate the totality of the spiritual and material development of their society. Cultural integration implies a unified and communal knowledge of this spiritual and material development in its totality by all members of the sub-region.

Our new theory of cultural rehabilitation shall give prominence to the "communication theory of integration" which emphasizes the need for a constant link between the nations that intend to integrate. This concept takes it as very important that the nations of the sub-region, having suffered disintegration as a result of imperialism, must evolve a system of constant communication on the various activities taking place in the nation-states. It is only when there is interaction that a citizen in a particular country will know what is going on in another country within the sub-region.

²³ Verhelst, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The rehabilitation that we are advocating does not rest on the belief that traditional African culture in its totality can be recaptured for the people. Such a return to the traditional culture is not possible and is not desirable. The culture that we seek to make the basis of our rehabilitation is the "transitional" culture to borrow the word from Thompson.²⁵ Thompson was in agreement with Ekeh and Ajayi that the colonial epoch, being a very significant one in the history of West Africa, has created an unsettled situation which is generating an evolution of culture.²⁶ The debate has been prevalent among scholars over whether Africa should return to the traditional culture or integrate herself with "modern" culture.²⁷ Our own position here is that it is not a choice for us to make, since we have already been fully integrated into the material aspect of Western culture. West Africa, and in fact the totality of the African continent, has enjoyed the fruits of the material culture of the West. Calling for a return to the indigenous culture would be unrealistic. A man who has been working in an air-conditioned office will find it difficult to part with these conveniences, which are no longer luxuries, but necessities. The best we can do is to see how we can bring in our spiritual ethos to guide this material acquisition and how we can produce such materials within our society with minimum cost. It is also necessary to orient the citizens of the continent to appreciate that even if our technology is inferior to that of the Western society, it is still in their own interest to desire the locally-produced goods and services. The issue, of course, would not be that people should continue to consume inferior goods because they are produced locally. No amount of propaganda can make them yield to that. But the best approach is to let them realize that it is only by patronizing local industries that we can encourage our indigenous producers to improve the qualities of their products.

²⁵L.A. Thompson, "Some Problems of Democratization in African Traditional Societies" (Paper presented at the Classical Studies Association of Nigeria Conference on the Celebration of the 200 years anniversary of the discovery of democracy, June 1990).

²⁶ See P.P. Ekeh, "Colonialism and Social Structure" (Inaugural Lecture, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1988), and J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The Past in the Present: The Factor of Tradition in Development" (National Merit Award Lecture, Lagos, 1990).

²⁷ Professor Abiola Irele is an advocate of integration into the Western Modern culture. See especially F.A. Irele, "In Praise of Alienation" (Inaugural Lecture, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1982).

Concluding this section we want to submit that cultural rehabilitation, which can effect a situation of cultural integration, can only be realized if it is founded on a strong philosophical and ideological foundation. Unless the sub-region and in particular the secretariat of ECOWAS propagates the dynamic "philosophy of cultural integration," our dream cannot be fully realized. Western imperialism, as we know, rests on a philosophical and ideological foundation, though a perverse one, but its effectiveness is not in doubt. Good reason dictates that such an ideological weapon should be employed in our just war to neutralize the effect of Western imperialism on our culture and thereby forge a lasting cooperation among the nations of West Africa.

Conclusion: Towards a Philosophy of Cultural Integration in ECOWAS

Our proposal of cultural rehabilitation can only be effectively carried out through the vehicles of philosophy and ideology. The term philosophy and ideology are often confused, but they are different concepts. Philosophy in this context denotes the rigorous intellectual articulation of problems and supplying of solutions to them; whereas ideology means the packaging and propagation of such a solution among all citizens of the society. From this analysis, we can see that what we intend to do in this section is a philosophical exercise, albeit a limited one. The formulation of such a rigorous philosophy of integration shall be effected by an assembly of scholars and policy makers—ours is just a proposal. The ideology of cultural integration will come in when the totality of the philosophical idea moves from drawing board to the market place, that is, in the various vehicles of propagating it.

Philosophy operates from a problematic springboard. Our problem now is the dependency of West Africa and the hindrance that such a situation constitutes to the integration of West Africa. We must also acknowledge that our culture is not exonerated from the crisis. We must acknowledge that the indigenous culture, in as much as all cultures are dynamic, ought to be reviewed on the basis of contemporary demands which the traditional culture never envisaged. The fact that all cultures are today being contaminated by one another implies that the African culture must adjust and adapt.

The focal point of our philosophy of cultural integration is the survival of Africa which is at stake. A response to this threat calls for unity and cooperation of all aspects of the sub-region. The philosophy must operate with the realization that the principle that is sustaining imperialism is the principle of "divide and rule." We must, therefore, conceive of this sub-region as a unit in the struggle with external parties. The problem of a member must be seen as a problem of all. The essential theme of the philosophy of cultural integration is what I call the principle of "transvaluation of values." The whole of our present-day values, in as much as they are not promoting our struggle for survival, must be changed. There must be a total reorientation of our taste, fashion and habit for goods and services that will promote collective self-reliance. Any value that celebrates civilization from outside Africa must be jettisoned as a threat to our survival. This can be achieved if we put in place a consistent propaganda machinery in all countries of the sub-region for the promotion of this integration. It is at this level that the philosophy becomes an effective ideology.

There have been many attempts in the past to put the cultural struggle of the African people in theoretical and ideological perspective. There was Senghor's attempt, although it was regarded as nothing but "an intellectual play for the leisure-time of the ruling class."²⁸ There was also Biko's Black Consciousness Movement which aimed at liberating the people from political and economic domination. Third, there was the Tanzanian example initiated by Julius Nyerere. Most of these emancipation processes were effected in piecemeal manner without proper attention to the challenge posed by the totality of European imperialism.

For the sake of the integration of the West African sub-region in particular and Africa in general, and for the sake of the ultimate goal of development, there must be a conscious reflection on the totality of the colonial experience. We need to see the essence of colonialism in its manifold dimensions and the negative impact it has had on African people. It is true that with colonialism, Africa has been appropriated into the Western modern culture, but a philosophical critique of the culture must be done to enable us to see those aspects of that integrated culture that will

²⁸G. Grohs, "Difficulties of Cultural Emancipation in Africa," *The Journal of African Studies* 14 (1976): 77.

foster the development of Africa and those that will not. The essence of the cultural rehabilitation that we advocate in this essay is to awaken us to the need for conscious reflection and critique of the modern culture that we want to adopt. Cultural rehabilitation will make us aware of the need to synchronize our cultural policies and programs in the sub-region so that we can forge a common front in our competition with other societies that make up the global economic community. The realization that the spiritual foundation of any culture is the determining factor in the progress and development of the society is the motive behind our entire demand for cultural rehabilitation. It is only when our spiritual impetus is derived from our genuine root that our development can be guaranteed.

As we pointed out earlier, this present essay is the philosopher's reaction to the struggle to attain collective self-reliance through ECOWAS. Our thesis is that economic cooperation cannot be realized without the cultural rehabilitation of the West African people. Although this essay is particularly on West Africa, sub-regional integration institutions are a means to an end. The end is the total integration of Africa for the sake of development. It is expedient that we should work towards attaining a strong philosophy of cultural integration that will challenge the ideologies of the West that strive to disintegrate the African continent.