

6. **Culture and Development: The Kadung People of Plateau State in Perspective**

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Abstract

Colonial historiography has always dubbed African culture as barbaric, retrogressive and not worth studying. This notion has made many cultures in Africa including Nigeria, to drift into oblivion and gradually move towards extinction. This article explores the rich and developmental aspects of kadung culture as a way of debunking the fallacious Eurocentric belief. By way of conclusion it calls for the revival of the Kadung culture for better developmental strides.

Introduction

“...any community which seeks development and wants to have it must not say that the times are hard, but must employ every known trick in the book to have it...”

The celebration of *Naska Kadung* (Kadung day celebration) is an annual cultural event among the Kadung people of Kadung chieftdom in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. It is a period when all sons and daughters of the Kadung Nation from far and wide gather to either participate in one aspect of the cultural celebration or witness it. It is a thing of pride for Kadung indigenes to be part of the events. Most Kadung people look forward to this annual fiesta during the year and as a result, they make sure they save some amount of money to come and donate for various projects through the Kadung Chieftdom Development Association (the umbrella body of the Kadung people) for the development of Kadung land.

The proceeds realized from this annual celebration is committed to various areas of need in Kadung society, since the prevailing situation has made it virtually impossible for government to provide everything for all the communities in the state. This festival is thus developmental nature because contributory role inherent in it.

Conceptualizing Culture and Development: The Kadung Way

The term culture refers to the customs, arts and social institutions of a particular group or nation and in this dimension, that of the Kadung people. It is the totality of the people's way of life. Culture is gradually gaining prominence in developmental studies the world over. As stated by

Moncrieffe (2004) that:

“The social and cultural norms that people observe influence their attitudes, choices and future growth and that people need not...and in many societies often do not...act autonomously”.

The Kadung culture, of recent, has come under serious pressure due to modernity, change and globalization with consequences which have raised great concern. The celebration of Naska Kadung which has been in the doldrums for quite sometime now, is not a healthy development for the land as some progressive aspects of this celebration has robbed the land for show casting its rich culture and subsequent development of it folks politically, economically and socially.

Development on the other hand and in any human society such as Kadung society, is multifaceted. Looking at it from the point of view of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being or accumulation of wealth. From the societal point of view, development is more often related to economic development, hence it is the bedrock upon which social and political indices rest on. A society such as the Kadung Nation develops economically where its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment which is based on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology) and the manner in which work is organised. Supporting this view, Rodney (1986) noted that:

“Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature”.

Looking at it from immemorial, the Kadung Nation could be said to have witnessed development since the origin of man due to her capacity to scratch a living from the forces of nature. This is reflected in the early history of the Kadung society in the progress made from crude stone tools to the use of metals, the change over from hunting and gathering wild fruits to the domestication of animals and the growing of food crops and lastly, the improvement in the organisation of work from being an individualistic activity towards being an activity which takes the form of social character through the participation of many. It is in this light that the concepts, culture and development are viewed in relation to the Kadung situation.

Two Parallel Views of Culture

Some scholars have continued to contest the viability of cultural practices in any society which seeks development like the Kadung nation while others believe that there are cultural practices that enhance development depending on ones concept of development. This has led to the emergence of two sharp opposing views on the conception of culture for development.

The first school of thought consists of group theorists of who see culture as inherently destructive. These theorists, as observed by Douglas (2004) argue that culture is inimical to development; they believe that culture is an irrational force that generates inertia and culminates in economic backwardness. This theory of culture is referred to as the static view of culture. They further contend that western societies actively promote a certain culture of development which entails ideologies and policies and reject the position that culture is in fact, dynamically interactive and developing. It should be noted here, however, that such straight jacketed view of culture forget to take into cognizance or underestimate such very important aspects of culture prevalent among the Kadung people like the inculcation of moral education, craftsmanship, carving, arts, the clanship institution, which influences development.

The fluid theory of culture championed by Rao and Walton (2004) interprets culture in terms of rationality; that is the relationships among individuals within groups among groups and between ideas and perspectives. This view tries to avoid generalizations that are often used to categorize, confine and discriminate against groups and individuals, particularly African societies of which the Kadung Nation constitutes a part. For instance, one frequently cited phenomena in the fluid theory is the example of women who seem to be complicit in their subjugation and actively promote unequal gender relations that disfavour themselves and girls within their communities and homes in order to maintain balance. It is imperative to note that balance requires the integration of culture with other factors that influence identities such as class, occupation, gender, location and politics. It is the intermingling of all these sources of identity that produces heterogeneity, fluidity, change and development. In other words, relationship between groups and individual culminates into a balance which is a basic pre-requisite for development. This balance is achieved through cultural practices and beliefs.

Historical Development of Identities among the Kadung People

In pre-colonial Kadung, clans cum group of people who shared the same ancestor became the central units of administration. At other times, family relationship took precedence where the people were sparsely populated. Some of the clans like Kalan, Tilam, Ndubar, Ndas, Lagwan, Mborok, Tudak, Ku'ush etc settled on clan basis and had a variety of customary

practices, social and political structures unique to them. Some of these customs were developed through consensus and/or commonly accepted principles of mutual accountability and susceptibility such as between elders and non-elders and between the wealthy and the poor. The Kadung situation was similar to that of Uganda where Karugire (1980) observed that:

“Some individuals were wealthier than others just as some were poorer than others. The wealthy never lost sight of their obligations to the kinship group just as the poor members of such a group were never slow in claiming their due from them. The point is that nobody could become wealthy without reference to his kinship group for they must have helped him in numerous ways, although his personal merits may contribute towards his success. In such societies, there had never been room for individualism or impersonal governorship requiring equally impersonal regulations to service them”.

The above quotation showed how the fluid theory of relationality helped people and the Kadung society developed in the pre-colonial era and can still help the Kadung nation to develop. The clan system which the impact of modernity is fast eroding should therefore be seriously embraced and observed in view of its pertinence to societal growth. There were frequent inter-clan disputes as families and kins either tried to expand or defend their territories just as inter-clan marriages were common too and those who were assimilated adopted the practices of the clans they joined. As the Kadung people intermingled, people learnt new cookery, farming techniques and other cultural practices not known in their former clans

Influence of Culture on Kadung Development

Recent studies indicate that Africans still maintain a sense of pride in their countries, continent, and ethnic origins. Though their traditional values and ties have weathered overtime, their resuscitation for societal growth like the Kadung community is necessary for meaningful developments to take place. Among the Kadung people, the desire to uphold ethnic tradition is paramount hence cultural values, norms and allegiances influence development which can be seen in the following ways: -

i. Culture as a Constitutive Development

This implicitly implies that constitutional development at whatever tier of government draws its roots from the cultures of various ethnic groups. In the Kadung society, well-being is not merely perceived on the basis of one's per capita income but on the enrichment of human lives through cultural

expression and practice. The freedom and opportunity for cultural activities are among the basic freedoms and the enhancement of which can be seen to be constitutive of development. This aspect of Kadung culture is also supported by Human Development Report (2004) which states that:

“Cultural rights are fundamental to human rights and that cultural rights and recognition are central in promoting a culturally sensitive approach to development”.

While the report recommends fair representation by all cultural groups as basis for development, the situation the Kadung nation operates is one of constitutional marginalization instituted by colonialism and still sustained in the post-colonial social order, merely to protect the interest of some alleged superior ethnic groups.

ii. Culture as the Root of Educational Development

Education development all over the world largely strives on the decency with which the act of pedagogy is conducted. The issue of malpractices which educational administrators are battling to contain could be effectively curbed if policy makers will recognize the important role played by culture in this respect. The Kadung culture for instance inculcates moral education to its youths by teaching them the evils of immoral acts and the need to observe and respect constitutional laws. These youths who grow up with these doctrines hardly engage in educational misconduct thereby reducing to the barest minimum the incidences of educational fraud and as well, consciously or unconsciously contributing to the development of the educational system. Moreso, schools have been renovated and instructional materials provided with the proceeds realized from festivals like the Naska Kadung, thereby contributing immensely to the educational development of the Kadung people.

iii. Culture and Economic Development

In contrast to the Eurocentric view that African cultures are static and inimical to development, recently, attention to the worth of cultural industries, particularly how they promote development among ethnic groups have been re-emphasized. Kadung culture emphasizes self reliance through hard work in an individual's early life and frowns at over dependence for ones livelihood on his parents. This singular act makes people to cultivate the attitude fending for themselves at a very early age. As a result, they engage themselves in various economic ventures to make ends meet. This requires that policy makers should be sensitive to the sanctity of certain cultural products produced by the Kadung society and also ensure the provision of adequate measures to guarantee that such cultures will not be disadvantaged

in the process. Kadung cultures like olive oil processing, mat weaving, black smiting among others, have not been provided with the right atmosphere to flourish by policy makers in the 21st century.

Therefore, policies which promote cultural industries must be implemented on the power structures and relations across groups and design interventions in ways that the relations of power can be transformed to profit the least disadvantaged.

iv. Culture and Political Development

Similarly, culture influences how and why people participate in political activities and the types of social and support associations that exist. Right from the pre-colonial period, the Kadung society has been a democratic one from the family through the clanship system up to the highest level, which laid the basis for its political system. (leaders at of the community at various levels are elected by the people) However, this was disrupted by the colonial regime with the imposition of village heads in 1935 for its own administrative convenience as averred by Maigoro and Danfulani (1999). What colonialism did in the former Pankshin Division was the denial or alienation of some ethnic groups from any active political participation within the colonial hierarchical structure based on its erroneous racial concept of inferior status and socio-political values. The alienation of these groups from active political participation in colonial structures denied them the opportunity to develop politically and economically. The sad part of this is that these marginalization tendencies have continued to be perpetrated even after independence and into the 21st century. This position stems from the fact that since 1976 when Pankshin LGA was created by the General Obasanjo regime, a Kadung man was elected to be chairman of the local government for the very first time after 32 years of its existence. Other elective positions like the State House of Assembly, Federal House of Representative and senatorial seats have continued to remain elusive to the Kadung nation. This implies the indirect continuity of colonial injustices in post-colonial society. The Kadung culture which is democratic in nature and scope should be embraced by the Kadung people as a leading force towards the realization of its political development in the face of overwhelming odds. In order words, kadung culture instills political consciousness in the minds of Kadung people due to its inherent democratic tendencies right pre-colonial times.

Charting a Way Forward

Below are some viable alternatives toward the realization of cultural, social, political, economic and educational development of the Kadung Nation in the face of global competitive forces in the 21st century.

The leadership of Kadung Chiefdom Development Association (KCDA) which is the umbrella body of the Kadung Nation should explore ways of developing the cultural and economic resources of the Kadung people to develop their economic status as well as showcase the natural resources such as the olive oil industry, tin mining, mat weaving among others in order to attract investors. It is not sufficient to gather during Naska Kadung festival, dance and then go to sleep.

The Kadung people should rise above clanship, sectional and politics of marginalization which is inimical to unity in the Kadung society, so as to form a common front politically and otherwise. It is painful to state that the term "unity" in Kadung land exists in name only and not in practice. The newly elected political office holders should eschew party differences and chart a common course for the unity and development of the Kadung nation.

The Plateau State government should come to the aid of the Kadung community through the renovation and provision of learning materials both in primary and secondary schools in order to provide quality education to the young ones. Education is the bedrock for development in every ramification. Political office holders too should float a scholarship scheme to assist the less privileged finance their education.

Finally, policy makers and stakeholders both in Pankshin LGA and the state at large should always distribute appointments to various offices and developmental projects equally. Anything short of this breeds a feeling of political, social, educational and economic alienation. A situation where the Kadung nation has just produced the first chairman in the LGA after 32 years of its existence speaks volumes in terms of fairness and justice to all ethnic groups.

Conclusion

From the on-going discussion, there is no doubt that culture influences development in all its ramifications. It is thus incumbent upon the leadership of Kadung Cultural Development Association (KCDA) and the Government of Plateau State to ensure that the culture of the Kadung nation and cultures of other ethnic groups in Plateau State are preserved in whatever form as it influences development. From this brief social, ethical and cultural analysis of the Kadung social order based on concrete historical facts, it is now clear that the nature and scope of our problems as stated above calls for the Kadung people to reorient their beliefs, values and structures of meanings, authority and legitimacy codes in order to promote peace, justice, national unity and development.

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