

## **BASIC STUDIES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CHALLENGE FOR AFRICA**

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### **Introduction**

When Ruth Benedict first published her book, "Patterns of Culture" in 1934, she may not have envisaged that her psychological orientation would permeate western mentality towards the peoples of the world, as has happened. A casual observation of the manner in which people from the West and more recently, from the East interact with others, will reveal that such interaction is based on some assumptions about their own and the other people's national character. If this assumption is largely true, it may justify the curiosity shown by American, European and Asian nationals in studying people from other countries so as to interact with them in all spheres of life from a point of knowledge and thus, advantage.

This paper seeks to review the nature and purpose of national character studies in the early part of last century and the use to which such studies have been put. Using Kenya as a case study, the paper attempts to indicate how national character studies can be deployed for national integration and development, as Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of Kenya, tried to do early in his long political career. It is assumed that Americans, Europeans and Asians such as Japanese, interact with the rest of the world advantageously because of self-awareness of their own identity and awareness of other people's national character.

### **Background**

In 1934, Ruth Benedict broke new intellectual ground by publishing a book on an area of study that fell largely outside mainstream American anthropology at the time. Her main thesis was that a people's pre-disposition or personality is formed as part of the process of adaptation to the environment especially the cultural environment. Environment refers to physical, social and cultural milieu. Adaptation, she believes, produces a central personality theme of life or configuration, around which all others are organised and which becomes the basis not only of socialisation but also of beliefs and practices.

The importance of Benedict's perspective in understanding society is that; the careful study of societies provides case material for the study of cultural forms and processes. Such studies help us to differentiate between those responses that are specific to local cultural types and those that are general to mankind. Beyond this help us to gauge and understand immensely important role of culturally conditioned behaviour (Benedict. 1939:20). Franz Boas is in agreement with Benedict:

"The desire to grasp the meaning of a culture as a whole compels us to consider descriptions of a standardised behaviour merely as a stepping stone leading to other problems. We must understand the individual as living in his culture; and the culture as lived by individuals. The interest in these socio-psychological problems is not in any way opposed to the historical approach. On the contrary it reveals dynamic processes that have been active in cultural changes and enables us to evaluate evidence obtained from the detailed comparison of related cultures "(Benedict, 1959:XVI).

As is evident from the above statements, the configurationist or culture-patterning perspective of Ruth Benedict as a whole, has a certain amount of homogeneity in composition and character disposition. This should not imply absolute homogeneity any more than the generally accepted assumption among anthropologists, that culture is shared in a society or community, when we know well that we are referring to an ideal rather than real situation. In practice, culture is unequally shared depending on such factors as age, gender, socio-economic and political status, geographical location and so on, so that each sub-group has a slightly different understanding of the same culture.

Partly because Benedict's work was descriptive, it was largely dismissed as "too impressionistic", thus, lacking in empirical rigour (Nanda, 1984:55). One of the consequences was that her works were widely read but few of the readers were willing to use her perspective until such scholars as Ralph Linton, Abram Kardiner and Gora Du Bois improved on her perspective and introduced the concept of basic personality (Barnouw, 1963:148-153).

### Basic Personality

In 1939, Abram Kardiner published a book entitled "The individual and his society", in which the concept of basic personality was elaborated. The assumption in basic personality studies is that children socialised in the same society, and therefore environment, acquire similar childhood personality later in life because of different constitutional factors and personal experiences (Kardiner 1939, Barnouw, 1963:149). Basic personality is shaped by a combination of primary institutions which are closely related to productive (occupational) and reproductive systems which impinge on socialisation, and secondary institutions which are basically projective systems such as dreams, religion, poetry, songs etc. Both types of institutions interact with the environment and human beings so as to produce similar conditioning among those socialised in the society (Kardiner, 1945).

In a way, the basic personality perspective was a more readily accepted causal theoretical model than the configurationist perspective. The two, however, emphasised different aspects of the same thing; while the configurationist perspective identified the common features of culture that put pressure on the individual to conform, the basic personality perspective focussed on how the common features are arrived at in any society. These two perspectives emerged in the United States during the inter-war period, when the possibilities of travelling abroad for research purposes among non-European societies had become difficult due to the First and Second World Wars. As part of the American war machine, national character studies using basic personality and configurationist perspectives were initiated.

### National Character Studies

During the Second World War when it was difficult for American anthropologists to travel freely abroad for research purposes, former students of Franz Boas, notably, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Elliott Chapple, Clyde Kluckhohn, Geoffrey Gorer and Lawrence K. Frank, got an opportunity to apply the early ideas of Ruth Benedict refined by Abram Kardiner, on the happenings of the Second World War (Barnouw, 1963:213). As the United States entered the war, these anthropologists among others, finding themselves idle and with useful research skills, accepted when they were called upon to move to Washington to assist in the war machine by providing information to strategic

government departments. Their assumption was that if Americans learned about the character of their enemies and allies alike, it would help the war machine as they would fight knowing their strong and weak points. It was also important for the anthropologists to provide vital information on Americans, to enable the government and the military to sustain national motivation in the war. It is possible that such studies laid the foundation for comprehensive research in military activities in which Americans have been involved thereafter.

It is therefore, evident that as much as basic and national character studies could be useful in generating information for understanding other societies, they can also be used to study one's own society where it is necessary or when required. According to Moore, "National character refers to the basic and enduring personality traits of people in nation states" (Moore, 1996:801). National character studies, therefore, formulate generalisations about socially patterned attributes of personality at the national level. The basic assumption is that even though members of a nation may be diverse in certain ways, e.g. ethnicity, language or dialect, and thus culture, the very fact that they reside within the same political and geographical boundaries, identify or are identified as possessing the same or similar national identity, means that they share certain basic psychological traits and bases of understanding reality. This is partly because some of them may be related to one another by blood or marriage; they reside in similar physical and social environments; have a similar or unique life-style; are exposed to the same or similar institutions and institutional pressures, and may, as a consequence, be exposed to similar socialisation agents. As noted earlier there definitely will be some differences due to such factors as individual constitution, age, social group affiliation, geographical location, religion, gender, and so on.

In accepting in principle the utility of basic national character studies, which are configurationist in nature, one must have certain reservations (Moore, 1996:802). First, the original national character studies were carried out in the United States among prisoners of war because it was easier to do so, partly due to the war situation, and partly because people (especially Japanese) cut off from their country, leaders and families were subjected to conditions under which they could reveal everything without a guilt conscience (Barnouw, 1963:214). The validity and reliability of these studies could not, therefore, be assured. Secondly, these studies extrapolated the character of large populations by studying small samples. National character studies also assume intra-national homogeneity which is not the reality. These studies were, therefore, considered unscientific overgeneralizations that were basically subjective. This criticism had validity. The problem, at least for the people in technologically less developed societies, is that national character studies targeting them have persistently been used largely to their disadvantage.

### **Application of National Character Studies**

Interest in the study and understanding of people from other societies is not of recent origin. In fact, anthropology partly emerged as a separate discipline from philosophy and sociology to provide a better understanding of the similarities and differences among societies. This is part of the reason anthropology emphasises the study of culture, since it is believed to be the central factor that makes the difference. From mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the classical cultural evolutionary theory held sway, colonial officers, missionaries and some anthropologists tried to understand the "others", especially those in technologically less developed societies, from this perspective. Although the evolutionary perspective has been criticised for being ethnocentric, the differences in culture and lifestyles

among the people's of the world have continued to provide raw data for comparative and differential characterization of the people.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, people in technologically less developed societies were to be understood so as to show them the way to "civilisation", through colonialism, missionary activities and international trade. During the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, understanding the people in technologically less developed societies has aimed at enabling the Western and Eastern countries to assist them to adopt democratic forms of governance, patriotism, responsibility and accountability. The underlying theme in what the Western world and more recently, the Eastern world have done through development assistance to Africa, with all the accompanying conditionalities, has been globalisation, or westernization.

There is no doubt that, like colonialism, globalization can only be of greater advantage to the Western and Eastern countries which are miles away in technological advancement, military prowess and standards of living. In order to sustain this lead, nationals of these countries are facilitated with handsome grants to go and study those areas of current or future political or economic interest, in addition to in-country basic and applied research. Kwesi Prah observes that, the establishment of African studies centres in the West and East is not for nothing. In fact, it is not simply aimed at explaining the "other" (Prah, 1998.31). It is a strategic multi-purpose project aimed at firstly, discovering the weaknesses and strengths of people in other societies in terms of character, and secondly, precisely identifying resources of strategic importance to the technologically advanced countries. Recent American military activities around the world have cast doubt on the assumption that laser-guided missiles can target specific tents as in Libya, or buildings where intelligence information collected on the ground is absent. Spies come to places like Africa in various forms, as scholars on research assignments, volunteers on community projects, missionaries, expatriate technical staff for technological transfer, advisors to the government, tourists, and so on. These people provide detailed information on people of other countries. It is, therefore, no wonder that many foreign nationals possess very detailed information about the people from technologically less developed countries. What is striking is that an individual member of the target country is treated in official and private circumstances and capacities as a national of a specific society or country. When I last visited the United States, for example, as we disembarked from the plane we were directed into three queues — one for Americans, the other for Nigerians and another for "others". These queues were not for convenience only. At least the Nigerians were being considered on the basis of the stereotype attached to their nation, even though not all Nigerians are international drug peddlers. Early in 1999, I visited both Holland and Israel; and coincidentally, people in both countries responded to me as a Kenyan in most negative terms because of the stereotype among donor countries and international NGO's that Kenyans are corrupt from top to bottom and nothing in Kenya works, due to poor governance, lack of democracy and lack of responsibility and accountability. Many European countries have of course stopped development assistance to Kenya citing the same reasons, meaning that individual nationals from Kenya are treated as if they are all corrupt, undemocratic and without responsibility or accountability.

These instances of prejudice and segregation in international interactions are definitely irritating when applied generally. This is why the question as to how long Africans should endure such abuses becomes relevant. According to Sarah Nuttall, no solution to the problem can come about when African scholars continue to emphasize victimhood perpetrated by the rest of the international community, and when in an effort to cultivate African authenticity in scholarship, they reject existing theoretical frameworks in preference to those

deemed indigenous to Africa. This has resulted in a poverty of explanatory theoretical frameworks and paradigms relevant to Africa (Nuttall, 1999:54-55). In this regard African scholars are similar to the continent's politicians who delude themselves and their audience that Africa has unique problems requiring African solutions when, in fact, Africa's problems are problems of human nature which can be found anywhere else in the world with only minor differences.

From this perspective, we may not blame Western and Eastern scholars for seeing us in specific ways however unacceptable it may be to us. Kwesi Prah laments, "The question I ask African scholars is, do you seriously think they will see light our way? I think, slowly, they will; but I fear that, for the present, they may not be historically situated to do what many of us may consider the right thing" (Prah, 1998:28). Ruth Benedict also observed that: "Modern existence has thrown many civilisations into close contact, and at the moment the overwhelming response to this situation is nationalism and racial snobbery. There has never been a time when civilisation stood more in need of individuals who are genuinely culture-conscious, who can see objectively the socially conditioned behaviour of other peoples without fear and recrimination" (Benedict, 1959:10).

It is, therefore, a challenge to African scholars, politicians and bureaucrats to institute mechanisms and resources for understanding ourselves, to be able to market our identity from an objective point of view. Kenyan long-distance runners may not be heroes at home, but when they attend international meetings, some of them excel and have carved a niche that gives them glory and wealth. No one doubts their potential and capability around the world. However, when the Western media, experts and politicians tell us what to do, we tell them that the reasons for telling us what to do are not relevant to us; yet we don't supply them with our own facts. Unfortunately for the technologically less-developed world, especially Africa, the ideas being dangled in our faces as to what developed Europe and North America, are the same ones that were propounded by scholars in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. They have now been exported to technologically less-developed countries as the panacea for their underdevelopment and poverty by politicians and bureaucrats through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

When Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of Kenya and probably the first Kenya anthropologist, set out to be an advocate of the African point view and an arbiter on such issues as clitoridectomy and land alienation, he found it impossible to function effectively without relevant knowledge and a propitious medium. He started publishing a newspaper by the Kikuyu name *Muigwithania* (reconciler) in 1928, as the medium for educating his audience, for he had recognised that wisdom and knowledge superseded everything else at the initial stages (Kyle, 1991: I). When he was sent to Britain in 1929 by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) to defend Kikuyu interests, he found it very difficult; first as an African, he could not be trusted in a foreign country. Secondly, he was mistaken for one who advocated for preservation of traditional culture when in fact, he was a moderate who intended to reconcile the African and British points of view so that everything African was not condemned, neither was everything British good for the African in Kenya (Berman, 1996:320).

He found that, in order to change the hostile and suspicious environment he had to say something about himself; he married a British woman and enrolled first at Woodbrook College in 1931, and in 1935 at the School of Oriental and African Studies University of London, for a 3-year postgraduate diploma in Social Anthropology under Professor Bronislaw Malinowski who also assisted him to obtain financial assistance. At the end of his studies Kenyatta wrote a thesis which was published in 1938 as "Facing Mount Kenya",



now an Anthropological "classic".

When he returned home to take up a political career, a number of things had happened:

1. He had changed his names from Johnston Kamau to Jomo Kenyatta- the names appearing in his classic anthropological text on the Kikuyu. This was not a repudiation of self as has happened to many African intellectuals, neither was it a return to tradition. It was, however, a construction of equivalence as an attempt to cast away the foreign ideology of supervisor-inferior, master-servant, modern-traditional, etc. In this way Kenyatta was in search of a foundation which anthropology facilitated.
2. In his thesis he challenged the white man's view of history; he projected the African self-concept and experience which he was now able to achieve through his Western-oriented education and travels abroad including the then Soviet Union (Murray-Brown: 1973:221). This he was able to do more successfully because he had gained an independent but incredible status as an educated and modern African.
3. He had received high academic qualifications for an African at the time, under a distinguished professor of anthropology. He had therefore been schooled and experienced in the manner of western thinking.

In a nutshell, Kenyatta was able, through Malinowski's seminars and his ethnography, to inform the rest of the world on the African version of African culture and institutions. According to Berman, "The Kikuyu society that Kenyatta depicted in *Facing Mount Kenya* was an Arcadian republic of the elders-a democratic, integrated, orderly and civilised organic community free of disruptive internal conflict. The process of internal debate, the loose and fractious community that was the basis of his project of reconciliation in Muigwithania, is nowhere to be seen or heard. Kenyatta invented a homogeneous Kikuyu society that spoke with one voice. To achieve this construction, he had to emphasize certain features of Kikuyu culture and institutions and de-emphasize or ignore others." (Berman. 1996:333).

What Berman intended to communicate happens to be mostly true of all ethnographies and is by no means unique to Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya*. The authors emphasize that at some point in the history of Africa, institutes focussing on African Studies were encouraged. In Kenya, for example, the Institute of African Studies was established at the University of Nairobi. One can safely say that its single most important achievement since its foundation has been pioneering in the teaching of Anthropology in the country. Otherwise it has not influenced policy decision making. As the Institution was set up to study culture in the country, it should have been involved in policy formulation which would have enabled laws in Kenya to be a reflection of national culture and standards. As a consequence, there is no positive culture or standard on judgement of what is good and what is not. This is partly because the delay in forging a national character based on certain national principles, has tended time to devolve into ethnic associations and alliances, thus emphasising difference and diversity rather than common features that could be the basis of national unity.

In Kenyatta's case, his studies, writings and travels seem to have logically given rise to the moderate and evolutionary post-independence ruling ideology based on African Socialism which aimed at creating an enabling environment in which there would be political

equality, social justice, human dignity, freedom from want, disease and exploitation, equal opportunity and equitable distribution of resources (Republic of Kenya, 1965:1). These ideals were to be achieved through adopting the best of African traditions, borrowing the best from elsewhere and adapting to rapidly changing circumstances (Ibid 3).

Of course African countries are awash with all manner of political slogans, but they are devoid of consistent ideologies. A good ideology originates either from scholars or statesmen at a time of crisis when national identity and unity are in question and there is need for a redefinition to the situation. In Africa statesmen are rare, while scholars may not have contributed their fair share to the ruling ideology (save for Tanzania where the late founding president (Nyerere) was both a scholar and statesman in a near one-man crusade to unite the country). It should, however, be noted that when the nature of the world is defined by a social category such as scholars or statesmen, it becomes an ideology. Ideologies tend to naturalise existing social conditions, identities, power relations, the course of history, and so forth. By so doing they make the ideas appear "to be inherent aspects of the world and the human condition, rather than the products of human creativity in history" (Kearney, 1996:1382).

Ideologies are therefore useful in forging unity because they are prescriptive and thus provide the moral foundation for national culture. African scholars should, therefore, assist politicians by engaging in national character studies, as stated by Benedict and attempted in Kenya for the Kikuyu ethnic character by Kenyatta, to facilitate national integration and development. Applied anthropologists and community development experts are of the opinion that much of what is referred to as social development, especially in technologically less-developed countries, can only come through some kind of social engineering. Robert Murphy observes that: The idea that human thought and activity are largely the result of learning within a certain social environment contains the hidden message that if we transform society, we can transform human nature. This might be a hopeful view, for it offers promise for the possibility of a more just society and a more righteous populace, for elimination of greed, prejudice, and aggression. But the notion of human plasticity also contains the germ of the idea that we can condition people to anything. If they can be made more gently, then they can be made more cruel, if they can be taught to share freely, then they can be taught selfishness (Murphy, 1986:17).

In Africa, Tanzania is on record as the only country that seriously considered social engineering based on a consistent ideology and, although the goal of *Ujamaa* (socialism) was not eventually realised and had to be abandoned, Tanzania is today reaping the fruits of the ideology which engendered integration and patriotism among citizens. Tanzania has consequently experienced relatively smooth transition from the first up to the third president. This implies some level of national mobilisation and in the process, one hopes, the emergence of a positive national democratic political culture.

Following this knowledge, it is not surprising that nationals from America, Europe and Asia more or less reflect their national character when they are abroad; thus, national character can become a diacritical feature of identity. When national identity is home-bred by whatever mechanism, then generally, there is correspondence between self-conception of identity and what others perceive the identity to be, as reflected in the consistent deportment of the individual members.

A good lesson for Africa may be drawn from Handler and Segal : "Successful nationalisms do not (of necessity) grow out of cultural homogeneity (the sharing of particular

attributes); rather, they strive to create it; nor can cultural heterogeneity (be taken to) account for failed nationalism" (Ibid., 843). While forging their own national character based on anthropological studies, Africans should deliberately create national cultures exposing positive values and standards of judging excellence. They should also endeavour to get more informed about nationals from other countries and African national governments, and other organisations should facilitate this.

### **Kenya's National Character: An emic perspective**

In April 1999, 45 final year B.A students taking the Culture and Personality course were instructed to write an essay on Kenya's national character, as part of their coursework assessment. What is presented in this section is the content and analysis of some of the responses to the question. It is assumed that this class, constituting a random selection of Kenyans from across the country was sufficiently knowledgeable in social science theory and methods.

1. Kenyans were characterised as being talkative, humorous, friendly and peace-loving. As a corollary, they are viewed as sympathetic, compassionate and hospitable. They can be quite generous and courteous, especially to foreigners. This is a character that many people, local and foreign alike, have employed to con individual Kenyans, companies run by Kenyans, and the government of large sums of money and property, partly because at some level Kenyans are unsuspecting, naïve and gullible.
2. They are highly ethnically conscious. They are, therefore, dubbed nationalist in reverse, because ethnicity does not translate into patriotism and national integration, but rather to ethnic associations and alliances, leading to conflicts and contradictions which foster disintegration. It is no accident that, with the national elections in 1992, inter-ethnic rivalry was heightened through ethnically-based political parties that had no national constituency, leading to inter-ethnic violence that caused substantial loss of life and property. Ethnic consciousness in Kenya is viewed as a tool deployed by the ethnically conscious ruling elites to perpetuate their stay in power at the expense of national identity, integration and development. It is also a tool that has been used to make the country stagnate and in some cases degenerate in most spheres of life since the practice of ethnicity ignores merit in employment and attaches little significance to efficiency and accountability.
3. It is notable that Kenyans view themselves as respectful and obedient. In pre-colonial African society this was a virtue, and children were socialised to become respectful and obedient towards elders and women. During the colonial period the African was obliged by circumstances to transfer obedience and respect to the colonial administration and missionaries. At independence the African ceded his or her obedience and respect to the ruling elites. Some bureaucrats think that it is one of the explanations for too much government in the lives of Kenyans in particular, and Africans in general.



This condition is reflected in the fear of authority by the populace; those in authority actually demand loyalty and co-operation and do muster it through bribery (e.g., buying of votes, handsome monetary gifts or placement in strategic well paying jobs without regard to qualification, or intimidation using the police, sackings and reprimand in public political rallies. The populace is expected to reciprocate through block (as opposed to individual) decision making.

4. They are generally conservative and avoid taking risks, choosing to adopt "a wait and see" attitude. As a consequence, they are not open to change. Sometimes knowledge is not necessarily translated into practical behaviour. For example, over 90% of married women know about modern contraception, and they also know where to obtain free services, but only 39% have ever used them. On the other hand almost everyone knows how HIV/AIDS is transmitted, but people continue to patronise multiple - sex partners without protection.

The high level of conservatism, in addition to irrational loyalty to those in authority, partly explains why the same leaders get elected or appointed to positions of leadership even when they have exhibited high levels of incompetence or lack of concern for the welfare of ordinary citizens.

This is partly as a result of lack of a national quality standards to which those in authority would be obliged to adhere; hence the need for a national ideology or philosophy that can provide prescriptions and proscriptions in order to enhance public and private morality which is at its lowest ebb.

5. They are dependent as reflected in the irrational fear of authority, and ready acceptance of handouts such as gifts and bribes, making social relations cash-oriented and personalized. Dependency is also reflected in uncomplaining perseverance in extreme situations of abuse of the rights of individuals and the public. This makes them patient, yet naïve and timid.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Kenyans are relatively reserved. They don't go out to explore much, due to lack of motivation and initiative. There are cases in which people forfeit their annual leave out of fear that in their absence, they will be undermined. Cases of people who basically lock-up their offices during the period of leave are common and this may derive from real or perceived threats.

6. Kenyans avoid appearing ambitious, because ambition is not encouraged but frowned upon as a negative quality. It is a carry-over from the traditional setting when gerontocracy reigned supreme and the youth could only be the leaders of tomorrow.

7. The personality of Kenyans seems to be that of self-deception. In such character, there is no love for the truth; empty promises become common; one avoids talking about weaknesses but over-boasts of achievements; even those who are not hard-working don't feel guilty about it; saying "I am sorry" is almost absent in their vocabulary; the lowly are almost equated with criminals and yet they are the majority. This is arrogant, authoritarian personality, which traumatises and discourages, instead of encouraging. When the self-help spirit emerged at independence, it was a useful strategy for grass-root mobilisation for development. Today, people go to self-help meetings to witness the political elites compete against one another in contributing large sums of money, and are themselves ashamed to go forward to present what is within their means. Kenyans, therefore, love publicity and showing off.
8. Kenyans are generally poor. Forty-seven percent of them are said to be living in abject poverty (Republic of Kenya, 1998). This may partly explain the passive and apathetic condition that induces in them a feeling of helplessness. It may also partly explain the fact that Kenyans are gullible, excitable, easily lose track of their goals; these are phenomena politicians have to reckon with for the future of the nation
9. Despite all these, Kenyans are known to be resilient. They are adaptable survivors who easily forget the immediate past when they bounce back. To many of them, history is of no consequence, and the future too far away to be of immediate concern.

This is definitely a discussion that should challenge some scholars into empirical studies of national character not only because it is informative, but also because it is of practical utility in nation building. It is evident from the above descriptions that Kenyan national character may not appear in black and white format. It is an ambivalent character that oscillates between extremes that are positive and negative. For example, some say Kenyans are industrious yet a tiny minority are rich; they are curious yet lacking in initiative; creative and yet inhibited hero worshippers, compassionate and friendly, yet violent rapists of underage boys and girls; grabbers and alarmist rumour mongers without feelings of guilt yet over 80% claim to be Christians and a significant minority are Moslems, and so on.

## Conclusion

This kind of characterisation should not be surprising. In his contribution to action theory, Talcott Parsons postulated the theory of pattern variables to suggest that when a society modernises, individuals are in a dilemma as to what kind of behaviour they should project. Depending on circumstances, they can decide to be traditional or modern. Thus they can be affective or effectively neutral; particularistic or universal; ascriptive or achievement oriented; diffuse or specific; collective or self-oriented; being the polar ends of traditional as opposed to modern character (Tonnies, 1957:21-29). This is expected in a country full of diversity in race, ethnicity, physical environment, resources and culture, thus, the need for a common denominator. What this points to is that:

1. Such information generalised at the national rather than the ethnic level is necessary in the formulation of a national ideology for development. Asian countries have experienced leaps in their development because they had religion-based traditions that bore progressive ideologies. Otherwise, Africa will continue to live without a stable and consistent standard of judging what is good and what is not, partly because of lack of an ideology that articulates societal problems and suggests ways of solving them, based on some principle, before the population is mobilized towards that end.
2. Such information is also useful in curriculum formulation, depending on the aspects of national character that require either encouragement or suppression. The nation's spirit, though expressed in an ideology, should be reflected in the educational and religious systems if it has to be positively expressed in behaviour.
3. Knowledge of such information is useful in understanding what underlies human response, as well as the motivational factors for the behaviour expressed. Such factors include biological, social and psychological needs, ambitions, values, and so on. It is strategic information that can be used in all spheres of life by politicians, religious leaders, teachers, business experts and so on. This partly explains why research and knowledge generation have become an important part of western life. It provokes and validates at the same time, and is something that should be considered positively, especially by African politicians who are the main stumbling blocks to development and freedom, because of their closed minds.

In conclusion I could point out that, old as Benedict's original paradigm may be, it is not outdated if cautiously deployed to understand our national character situation. President Kenyatta, as an anthropologist, applied it to the Kikuyu ethnic identity and, as an individual and President, he used it to keep the country united, and it is surprising that the ruling ideology during his Presidency was based on the conciliatory Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965. If scholars, politicians and managers followed in the footsteps of these pioneers, it could be proved that anthropology as a discipline is not only a theoretical discipline for understanding society, but it also has potential in contributing to national development through social and cultural engineering.

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