

From the Achieves

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization¹

Ikenna Nzimiro

DOI: 10.36108/NJSA/9002/70(0170)

Vol. 7 Issue 1, 2009

Introductory Background: First Nigerian Effort, 1950-1960

Eleven years ago (1959), a group of Nigerian social scientists, including the author, inspired by Professor Sam Aluko, gathered in London to found the **Nigerian Economic Society**. At this period, there was only one University at home, Ibadan University, and three colleges of Arts and Technology. Ibadan, the first university, had only established the Faculty of Economics with an Irish Professor who did not believe that Professor Aluko, with his distinguished grade in London University Masters degree, was competent to teach economics at Ibadan. He moved to a College of Technology Ife, which later became a University, and later was fired, for his defence of academic freedom. He has returned there as a full Professor.

This group of students levied themselves to found the journal known as the *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*. Those at home were written to join the Society and even to subscribe to the publication of its first journal. The response was poor, and we were not dismayed for our leader was a person of indomitable courage. The maiden issue appeared and it was well received in British intellectual circles. The copies that were sent home attracted the attention of the lukewarm social scientists and gradually the society grew and its journal became a recognized journal where articles accepted for publication gained some academic eminence for the authors. Some expatriate scholars including Professor Berback, the man that rejected Aluko, joined.

Foreign Control of Ideas and Research

Nigerian Institute of Economic and Social Research then harboured research scholars most of them expatriates who worked with funds supplied by the charitable academic foundations with plans for research dovetailed according to the hidden political and economic designs of the donors. Since the Institute and the New Faculty were controlled by expatriate scholars one would expect nothing spectacular in their study of our changing society. They were all

¹The paper was presented at the First Annual Conference of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association that held at ABU, Zaria, December 16-18, 1971. The author (of blessed memory) was then a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The paper is published with minor editing.

establishment sort of social scientists scratching the surface of our social problems and bringing their ideas on the notion that the society should obey the law of consensus. Not being indigenous scholars their commitment to the society was marginal for their task was to conduct research, gather materials and go home and publish in several journals only to be acknowledged as experts in that tribe or the other, or that aspect of a particular branch of social science.

1960s American Interests

With the emergence of independence and the craze for the study of African societies, great interest was aroused in the United States and the great foundations - Rockefeller and Ford - provided funds for scholars who flooded Africa and Nigeria to study various aspects of her society. We are aware today that the two great Foundations are appendices of the United States imperialism. It is well known that its leaders are members of the monied class, directors of the giant corporations whose interests in African are ideologically oriented towards the preservation of the imperialist ideology. Using these American hired scholars to probe into those aspects of our society, they owe their allegiance to these benevolent donors. On their return, they became Africanists and became lecturers in the various American Universities and established African centres in such places as Boston, UCLA, Columbia, Howard, Northwestern and Wisconsin, etc. The number of scholars and the men involved are enormously growing.¹

Through this university complex, the Empire's need for detached information and analysis about African affairs is met by these centres. The network, the African Research Group, is coordinated and maintained by government and para-government agencies. Control over funding rests in the hands of narrowly selected panels of approved scholars who form select committees of such foundation fronts as the Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Foreign Area Fellowship Program. Operationally, such work is further coordinated within the profession by the American African Studies (ASA) foundation funded by Research Liaison Committee, while research priorities have been mapped out under the auspices of the USA Army through the African Research Committee. On the government level, such agencies as the State Department Office of External Research keep regular tabs on academic production with the enthusiastic cooperation of many scholars. These are only the formal and visible links; many of the closest relationships are informal and removed from public scrutiny.²

The report goes on to show that "this centralized control ensures that African Studies will serve the needs of imperial America." The result is that out of some 500 courses offered annually in African Studies programme, few, if any, deal exclusively with the analysis of imperial penetration and neo-colonial domination. Instead, most deal with "modernization" (Americanization), "institution building", "elite formation", "African Political Systems" or

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

the "Traditional Structure of Ibo Society" and are biased by the plunderous, anti-Marxist approach. Thus, the system performs its ideological function.³

Having studied those aspects of African societies, these men accomplish such high level tasks as writing development plans for African countries, (The First Nigerian Development Plan was prepared by American economists), developing new constitutions and legal codes for African governments and fashioning African institutions into channels for US penetration. At the same time they continue to advise the US government on African policy matters and help out US 'Corporations' when needed. And throughout all these activities they claim neutrality for their work and loudly proclaim their research to be value and interest free.³

The field of studies that come within our discipline has been dominated by these establishment scholars, most of them serving the interests of imperialist governments, but camouflaged as scientific objective studies. In Nigeria, names like James Coleman (*Nigeria Background to Nationalism*), Mabel Smythe (*New Nigerian Elite*), Henry Bretton (*Power and Stability in Nigeria*), Paul Bohannon (*The Tiv*) and others such as Melville Herkovits, L. Gray Cowan, David Apter, are too new in our memories. These names have served in African Advisory Council appointed by the State Department. The pattern of study of the three mentioned - Coleman, Smythe and Bretton - falls within the area of study that deals with political opinion and behaviour as well as patterns of leadership so as to expose the society to the State Department to enable her penetrate comfortably into all aspects of our national life.

Where do we come in?

Why have I spent time to draw the attention of my colleagues to the fact that the field of social science has been controlled, molded and shaped by expatriate scholars? Does it mean that being an expatriate precludes a scholar from being detached from the control of his government? Not necessarily so. Some are not agents of their governments, but pursue their studies objectively. In the field of Anthropology, we find the same trend where early Nigerian Anthropologists were establishment scholars. They were hired anthropologists who came to serve colonial interests no matter their excitement. C.K. Meek, author of *The Sudanese Kingdom, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe, Land Law in Northern Nigeria*; Margary Paharm, author of *Native Administration in Nigeria*; Lugard Diaries; W.D. Jeffrey, author of *Divine Kingship in Umudri* and G.I. Jones who served the Colonial Office in Nigeria and Basutoland for over twenty-three years before joining the University of Cambridge, served the Colonial government. Numerous District Officers who wrote over two hundred Intelligence Reports on the Ibo people after 1929-30 Women Riots were all guided by these Colonial government anthropologists. They were all establishment scholars whose commitment in their work was to support the colonial government so as to ensure the effective political domination of Nigeria. They played the role, which the present Africanists new-colonial agents of America are playing today in their study of New Nations of Africa.

The cardinal issue then is for us to ask whether the present generation of Nigerian social scientists, particularly sociologists and anthropologists, should be establishment scholars? By this I mean: should our commitment be towards the critical analysis of the society in the spirit of science or to dovetail our research to support such scholars or institutions that create instability and destroy the foundations of our national solidarity?

In this paper, I shall posit the thesis that the sociologist and anthropologist, the social scientist for that matter, should be committed to the great issues of our society and not involve in such marginal research. By marginal research, I mean that aspect of research which probes aspects of our society that are not intrinsically vital to the development of our nation. I shall at a later stage show what I mean by marginal research and fundamental or strategic research. The later contributes to the solution of such perennial issues that lead to instability in society and thus advance the welfare of our country.

The Historical Tradition

Sociology, for example, was started by its founding fathers in the search of the solutions of the serious social problems of their age. If we go back to the Greeks, Plato wrote his *Republic* as a result of his great sorrow over the killing of Socrates, a wise man, and the destruction of the great Greek civilization by the Peloponnesian war. Saint Simon's starting point was his perception of the condition of France, indeed of Europe, in the aftermath of the French Revolution. He was struck by the great upheaval and expressed that "The general upheaval by the people of France had led to a situation in which all existing relations between the members of a nation becomes precarious and anarchy, the greatest of all scourges, rages unchecked, until the misery it plunges the nation ... stimulates a desire for the restoration of order even in the most ignorant of its members."⁴

Struck by this disorder, he went about to find a solution and in his Geneva letters, Saint Simon lays down the proposition that "all men ought to work."⁵ Society was "in the state of extreme moral disorder, egoism is making terrible progress...and the problem was to put an end to the 'profound agony which society has had to endure in the period from the decadence of the old political system' to the constitution of the new."⁶ We see in this sentiment an involvement and concern for the conditions of the period. His proposals for the solution of the problem, which we cannot go into here, were considered 'utopian', but the point I am stressing here is that he was concerned and showed a deep sense of commitment and involvement. I wonder how many of young Nigerian social scientists, sociologists as such, are so involved and touched by the social agonies arising from the events of the last ten years.

The man whom we attribute to be the founder of our discipline, August Comte was born ten years after the French Revolution. He grew up to witness the aftermath of the Revolution and associating himself with Saint Simon for sometime, he (Comte) was struck by the problems of his time. He proceeded to found an appropriate science that would help to resolve the social issues of the

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

era. He realized that there was internal contradiction of the society of his age, the contradiction between theological and military type and the scientific and industrial type. He began with the analysis of a certain moment in history. Since this moment in history is characterized by the spread of scientific thinking and of industrial activity, Comte believed that the only way to put an end to the crisis is to create that system of scientific ideas, which will govern the new social order, just as the system of theological ideas governed the social order of the past.⁷

That was the founder of our discipline evolving his ideas as instrument of introducing order in the society he lived. This tradition was carried on by other pioneers – such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim and numerous others. Marx was a great social scientist, a person with great erudition, of very high middle-class origin, but greatly committed in the championing of the cause of the working class movement, the oppressed to whom he devoted his energy both theoretically and practically to liberate. The oppression of the working class during his time involved him in the examination of the ideas and methods to be prescribed for the elimination of this exploitation by the bourgeoisie. Realising that the ownership of property was the key to power in society he worked out his ideas to show that the abolition of property and its ownership and control by the proletariat was the surest way to establish a stable society more real and humane than that which he witnessed. So, in his major works – *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *Das Kapital*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The German Ideology* (with Engels) and the *Manifesto* (with Engels), Marx showed this dedication and commitment to the events that occurred in the European society of this era.⁸

Durkheim who exposed the cause of better methodology wanted this in order to enable the social scientist to observe social facts and to understand the intricacies of the social institution of society. He was concerned with the social anomie that arose in the industrial society, which reached the stage of organic solidarity and advocated a form of division of labour in society.⁹ His study of suicide was as a result of his deep feeling for the social anomie, the pathological stage in which the industrial society has exposed mankind.¹⁰

Max Weber realized that the new institutions of European society were becoming a sort of structure that molded human conduct in society and set out to analyse the problems of power, bureaucracy and even the influence of religion in the evolution of capitalism.¹¹ In Britain, great names like Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Sir William H. Beveridge, John M. Keynes and R.M. Titmus remind us of the commitment of these social scientists to the development of the Welfare State in Britain. Caught in the trap of capitalist contradiction, more so after the First World War, the Britain socialists were beginning to read Marx. The Webbs, had in 1909, in a minority report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, pointed out that there was a type of unemployment, which arises independently of any qualities, which the employee may possess. Beveridge, under the title of *Unemployment, a Problem of Industry*, suggested that a certain major element of the economy might perhaps be res-

possible for economic employment. Keynes swiftly brought economic thought into harmony with social needs of society by presenting Consumption capacity within the economy as the essential means of eroding crises.¹²

The theories of these social scientists essentially gained acceptance after the Second World War. Natural requirements compelled the Government to intervene in civic life through rationing, evacuation, school meals, rebuilding and mobilization of all labour resources. The Beveridge Memorandum of 1942 was a plan for social welfare which was, at this time, economically viable, and was moreover desirable and in keeping with a standard of ethical value, which had long been ripe for just such a system.

In the field of political thought, Herold Luke's ideas in London School of Economics and Political Science were devoted to the application of his mind for the exposition of the capitalist system which, based on the ownership of private property by the few, enabled this tiny class to determine and influence the democratic process.¹³

Why have I wondered into this long incursion into history of ideas? I have done so to bring out clearly the theme I am developing, that the pioneers of Social Science, and Sociology were men committed to the searching of the solutions of the social problems of their countries. They were not just doing that for more intellectual curiosity alone. They had the sense of history and they influenced social change through their ideas. They were deeply involved in the affairs of their fatherland, but no socialists were also detached so as to analyse social facts. There was no contradiction between their involvement and detachment. There was no false idea of 'objectivity' devoid of participation. Both were synonymous to them.

The Nature of our Society

C. Wright Mills, the pioneer of radical sociologist in the United States, a theorist of eminence who challenged the orthodox establishment sociologists, clearly stated in his celebrated work – *The Sociological Imagination*: to quote:

The Sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social position. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues.¹⁴

Mills continued by stating that whatever the specific problems of the classic social analysts, however limited or however broad the features of social

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

reality they have examined, those who have been imaginatively aware of the promise of their work have consistently asked three sorts of questions:

1. What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another? How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change?
2. Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period – what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history making?
3. What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blended? What kinds of "human nature" are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for "human nature" of each and every feature of the society we are examining?¹⁵

This long quotation is necessary to remind us, the oncoming sociologists and anthropologists, the social scientists as a whole, that the issues of our society are the challenges we face as our society undergoes the process of change. To involve ourselves in the intimate and intricate nature of our social problems is the key to the possession of the sociological imagination. Many young on-coming sociologists and anthropologists, if there are any yet worth the name, are influenced by the two grand traditions in our discipline namely, those who accept the Parsonian consensus views about society and those who accept the conflict analysis views. Whichever one we accept, the crucial question for the young social scientist in our society is to examine these pressing questions of Mill's for we can only operate if we:

- (a) understand the nature of our society;
- (b) the idea that it is a dynamic society which has not yet settled to some extent like the western societies;
- (c) that it has innumerable internal antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions;
- (d) that these internal contradictions demand a sharpening of our wits, a critical evaluation of those social problems and issues that cause these contradictions and
- (e) a commitment akin to those of our early pioneers whom we have summarized before.

What is Nigeria Society?

No social scientist of note can operate if he or she is ignorant of the structure and functions of our society. This understanding is his first intellectual weapon. He can understand it if he knows the structure and functions of our traditional society before he can understand the intricacies of the changing modern society. The tasks of the anthropologists and sociologists are crucial, and here I must state that the sociologists who limits himself to the understanding of the modern European societies without studying the social structure of our society in its traditional setting has not yet completed the picture of his image of our society. It becomes imperative that he must know both if he is to operate scientifically. Let us in a brief way analyse what I consider to be the social structure of Nigeria and demonstrate the dynamic and contradictory manifest or latent factors inherent in the society.

Nigeria is made up of various nationalities, such as the Ibo, Ijaw, Hausa, Itsekiri, Kanuri, Yoruba, Edo, Biroms, Tiv, etc. A nationality in the way I have used it is an unstable community based not on consanguineous ties like the clan, but on common territory, language and culture. Markets and exchange of commodities existed within each nationality, but of a limited nature and of local significance and could not evolve such stability as to dominate the unstable political and economic disunity that existed within the various groups.¹⁶ Nationality had therefore a common cultural characteristics, language, history, but not economically stable. Exchanges were merely by trade. Within nationality we have clans. These are marked by assumed consanguinary affinity. Certain cultural indices, exogamy, ritual and land ownerships, totemic observations are characteristic. Within the clan group of villages (matrilineal or patrilineal lineages) that make up a 'town'. Within this 'town' we have the villages. Each is corporate descent group, the highest being the lineage which segments genealogically into the major, the minor and the minimal lineage. The village is the most intimate group within the clan. Every Nigerian traditional community is founded on the lineage structure, that is, the line of descent, through which the individual derives his social attachment. The nationality is therefore a structure that has grown from the lowest descent unit, to the clan and sub-clans and emerging into a wider group, which I call a nationality, an ethnic group. The size of these nationalities varies, but each has cultural indices in common. The three descent systems, matrilineal, patrilineal and double descent are found among some of these nationalities, the majority being the patrilineal descent group. Double descent is found among the Cross River and Afikpo Ibo group¹⁷ and matrilineal descent is found among the Ijaw.

The various nationalities had varieties of economic activities that characterized many peasant societies. Pastoral life is found among the Fulani Boro-ro¹⁹; sedentary life, agricultural and horticultural activities exist according to the ecological nature of the area. Fishing, boat-building are practiced among those that live along the rivers, lakes or the Atlantic sea-boards. Crafts organizations exist in many areas particularly the feudal societies in the North and West and Mid-Western nationalities in Nigeria.²⁰

Political System

Political systems exhibit characteristics features defined by political anthropologists. State systems, age grade political patterns, autonomous segmentary lineage, political units, political systems, which combine age grade and titled associations, are found in the various nationalities. Interest groups – secret societies, women association, titled associations, youth groups, age sets and grades, lineage groups constitute in some of the ethnic groups avenues for including legislative processes or in carrying out executive function of government.²¹

Religious System

Religious systems cover varieties of ritual practices and belief systems ranging from Islamic worship and practices of ancestor worship, belief in witchcraft and sorcery, divinations and medicinal practices.

Social Stratification

Traditional social stratification consisted of varieties of stratifications which were dominant among the various ethnic nationalities. In the North, society was stratified on ethnic lines such as the Fulani sad order consisting of the Fulani ruling aristocracy and their related sedentary and nomadic kinsmen. The Fulani ethnic nationality ranked higher in status than the non-Fulani groups. Serfdom, slavery and clientelship characterized the system which was stratified on religious, ethnic, occupational and political grounds. Society was split into the ruling class and commoners, the former living by the economic labour of the later. Islamic ideology reinforced and sustained this stratification. It was both theocratic and political for Islam inculcated vigorous religious values that reinforced the political and religious hegemony of the ruling aristocracy.

In the West and Midwestern parts of Nigeria, the stratification was similar. There were kingdoms each with a recognized king. The kings had titled officials, chiefs, and these were hierarchically graded according to their seniority in the political system. Below these were non-officials who constituted a separate political class and within each of those communities were two types of citizens – the royal and the non-royal. Among these two categories was a class of people who were the servile class. These features were found among the satellite Ibo Niger kingdoms that claim their origin from Benin, and some features existed among the Itsekiri and some Urhobo chiefdoms. Among the nationalities where these feudal type societies are absent, we found societies stratified on basis of titles. There are two types of such title associations – open associations such as the Ozo titles in Iboland and secret associations such as Ekpe in Efik and Ekpo in Ibibio. Some were stratified on the basis of age – the age grade societies. There were caste systems typical of which were the Osu system associated with spiritual cults and the Ohu or Oru system based on kinlessness.¹⁹ Most of these varieties of social stratification and differentiation still persist.

The Modern Setting

(a) New Values, Ideas

In the preceding section above, I have briefly analysed the traditional systems characteristic of the Nigerian ethnic nationalities to show clearly the heterogeneity and complex nature of our present Nigeria society in its traditional setting. One sees clearly that such a society when exposed to modern values will exhibit characteristic internal conflicts and contradictions that anthropologists or sociologists who attempt to study these complex societies cannot impose their own order or regularities on the system. They have to become involved passionately and not just for mere intellectual curiosity.

In the past, and this still exists, the most common fault which has minimized the proper scientific nature of anthropology was the lack of scientific approach by the earlier pioneers to the study of such dynamic societies. It was often thought that the scientific approach to society was only limited to Western societies, and that in the study of the 'primitive society' an anthropologist might claim to be an authority in one society, holding therefore that his views about the people's life and thoughts were invariably the known eternal truth. That this truth should be the universal means of understanding the peoples life and culture and therefore the methods have been determined and the goals achieved by the immutable laws set by one authority. This dogmatic view of society has denied our discipline of the critical attitude in the place of dogma which hinders scientific methods. One great danger this has produced is the reliance on definite categories as means of examining or interpreting the social phenomenon of the 'primitive'.²⁰

An anthropologist who goes to the field and is a victim of this sort of dogmatic thinking (characteristic of the colonial establishment anthropologists and the present establishment neo-colonial anthropologists and sociologists) often looks for the categories or what Karl Popper calls regularities to confirm his hypothesis. Popper put this clearly in his work *Conjecture and Refutations*. According to him "our propensity to look for regularities, and to impose laws upon nature, leads to the psychological phenomena of dogmatic thinking or, more generally, dogmatic behaviour. We expect regularities everywhere and attempt to find them even where there are none; events which do not yield to these attempts we are inclined to treat as a kind of 'background rose' and we stick to our expectations even when they are inadequate and we ought to accept defeat".²³

Let us turn to the modern setting. The British created nation out of these ethnic nationalities. Colonial domination brought these nationalities together under the modern influence of European civilization. The new institutions of colonial regime exposed all Nigerians to new norms, values and culture of the West. These new norms were generated by the new institutions – political, economic, educational and religious, and these norms became the new binding forces that brought all the ethnic nationalities together.²⁴

There emerged two factors that changed the entire socio-politico-history of this area known as Nigeria. One was this historical circumstance of the internal

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

migration which occurred over the centuries in the course of one ethnic group migrating from one area to the other, a phenomena that occurred long before the contact with the West. The second, and most vital, was the colonial domination which brought all of us together under the modern influence of European civilization as explained above.

Thus exposed to the values of new nationhood, the Nigerians were impregnated with the ideals and concepts of Western economic values. Nigerians were taught to accept the ideals of profit motive, of the sell of labour power in the labour market, be it the labour market controlled by the voluntary agencies, by the commercial enterprises or government institutions. Nigerians came together under the various economic institutions and worked under the directions of the British who controlled most of these institutions.

In the political plane, man in Nigeria was no longer concerned primarily with his own methods of government, and those who were brought in contact with Western education viewed society from new perspectives as opposed to the old perspectives that limited man to his ethnic world.

Western education inculcated these values and the increase in the number of those that were exposed to this system of education meant also the corresponding awareness of the new nation, which was emerging with new concepts and beliefs that were different from those of the traditional society. These new concepts which can be styled the concepts of modernisation contained gems of modern nationhood, for the modern ideas carry with them certain fundamental beliefs which are universal in all human societies. They contain beliefs in the rights of man to freedom. Freedom implies freedom to organize his society in the western way, freedom to choose his form of modern government; freedom to express his opinion as to the way the government should be run. They contain elements of the theory of social justice which implies that the new legal institutions set up by the modern administration should respect the rule of law. That is, that every citizen is free to receive justice in the courts of law, that law should be supreme and nobody should be above the law.²⁵ The degree of the acceptance of these values by the new men created by this western education varied from individual to individual, but up to the end of the 40's, the people of Nigeria worked and lived together in the various communities as brothers and sisters. They were free to migrate to any part of the country to trade. They inter-married. They went to school in any part of the country that opportunities offered their youths. The sense of belonging was emerging at all levels, in economic enterprises, state administrations, in Christian churches and educational institutions. The net effect of this new exposition brought about a further complexity in the social structure of Nigeria.

(b) Modern Stratification

Modern social stratification emerged as a result of the rise of these new institutions and the values attendant to them.

Nigerian society has become a class society side by side with the traditional society. As a class society, it possessed the characteristic of modern class

society – differentiation is based on monetary wealth and income; individuals of all classes are in principle equal before the law; no legal restrictions on the movement of individuals; the classes are not organised closed social groups, but aggregates of persons with similar amount of wealth – property and similar sources of income; the style of life characteristic of the different classes emerge in their patterns of consumption, types of education and opportunities available for their children. Manners, tastes and in fact nature of conspicuous consumption of the status groups have arisen because of these differences. These status groups are informed groups whose members view each other as equals because they share common understanding; the hierarchy of status groups has developed this in inter-related but not idealized within hierarchy of class. The new class society is less rigid, highly permeable. Social inability is now possible with the three types of mobility – upward, downward and horizontal operating. Achieved status exists and the new class society is competitive. Thus in the new society we find the growth of a new bourgeoisie – an upper middle class, a lower middle class and bulk of new urban proletariat – workers and the unemployed and the rural society still inhabited by the rural peasantry. The class structure of our society still inhabited by the rural peasantry. The class structure of our society can be visibly observed in the urban societies where residential patterns, style of life, new occupations and the income groups can be observed.

The commercial landlords, industrial professional, military and educated middle class of all persuasions are found in the urban setting side by side with the working class unions and their allied unemployed and poor self-employed population.

All the features of a growing capitalist society now abound. The economy is predominantly capitalistic and neo-colonial dominated in orientation. Banks, insurance, shipping line, mineral oil and petroleum, iron, columbite, industries of all types, capitalist agricultural estates, private transport, commercial enterprises, retail trade, private road transport, import and export are still dominated, controlled and owned by absentee capitalists. The bulk of the recorded 376 industries in Nigeria are owned and controlled by foreign capitalists.²⁶

(c) *Dynamic and Contradictory Forces*

The interaction of the traditional and modern social forces outlined above has stirred series of internal contradictory forces, some latent and some manifest.

The aggravation of these contradictions was sharpened by the constitutional structure which Nigeria was endowed at Independence. These served four purposes:

- a) To facilitate the transfer of power to a substantial predetermined elite;
- b) To provide sets of principles and guidelines for formal mechanical operation of the government along the lines favourable to the foreign political and economic interest of both the imperialists and their counterparts in Nigeria;

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

- c) To assure, as long as possible, a political balance between the predetermined elite on one hand and their political characters on the other;
- d) To preserve the status quo in several regions through useful circumscribed and special kinds of individual rights.

The net effect was the series of contradictory forces that unleashed themselves between 1960 and 1970. There developed contradictions between nationalism as an ideology and ethnic regional ideology; contradictions between capitalist ideology subscribed by the new bourgeoisie and socialist ideology subscribed by some intellectuals and working class leaders; contradictions between the traditional elite and the new elite; contradictions between the urban and rural societies.

There were contradictions between the NATO powers and the Soviet block. These contradictory forces had multiplying effects. Within the former regions, there were contradictions between the various ethnic national groups. In the North, there were contradictions between the Fulani-Habe feudal North and the Middle Belt non-feudal areas. Latent contradictions existed between the feudal class and the Talakawa, between the slaves and the citizens, within the ethnic nationalities in the new Northern states between the Islamic and non-Islamic groups – Christians and pagans, between the new elite and the northern traditional elite.

In the South, among the Yoruba, there were internal ethnic contradictions among the sub-ethnic nationalities – Oyo versus Ibadan, Ijebu versus Ekiti, Egba versus the rest and so on. There were contradictions between the traditional rulers and the new elite, and also contradictions between the chiefs and the peasants.

In the Mid-West, there were also ethnic contradictions between the Urhobo and the Itsekiri, the Ibos versus the rest, the Benin versus Urhobo and so forth. Contradictions existed between the ruling kings and the common people and the old traditional elite.

In Eastern region, ethnic contradictions were manifest as well as latent. Contradictions existed between the Ibo and the rest, between the Ibiobio and the Efik, the Ogoja and the Ibiobio, Opobo and the Ibiobio, Okrika and Abonnema, Ikwere and the rest.

Transcending ethnic contradictions were the broad contradictions of national nature already outlined. These contradictions were latent or manifest and contained two types of contradictions, the antagonistic contradictions and the non-antagonistic contradictions. The antagonistic contradictions led to open conflicts such as the Tiv Riots, the workers strike of 1964; the 1965 riots in Western Nigeria; the January coup of 1966; the July coup of the same year; the mass killings of September and October leading eventually to the civil war.

The New Approach

Having summarized the nature of our society and pointed out its dynamic nature, what should be the approach of the sociologist and anthropologist in studying this sort of society?

The approach depends on the:

1. the intellectual orientation of the scholar;
2. what he intends to do with his research;
3. his attachment or detachment to the source of political power and, above all;
4. his national commitment to the concept of national unity and stability.

This raises the question of ideology. Can a social scientist be completely ideologically free? No. Those who talk of ideological value free are talking mere sentiments. The history of the evolution of social science as outlined has brought clearly to us the grim fact that the expatriate pioneers of anthropology or sociology and other branches of social science served the ideological interest of imperialism and neo-colonialism. If the Nigerian social science scholar is to contribute to the creation of a stable united and prosperous country, his ideological premise must be contradictory and therefore antagonistic to the standpoint of the neo-colonial ideologically ridden scholar. To refuse to have intellectual standpoint is to commit intellectual suicide. A lot of false ideas have passed through in the guise of 'objectivity' and detachment.

Varieties of Ideological Standpoint

This brings us to the analysis of the ideological standpoints of the contemporary Nigerian intellectual. Four such types exist:

1. *The Progressives*: These are a minority group, which is sensitive to change and desires to alter the false ideas in society. They endeavour to hatch ideas that can challenge those that impede rationality and the triumph of reason over feeling. They are the true champions of true intellectualism and the greatest opponents of mediocrity.
2. *The Conservatives*: These are merely concerned with their work and push the theory (rejected with ignominy by the best academic circles) that knowledge could be pursued for knowledge sake. They are not bothered by the events that take place in the society, and rather concerned with their own personal welfare. They seek outlet in the pursuit of metaphysical values – dogmatic beliefs, worship and practices and rationalize their society by metaphysical constructs. To them, events occur to us because God has so ordained them. It is foolish in their view to upset the existing order which God has so determined. To this group, the radical progressive intellectuals are atheists and trouble-makers. The conservatives are most prone to subscribe to neo-colonial ideals and to pin their faith in the goodness of the colonial master.

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

3. *The Intellectual Ordinary Men:* These are in the majority and are those who are ethnocentrically fixed and reactionary. Their worldview is myopic and they cannot see the objective realities of society outside their ethnocentric circles. They are intellectual ordinary men, for no matter how you educate them, no matter the degree of exposure they received in their former universities of study, they are invariably ethnocentrically fixed, inward-looking and place their faith in their ethnic cliques. They are pathologically distrustful of others not in their ethnic circle. They too share conservative, individualistic values about society.
4. *The Liberal Group:* The middle-readers. This group consists of those who will like to change society, but will not welcome such changes that will disestablish their class position. At the same time, they do not wholly subscribe to the excessive oppression of the people, though they argue that since the five fingers of the hand are not equal, the opportunities open to all cannot be successfully exploited alike. They lack real intellectual dedication and commitment. They can occasionally brandish progressive ideas to deceive the people or create the impression of a desire to make innovation in teaching, but they lack the courage to stand firmly by their conviction. They equivocate a lot and are always ready to rationalize their rapid shifts in points of view.

Groups 2 and 3 are decisively loathsome in their approach to change. Change involves thought and thinking sets us free. Unable to escape from their conservative intellectual capsule, they abhor thought, are lazy, and in fact, gather their prejudices against the progressives from facts pushed to them by their intellectual aides of the metropolitan motherland. They (these groups) are the vehicles of neo-colonial mentality, while group 3 helps by stamping the little they know with their irrational ethnocentric ideas about men and society. Groups 1 and 4 are those which at one time made impact in the holding of ideas that changed European civilization. Group 1, that microscopic minority, is found in all our universities. Its members possess the intellectual courage needed to uphold scientific objectivity and to defend truth. History has abundantly shown that great changes in human civilization were initiated by this group.

From the above, you will see that the progressive intellectual is bound to be deeply involved on greater issues, and to pursue what is relevant and eschew what is irrelevant in his research pursuits. You can see too that no intellectual is ideologically free and to stress this among Nigerian intellectuals is to confuse weak minds. We should beware of those who proclaim objectivity, but disguise their ideology under scienticism.

The Nature of Research and Teaching

The concept of objectivity while it becomes the basis of scientific concern should be pursued only by bringing our theory into practice. The combination of theory and practice lends credence to our scientific pursuits. The society is our laboratory and therefore all our intellectual standpoints should be relevant to the social problems of our age. In the past, many social scientists have solely been concerned with reproducing the ideas of others instead of testing these ideas in our society. Our research must have relevance to our society. This relevance implies a research in those social problems that lead to instability, conflict and misery in our society so as to prescribe, in the light of empirical evidence, solutions to the problems. We should adopt the posture of the pioneers of our discipline as already outlined. Man does not live in a society that is vacuous ideologically. Praxis, the integration of theory and practice, is a relevant pursuit for pioneering social scientists. That was the way Keynes, Marx, Beveridge, the Webbs saw the social issues of their era. They were critical of their existing order, confronted the injustices, iniquities and corruption and provided explanations for the origin of such injustice, inequality and corruption. They acted by translating their theories into practice and were directly personal participants in the historical social transformation and political and economic revolution which marked their era. That is the calling that stares us at the face.

How do we achieve this? By adopting Fundamental and Strategic Research Scheme

We can be involved in the relevant issues of our society if we dovetail our research and teaching to those issues of relevance. We have to be empirically committed in our search for the solution of those social issues that lead to conflict which could lead to the destruction of our nation. We should take side on the path of progress than retrogress.

We should restructure our teaching curriculum to bear relevance to the issues of our time. The courses should be patterned to serve and know the issues of the day and research on such issues should be related to the schemes for reconstruction.

We should therefore avoid overloading our teaching with examples drawn from highly industrialized societies where they bear little relevance to the issues of our society.

We should by our research explain such issues as the causes of economic inequality, the problems of ownership, management, and control of the economic institutions of our society since the knowledge of those helps to determine our political dependence or independence from foreign powers. It helps us to understand the ideological content of our economic policies.

Since property ownership determines one's social position in contemporary class society, we should therefore teach social stratification in relation to the consequences of such stratification in the distribution of income, property, power and opportunities among the citizens.

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

We should probe into the problems of power in our contemporary society as it relates to the formulation of policies which determine the fate of millions of people.

We should investigate the rural society to find out the problems of poverty, disease and ignorance, all of which reflect on the relative low income and low productivity in the rural society. We should probe into the nature of contributions the peasants make to the national wealth, the proportion that go to them and the relative position of the urban and rural societies in terms of exploitation and rewards for productive services.

Anthropological courses should not merely adopt the old-fashioned ideas of record of the traditional system. The courses should include the knowledge of the changes going on in the rural areas.

Urban studies should concentrate on discovering the multifarious causes of urban destitution, delinquencies, immorality, prostitution, slumps, deaths and births, hospital cares, sanitation and the relevance of these knowledge in the making of policies and therefore influencing ideological movements that can transform the social and cultural life of the people.

We should avoid such methodological approaches that make us stray away from the fact that an intellectual standpoint is valid form of scholarship and that a standpoint is only meaningful if it has an ideological leaning. Economic and political theories were propounded by social scientists and the application of these theories was useful in building up the political and economic systems of contemporary western civilization. There are bourgeois oriented economists as well as liberal and socialists economists. The economist, political scientist or sociologist should not dabble into such methodology that will make him believe that he should eschew himself away from giving his research its ideological content. The pursuit of all these is what I term the pursuit of relevance, the pursuit of fundamental or strategic research. Most of our university schemes in the social science discipline are adopted from the universities abroad.

Conclusion

This paper has been made provocative for the simple reason that, being the first Annual Conference with a theme – **Sociology and Anthropology for Nigeria; What For?** – one should be free to express his opinion and to cause dissent among one's colleagues. I have briefly narrated the history of the social sciences in Nigeria and the control of the fields of social science by the expatriate staff. I should not be misunderstood by thinking that non-Nigerians, especially the whites, cannot feel as passionate as some of us in matters concerning the study of our society. No. There are radical and committed expatriate intellectuals who in fact show greater concern than the Nigerians. They are as ideologically involved as some of us, and they have done much to contribute to our knowledge of our society.

I have analysed the nature of our society principally to show that such a complex and dynamic society presents great challenge to us as social scientists,

and that the method of study should be of a critical, analytical and non-conformist approach, and not dressed with conservatism. My suggestions reveal my own intellectual exposition and inclinations. I make no apologies for my belief.

Notes

1. *African Studies in the Americas – The Extended Family* – A tribal analysis of USA Africanists: African Research Group: Boston, pg. 48.
2. Op. cit., pg. 38.
3. Ibid., pg. 38.
4. *The Founding Fathers* (ed), Pelican 1970. Article by Haven Lukes on Saint Simon, pg. 51
5. Fredrick Engels, *Socialism Scientific or Utopia*. International Publishers, N.Y., pg. 38.
6. *The Founding Fathers*: Lukes, pg. 38.
7. Raymond Aaron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, vol. I. Pelican, 1965, pg. 68.
8. Several Writers have summarized Marx's major works; T.B. Bottomore & Maximian Rubel: *Karl Marx*; Selected writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy; Pelican Book. A. C. Watts & Co. London. 1961; David Conte, *Essential Writings of Karl Marx*; Panther Books: London 1967; Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, Cambridge University Press 1970.
9. Kurt H. Wolf (ed), *Emile Durkheim Essays on Sociology and Philosophy*. Harper Torch Books N.Y.1964. Contains essays and appraisal of Durkheims works.
10. Talcott Persons, *Max Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Unwin, University Books, London 1970 (10th impression) Reinhardt Bendix: *Max Weber – An Intellectual Portrait*.
11. Heinaman Lon. 1960. Here Professor Bendix examines the various aspects of Weber's work: Also Gert and Mill: *Max Weber's Essays in Sociology*: Kegan and Paul, London 19. Both authors review in an introduction the contributions of Weber and publishers his essential works.
12. J. Piet Thoemes, *The Elite in the Welfare State*. J. A. Bonks (ed), Faber and Faber: Lond. 1962, pg. 39.
13. Harold Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London 1967: *Liberty in the Modern State*; *The State in Theory and Practice*. *Communist Manifesto*: A Socialist Landmark American Democracy are other works in which he interprets society from a Marxist Social standpoint and showed great concern over the political and showed great concern over the political philosophy of the age.
14. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imaginations*; Oxford University Press 1958, pg. 5.
15. C. Wright Mills, op. cit., pp. 5-7.

Social Scientists and the Challenge of our Civilization

16. Nzimiro I., Ethnic Nationalism and the Nigerian Nation: Paper prepared for Frantz Fanon Research Centre.
17. Radcliffe-Brown & Daryll Forde (ed), *African System of Kinship and Marriage*: OUP 1950. Forde, *Double Descent among the Yako*; pp. 285-332. Simon Ottenberg, *Double Descent in an African Society. The Afikpo Village-Group*: University of Washington Press, Seattle/London, 1968.
18. Nzimiro I, *Social Stratification in Nigeria*, Forthcoming Book.
19. C. Edward Hopen, *The Pastoral Fulbe Family in Gwanda*; OUP 1958. Derek J. Stenning, *Savana Nomads: A study of the Wadaabe Pastoral Fulani of Western Bornu Province of Northern Nigeria*, OUP 1959.
20. Nzimiro I., *Social Stratification in Nigeria*: Forthcoming book: Nwankwo-Ifejika Publishing Co. Contains brief and summary discussions of Craft Organisation as form of occupational stratification in these areas.
21. S.F. Nadel, *The Black Byzantism*; OUP 1942. M. G. Smith, *Government in Zazzau*; OUP 1960. John Boston, *The Igala Kingdom*, OUP 1968. Nzimiro I., *Chieftancy and Politics in Four Niger States*, Frank Cass (forthcoming) 1971. R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*, OUP. 1957. Peter Lloyd, *The Sacred Kingship among the Yoruba*; Africa XXX July 1960, No. 3 and other works. Nsugbe Philip, *The Age Grade among the Ohafia Ibo*, Oxford University, B. Litt Thesis, 1965.
22. Nzimiro I., Anthropologists and their Terminologies: Paper presented to the annual Conference of Nigeria Economic Society held at Ibadan, February, 1965.
23. Popper Karl, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, London, 1967, pg. 49.
24. Nzimiro I., Ethnic Nationalism and Nigerian Nation: Paper prepared for Frantz Fanon Research Centre, Enugu.
25. Nzimiro I., op. cit.
26. Alan, Sokoloski, *The Establishment of Manufacturing Industry in Nigeria*: Praeger Publishers N.Y., pp. 287-343.
27. Nzimiro I., An Article on the Irresponsibility of the Intellectuals in a Chapter of a Forthcoming Book, *The Dialectics of the Nigerian Civil War*, Nwankwo-Ifejika Publishing Company due February, 1971.