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# Cultural Ecological Factors in Nigerian Child-Rearing

## Exploration of the Concepts of *iwa* and *kirki*

Edward Adeyanju and Frank A. Salamone

**Abstract. –** Long ago Margaret Mead noted that society chooses child-rearing patterns to shape a child into its cultural ideal of an adult. Erik Erikson developed a general psychosocial theory encompassing the interplay between psychological and cultural forces working in child development. One of the authors tested these relationships among the Hausa, finding that some of Erikson's concepts had validity in explaining Hausa sociocultural life; others did not. Therefore, this article tests Mead's more culturally sensitive notion of child-rearing patterns as cultural efforts to fit children into patterns which will shape culturally fit adults. For the Yoruba the term is *iwa*; for the Hausa this concept is summed up under the term *kirki*. *[Nigeria, Yoruba, Hausa, child-rearing, Margaret Mead, Erik Erikson]*

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In this article, the relationship between the types of errands engaged in by Yoruba and Hausa toddlers of Nigeria and cognitive performance is examined as a measure of cultural fit between parental goals and child-rearing patterns. Other measures are also employed. Margaret Mead's daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson, in her "Word for a New Century" (Bateson 2001: xv), written for the republication of Mead's "Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies" (2001c), wrote "Several of Mead's field trips focused on child-rearing. Writers have been telling parents how to raise their children for centuries; however, the systematic observation of child development was just beginning, and she was among the first to study it cross-culturally." Mead was adamant that societies that neglected children were not good societies. She also called attention to the fact that child-rearing was clearly geared at producing a particular kind of adult. Ruth Benedict[1], her teacher and friend, most likely influenced her ideas on the subject as did Franz Boas, the doyen of American anthropology.

Over a period from 1970 to 1990 Salamone conducted field work on eight separate occasions in various parts of Nigeria, including Yauri in what was Northwest State and then Sokoto State; Jos in what was Plateau State; Ife, Ibadan, and Lagos in the southwest area of Nigeria, and in various other areas for shorter periods. In each of these areas Hausa and Yoruba were in daily contact with one another. In some places, the Yoruba were rulers, in others, the Hausa. In Jos, neither was in control of local government. Numerous publications reflect his ideas and empirical work on the Hausa.[2] Salamone has also conducted less systematic research among these groups in the United States. It was ob-

1 Benedict (1934, 1937, 1942 [Shaw Lecture 1], 1946; and her "Shaw Lectures 2, 3, 5, 6" 1941a–d).

2 Salamone (2010a–c, 2007a–c, 1998a–b, 1972, 1970); Butler and Salamone 2004; Salamone and Salamone (2007); among others.

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vious that there were complementary differences between the groups, which were easily seen in their child-rearing patterns. Therefore, what was mainly a hunch based on ethnographic experiences has received systematic analysis here.

Adeyanju spent his years in Nigeria in various occupations, including journalism, banking, and writing books on politics and economics. These pursuits gave him opportunities to observe his own group, the Yoruba, as well as their interaction with other groups. Frequent and widespread travel widened his observations of Nigeria's ethnic groups, their cultures and their social structures. His move to the United States has deepened his observations and reflections.

The authors have known each other for over twenty years and have often shared their thoughts on matters and people Nigerian. That different groups have varying sociocultural systems was obvious. How these systems came about and were recreated generation after generation, socially reproduced, was a matter for theoretical and empirical exploration. This article seeks to investigate not only childhood practices, which reproduce adults to fit into the culturally approved pattern, but to examine the philosophical concepts behind those patterns. For the Yoruba these philosophical ideas are encompassed in the term *iwa*. Similarly, for the Hausa the designation is *kirki*. Accordingly, we seek to examine the manner in which Yoruba and Hausa employ the concepts of *iwa* and *kirki* to the process of child-rearing in order to shape the personality and behavior of their children to meet cultural expectations of ideal adults. These expectations, moreover, have evolved from the cultural environment in which these significant groups have shaped their identities.

## Summary of Hausa Culture and Child-Rearing

In "Erikson in Nigeria" (2010: 120) F. Salamone and V. Salamone wrote:

> *Kirki* provides the Hausa with an essential element for their social mask. It is essential to their economic activity, which benefits from the ability to move among and identify with a vast number of potential customers. *Kirki* woven into the individual's social mask does not have one ideal manifestation but rather presents itself in a range of acceptable forms. Ultimately, the purpose is to smooth the way for friction free, open-door relations.

Ethnographic background is appropriate here to place the concept of *kirki* in its correct context. There are about 50 million Hausa speakers in West Africa, primarily in northern Nigeria and southern Niger. The variation among these 50 million people is great. A common language masks great variation from community to community, a variation made greater by the process of "becoming Hausa" in which minority groups change their ethnic identities to gain various privileges reserved for the ruling class. Unsurprisingly, the Islam of many Hausa groups is quite syncretic.

The Hausa, then, are usually considered to comprise the Hausa-speaking Muslim population of northern Nigeria and the adjacent areas of Niger, which have traditionally been organized into large, centralized states. In fact, they include these people and many others who are not Muslims but have some semblance of a generalized Hausa culture. Originally, the name "Hausa" referred only to the language of the Habe people of northern Nigeria. These people were organized into seven independent but interrelated states called Biram, Daura, Kano, Katsina, Gobir, Rano, and Zazzau or Zaria.

The Fulani, or Fulbe, conquered these states and the seven other "illegitimate" Hausa states early in the nineteenth century. Under the leadership of Usman dan Fodio, the Fulani waged a jihad or Muslim "holy war" against the Habe, whom they accused of being lax in the practice of Islam. The Fulbe established the Sokoto Caliphate, ultimately incorporating fifteen states or emirates into the caliphate. Fulani rulers replaced Habe ones.

The overthrown dynasties of two Habe states, Zaria and Katsina, established the new states of Abuja and Maradi. A third new Habe state was founded at Argungu. These three states preserved Habe customs, virtually unchanged by Fulani customs. The Fulani rulers of the conquered Habe states became "Hausaized," becoming sedentary town Fulani, rather than the pastoral Fulani of the jihad. They took Habe wives, spoke the Hausa language, and took on other customs of the conquered people. The Hausa of Nigeria are chiefly found in the provinces of Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, and Zaria, with a population about six to eight million people. When one adds other Hausa speakers in Niger and communities in Ghana and throughout West Africa, the figure is about 50 million.

Over time, the term Hausa became even more extensive, referring to the original Habe population, the town Fulani, the mixed population in the Hausa states, and other groups in the area, such as Tuareg, Kanuri, Gungawa, and others who have accepted Hausa language and culture. The term also includes "pagan" Hausa speakers, the Maguzawa.

The fact that Hausa are famous for their markets and trading is important to understanding the need for the Hausa to maintain their separate ethnic iden-



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tification in Ibadan and all other areas where the two ethnic groups come into contact. Their vast trading network is held together through ties of clientele and kinship. Many, if not most, transactions are sealed with a handshake, not with written contracts. Thus, ethnic ties are essential to the maintenance and perpetuation of the system. In sum, Muslim Hausa social organization is characterized by a complex system of stratification, based on occupation, wealth, birth, and patron-client ties. The Hausa prize wealth and use it to form patronage links. However, wealth also brings with it the burden of great responsibility. The patron-client relationship binds all Hausa men to some extent. The very qualities subsumed under the expression *kirki* are those required for the system to maintain and reproduce itself.

*Kirki* reveals itself in selfless gestures throughout the life cycle. It is a moral concept expressed through appropriate behavior. It is not, however, simply an emotional concept. The Hausa are clear on this point. It is in Kohlberg's terms "a cognitive-developmental … theory … translated into a rational and viable … educational ideology" (Kohlberg and Mayer 1972: 450). *Kirki* is something good to think about. Indeed, it clearly requires a lifetime of thought to understand. It is, therefore, a developmental concept, unfolding over the course of the lifespan. Each stage of life possessing its own proper measure and variation of *kirki* contributes to a holistic understanding of its meaning to Hausa ethos. Without *kirki*, it is safe to state that there is no Hausa identity. Proverbs relating to *kirki* urge the point. Three examples suffice.

*Alheri dankone baya paduwa kasa banza.* This proverb – "Happy the small area before dust made it a useless land" – is used to prod people to do some good as they pass through life. Abdullahi (1990), our Hausa informant, first translated it as, "When you pass through life you must do some good. Even a little evil turns the land useless while a little good makes it blossom." The power of *kirki* to promote harmony in life flows logically from the belief that the good of all people is interconnected.

Another proverb states: *barewa tayi gududanta vayi rarrape*. Literally, it says the antelope runs and the child cries. Aside from its obvious meaning that each creature has its appropriate action and should not be forced to do what it is not yet capable of doing, a good developmental principle, it has other meanings. It is used to remind people to provide models of behavior for youngsters. How else can a child know what is appropriate for an adult to do unless the adult model that behavior? Otherwise, the child will never grow past the crying stage.

Finally, *sai bango yar tsage kadangare kan sammi mushi ga*, precisely means, unless the road is straight you cannot enter the hut. The Hausa employ this proverb to warn mothers-in-law not to meddle in family affairs unless invited to do so. Through extension, they warn all those who would meddle without knowledge or invitation not to do so. *Kirki* refers to knowing how and when to act appropriately. Rushing in to interfere in other people's affairs is not an appropriate behavior. In all things, caution and decorum must prevail. Precipitate behavior is not seemly. The Hausa must appear unrushed, collected, and in control of emotions.

Social situations appropriate for the display of *kirki* are frequently satisfied through displays of generosity. Using Dell Hymes' (1962) distinction between competence and performance, *kirki* can be viewed as a component of personality, the sincerity of which can only be assumed through overt actions performed at the appropriate times. Using generosity as one measure, the wealthy Hausa would seem to have the edge over the poor Hausa in the performance of *kirki* (Barkow 1974). Yet linking the performance of generous acts to *kirki* can be misleading.

Hausa regard the poor man who gives his mite to beggars in good cheer to fulfill the obligations of *kirki* with no less respect than they view the wealthy man who gives from his greater wealth. The child who, with cheerful carriage, assists his juniors displays *kirki* no less than the adult patron who aids his client. At every age and at every level in the social hierarchy, Hausa are offered opportunities to display sincere *kirki*. Every aspect of Hausa society is charged with the energy of *kirki*.

The Hausa maintain that God gives riches to people in trust. The more important a person is the more he or she must display *kirki*. Everyone in life must take care of everyone else, with God taking care of the entire community. Great riches bring great responsibility, for they offer a person greater opportunity to display *kirki*. If a person meets his or her obligations in a manner satisfactory to the community, then the Hausa adult possessing a blend of competence and performance in *kirki* is rewarded with sanction to move through the geographic and social space of diverse groups.

Michael G. Smith (1959: 129) characterized Hausa culture as one of patron-client relationships; a description, which remains undiminished until now. Factors including birth-order, family prestige, and individual personality assist the Hausa in determining the patron-client nature of all relationships in their highly stratified society. Socialization practices active throughout life assist the Hausa in determining whether (s)he should view self as the patron responsible to a client or a client responsible to a



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patron in a particular relationship. The patron-client nature of Hausa culture is maintained in part by the practice of *dan faxi* and *tallafi*.

*Tallafi*, or child adoption, is a method used to extend the social ties of a Hausa child. Commonly, it occurs between the ages of two and three when a child undergoes weaning. At that time, a mother has another baby. The older child's leaving to live with another nuclear family coincides with the younger child's appearance and serves to emphasis a distinction between them as well as to teach the older child the limits of a nuclear family's ability to satisfy all his or her emotional needs. At the same time, it also demonstrates the role of the extended family network in meeting the needs of its members, for those who adopt the child tend to be its maternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other relatives or fictive kin. Thus, the child, who rarely resides far from the parents, is provided communal support and nurture while learning about the extent and boundaries of his or her social world.

Internalization of the demands of *kirki* begins in childhood. A Hausa child is rewarded when *kirki* is displayed in childlike fashion in age appropriate situations. This childhood activity lays the foundation for adult displays of *kirki*, an integral and essential value in adult Hausa relationships. Its timely display serves to reduce the stress associated with social interaction, thus diminishing the possibility of conflict. Hausa marketing economy relies upon the individual's ability to develop numerous social ties and to sustain those ties while moving through a wide network of suppliers and customers. *Kirki* is a social commodity culturally constructed which enables the Hausa to fulfill their roles as prime entrepreneurs throughout Nigeria and the rest of West Africa (Mahdi 1979).

## Yoruba Origin

There are different stories about the origin of the Yoruba people, but the common bridge between the versions is the fact of Oduduwa as a common ancestor. The origin of the Yoruba in Nigeria cannot clearly be deciphered. It is believed that their primary ancestors, the Oduduwa, came from Egypt. This assumption is based on the resemblance of the sculptures found in Egypt and the sculptures found in the mythological center of Yoruba life, the city of Ife (Balandier and Maquet 1974: 1–26).

History shows that Portuguese explorers "discovered" Yoruba cities and kingdoms in the fifteenth century, but cities such as Ife and Benin, among others, had existed at their present sites for more than five hundred years prior to the arrival of Europeans. Archeological proof indicates that technologically and artistically advanced, proto-Yoruba (Nok) were living somewhat north of the Niger in the first millennium B.C., and they were then already working with iron.

The Yoruba people (Yorùbá in Yoruba orthography) are one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa. The majority of the Yoruba speak the Yoruba language (Yoruba: *èdèe Yorùbá; èdè*). The Yoruba constitute around 50 million individuals throughout West Africa and are found predominantly in Nigeria with approximately 41 percent of its total population. The Yoruba share borders with the Borgu (variously called Bariba and Borgawa) in the northwest, the Nupe (whom they often call Tapa), and Ebira in the north, the Edo, the Ẹsan and Afemai to the southeast. The Igala and other related groups are found in the northeast, and the Egun, Fon, and other Gbe-speaking peoples in the southwest. While the majority of the Yoruba live in western Nigeria, there are also substantial indigenous Yoruba communities in the Republic of Benin, Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, USA, the United Kingdom, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Panama, Grenada, Puerto Rico, Ghana and Togo.

The British officially colonized the Yoruba land in 1901, but a system of indirect rule was established that imitated the structure of Yoruba governance. The Yoruba people have a rich cultural heritage, which they take seriously. Greetings constitute an important part of their daily life. While greetings are exchanged, it is important for the people to smile; and when asked about the wellbeing of someone, time is given to respond as this is considered to be polite. The Yoruba greet their elders with a lot of respect, the boys prostrate to greet their elders, while their female counterparts greet by kneeling on one or two knees. This practice is inculcated in boys and girls right from childhood.

As part of Yoruba people's rich culture, there are different forms of dance, arts, music, dressing, and philosophy. Proverbs and adages form a significant part of everyday language and are used widely in all forms of communication. This is also used as a complement in music where talking drums communicate praises or antagonize opponents as the case may be.

A people's beliefs and values, and their ideas, about the qualities that children have to develop in order to function effectively as adults in the society influence the ways in which people raise their children and interact with them. The requirements of life in a particular society, the skills and abilities valued by that society also influence their child-



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rearing practices. All these factors constitute a most important set of influences on the child's development. These factors make up the child's social environment, and they differ from one cultural group to another. For example, in some African societies, where the boy child is valued more than the girl child, preferential treatment is given to the boy to encourage his growth (Apanpa 2002: 10).

However, trends changed with the introduction of free education as a political program of governments in power in home states of the Yoruba. This afforded every child equal opportunity for education irrespective of gender. In the same parlance, free medical services were introduced simultaneously to promote the good health of children and ensure that they are able to exhibit their full potential. Given the opportunity, it was only a matter of time when women began to emerge as outstanding successes in their various careers. Unlike male children, female children have been found to exhibit great passion, concern, and care for their parents even when they are married. Parents currently value whatever sex of any child they have. Parents now would rather invest in proper education and good upbringing of their children. They place more emphasis on good character and virtues that will make them stand out among others as responsible and intelligent children.

A good and gentle character is the objective of child-rearing in Yoruba land. Most families cherish their good name and want everyone in the lineage to work hard to preserve it. Some people would rather behave like a man who prefers to die rather than bring reproach to the family name. Yoruba revere the African proverb: "Good character is sufficient armor against any untoward happening in life. Anyone who wears it need fear nothing." Yoruba also believe in maintaining one's character. Hence the saying: "Honor can leave from the house of a person. Beauty can leave from the body of a person. However a person's character will go with a person to the grave."

It is part of Yoruba belief that the child's character gives the child a name. Character is like smoke, it will always resurface. Character will never leave its owner alone. No matter how handsome or beautiful a child may be, without a good character something very valuable is missing. A good character is a person's bodyguard. A good character translates to gentleness and accommodating others with benevolence. Patience is the progenitor of character; character is the progenitor of blessings. To have a successful life, one seeks to develop gentleness (*iwa pele*). *Iwa pele* translates to good character in English and *kirki* in the Hausa language. This concept represents the growth of beauty and depth of character from within. By our actions and interaction, we demonstrate that we are in harmony or balance with our being and the universal concepts or traditional way of life showing respect to all as part of concert of creation. *iwa pele* enables one to understand the importance of responsibility and the consequences that come from positive or negative actions.

Advancing towards a good character requires the virtues of integrity, objectivity, a good heart, honesty, and dependability. These virtues are key attributes that must be inculcated during child-rearing. Child-rearing in traditional Yoruba society is hardly a one-person's job. One of the Yoruba proverbs is "*eni kan lo n bimo, opo eniyan lo n ba'ni to*," meaning that only one person gives birth to a child, but many people take part in rearing the child. The supportive role of both close and distant kinsmen and other family members in child-rearing has been documented (Oni 1995: 21–34).

The result of a good character in developing an inner peace, resilience, and a good reputation helps build good social relations as well as a strong and righteous society for posterity. These worthy social relations help to build a strong and righteous community for one's children and their children. The Yoruba prefer to rear children who can make individual decisions within the context and understanding of the world they live in and who do what is universally correct rather than have children who simply act in arbitrary ways in conformity to personal standards or standards of special groups.

Therefore, responsibility training is an essential component of child-rearing practices in several African societies. To inculcate responsibility, caregivers allocate their children household duties and send them on errands; these include (but are not limited to) fetching objects and purchasing items. Such errands foster the acquisition of cognitive, social, and economic competencies. In this article, the relationship between the types of errands engaged in by Yoruba toddlers of southwest Nigeria and cognitive performance, using an adapted version of the Bayley Mental Scales of Development[3] referred to as the "Yoruba Mental Subscale," is examined. Findings revealed that children who engaged in purchasing items and retrieving specific objects for the caregiver had a significantly higher performance on the Yoruba Mental Subscale compared to children who did not engage in such errands (Ogunnaike and Houser 2002).

3 The Bayley Scales of Infant Development (BSID) measure the mental and motor development and test the behavior of infants from one to 42 months of age.



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## Yoruba Culture and Child-Rearing

Yoruba is the second largest language group in Africa, consisting of over 20 million people. In common with the Hausa, many Yoruba groups were not united under one ruler. There were at least twenty-five separate groups encompassed under the linguistic and cultural term Yoruba. Indeed, there were differences between any one Yoruba group and each of the others. The common bond among the Yoruba peoples is the central role ritual plays in Yoruba life in everyday life as well as for special occasions. Among Nigerians, Yoruba are known as a religious people, specialists in religion who have the most elaborate beliefs and ritual found in the area. In fact, the Yoruba seem capable of holding many contradictory religious beliefs in the heads at the same time. Similarly, their ritual is notable for its transmutative quality. It can adapt to any circumstance and improvisation is its keynote. Performers and spectators often appear to swap places during the ritual performance. In sum, the Yoruba can and do embrace contradictory ideas that are "this" and "that too."

By all accounts and universal Yoruba belief, Ife was the first of the Yoruba cities and is the sacred center of Yoruba belief and ritual. Although Oyo and Benin are younger cities, they became kingdoms while Ife remained a city-state. Oyo and Benin, as did other Sudanic centers, based their expansion on trade and their ability to control trade. Despite granting religious and cultural prominence to Ife, however, Yoruba gave their political allegiance to their individual cities, regions, or kingdoms. Each city regarded other Yoruba cities as foreigners. In fact, as is so often the case, the very name for the people, Yoruba, came from another ethnic group. In this case, it was the Hausa.

Yoruba culture, an urban-based system, spread throughout much of West Africa. Indeed, the Yoruba prided themselves on their urbanity. Of course, each of its cities depended on a widespread system of productive farms. These farms enabled the Yoruba to develop great art and crafts, such as bronze casting, music, and decorations. Their religious ideas and practices spread very quickly. For example, their divination system called *ifa* is still found in areas, which the Yoruba do not control.

Throughout the world colonial powers created situations that led to the emergence of new or newly defined ethnic groups. People reacted to the exigencies of the colonial situation through forming groups that protected their situations or that enabled them to seek a better position in the novel reality of colonial political, social, economic, and religious life. The Zulu and Sotho, for example, materialized from the conditions of British colonialism in South Africa. The Yoruba, a collection of warring and disparate peoples speaking related languages and sharing core traditions, found it expedient to shape a common identity to interact with other similar created identities in the colonial situation of Nigeria.

But we can go beyond this profoundly simple fact. Social actors, no matter how cynical, like stage actors, often inhabit their roles so completely that they become this role. We find people seeking to distinguish themselves from their fronts or social selves. They may bring family pictures to work or play music they particularly like there, even if it is not what others may like. Whatever the means, there is an attempt to fight the capture of their innermost selves from their social fronts. But anyway the two may merge. Perhaps, one has become so socialized that there is little difference between the two. Or there may be great reward in being one with those whom other admire. The feedback process has a great deal to do with the overall process of identity formation and identification.

The colonial authority had culturally mummified "tradition" via historical acts of promulgation. Abner Cohen (1993), however, has drawn attention to another aspect that is more subversive. His work has been concerned with the powerful forces of culture, through music and dance performance, in mobilizing a popular awareness of underlying political and economic interests. Such performances may be considered as collective representations in a Durkheimian sense. They express and promote the growth of a certain confidence, a mutual credibility; a gathering will to succeed that is as relevant to understanding subversive popular movements as it is to understanding the dynamics of the market in the mainstream domain of economics.

In his analysis of the Hausa community of Sabo, Abner Cohen (1969) argues cogently that the group reestablished its solidarity through its recognition of and adherence to a particular form of Islam, as the reference to ethnic solidarity became increasingly less viable. Cohen demonstrates how a group may reconstitute itself on different bases, how new identities are fore fronted to maintain cohesion, and how this new focus can become a basis for mobilization and transformation of the community. In his analysis of the Hausa community of Sabo, he argues cogently that the group reestablished its solidarity through its recognition of and adherence to a particular form of Islam, as the reference to ethnic solidarity became increasingly less viable.

Ethnic identity is a type of political identity. It is a means of mobilizing support to attain perceived goals, support which calls upon the principle of



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ethnicity, or presumed common descent (R. Cohen 1978: 370–403). That it changes over time to suit various situations has been established in numerous places (Hendrixson 1980). Although ethnic, and, therefore, political identities are mutually negotiated, there are limits to the process. The British, for instance, possessed a colonial ideology based on evolutionary anthropology. That ideology was indeed flexible, but it was not very malleable. When it could not be reinterpreted or adjusted, it forced rigid, even logical, compliance within the constructed boundaries of the defined realities.

Ethnic identities are after all situational, as Ronald Cohen (1978: 388) has argued. "Ethnicity is first and foremost situational … the interactive situation is a major determinant of the level of inclusiveness employed in labeling self and others." What Cohen states about ethnic identity is also true of other identities as well. Moreover, it is through interaction and symbols that shape the content and perception of interaction, that identities are formed, established, and maintained.

### *Iwa Pele*

To understand the Yoruba, one must understand the concept of *iwa pele*. It is as essential to their élan vital as *kirki* is to the Hausa's worldview. *Iwa* is character. In Nigerian culture, people expect that begets like and parents want their children to keep those values that are synonymous with their family. Character is very important. Parents tell their children they should remember their roots. They must preserve the values of the family. *Iwa*, therefore, is character. It is part of one's inner self, which is expressed in demeanor and behavior.

Yoruba believe that it is a combination of nature and nurture, in the same way that a fertile seed must be cultivated and cared for in rich soil. The phonotypical expression is a function of the environment. There is a genetic codification of such virtues in the life of the baby, but what really brings it to fruition is the environment. In the appropriate environment, people will train the child to meet a number of cultural needs. Parents and others will teach the child to speak the language, to be able to eat the proper kind of food, and to train the child to greet and respect the elders. A baby girl is taught how to kneel down, and a baby boy is taught how to prostrate himself. Moreover, children must talk to their elders with respect. In traditional times, the entire community took care and raised the children. Thus, in some way, a child had many parents and had to respect the community.

The goal of child-raising is to produce an acceptable adult. The Yoruba ideal is clear. A mature Yoruba male will be able to take care of his family. He will be dependable and hard working. He will manage his family affairs and make the final decision in the family. His wife is supposed to complement her husband. Of course, women have ways of influencing decisions and only appearing to fade into the background. If a man is not strong enough in character to take proper responsibility, then his wife will step in. She will do trading or whatever else is necessary to be able to take care of both her husband and children. Character is taking one's responsibility wherever it may lead.

Yoruba parents train their children to remember where they have come from. No matter what else is going around them, memory of their source and roots should carry a Yoruba calmly through difficulty. Yoruba children are taught that they can be whatever they want to be and to draw strength from their family's name and reputation. They are taught to be quiet in the face of harassment and tribulations. There is a belief that when you calm yourself down, when you appear indifferent to whatever they are saying, they will keep silent. Yoruba children are taught to respect others and to be aware that every action has a reaction. Thus, Yoruba often appear indifferent to problems and quite analytical. However, it is not that they are indifferent to problems. They are taught to remain calm and analyze what is happening, before they come out with their position. It is a cliché that it takes a village to raise a child. However, among the Yoruba this is the ideal. Everyone in the village is responsible for helping to raise a child younger than herself and himself. The child is made to feel safe and loyal in his or her community. Character means to keep from disgracing one's family and network. It means to be true to one's heritage and thus to oneself.

## Conclusion

Wang and Viney (1997: 139 f.) write in their developmental study of Chinese school children,

> Dialectical framework has attracted the interest of developmental psychologists because of its emphasis on process and changeability (Peterson 1966). Holding a dialectical metamodel of development (Wang 1991), the authors view psychosocial development as a process ever-moving towards psychosocial maturity governed by the contradictions inherent within that process. Within this metatheoretical framework, Erikson's epigenetic model of psychosocial development has been considered more appropriate than other available Western theories, not only because he



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has been one of the major sources to have guided the research in this field (Newman & Newman, 1995), but also because his theory is concerned with crises and their resolution and it has been regarded as dialectical (Maier 1979; Miller 1983; Verhofstadt-Deneve 1985).

As Salamone and Salamone (1993) and V. Salamone (1991) have shown, *kirki* is a dominant value in Hausa society. Consequently, each stage of Hausa child-rearing is geared toward guiding the child toward progressing, toward the perfection of that virtue as an adult. Similarly, the Yoruba concept of *iwa pele* leads the Yoruba child toward achieving and demonstrating characteristics associated with it as an adult and at each stage of human development. Wang and Viney (1997) support the developmental hypothesis put forward here in general support of Erikson's processual and developmental psychosocial theory (Erikson 1950, 1994a–b). It also supports Margaret Mead's overall view of child-rearing; namely, that cultures have a view of the ideal adult, shaped by their society's needs and their adaptations to those needs (1969, 2001a–c). It was a view, which Ruth Benedict strongly influenced.

It is clear that *kirki* functions multivocally within Hausa culture. It is clear, indeed, an identity marker between Hausa and others. Moreover, it is a measure of "Hausaness" within Hausa society. Simply, those who exhibit more *kirki* are somehow more Hausa. Although Hausa exhibit *kirki* through behavior, they see no dichotomy between thinking about morality and actual behavior as the proverbs above demonstrate. Behavior springs from the presence or absence of *kirki*. Those who have *kirki* will behave in a responsible and gentle manner. Those who do not, will be *banza* (worthless) and their behavior will approach that of groups least like Hausa. Over the course of the lifespan, a Hausa learns more about the meaning of *kirki*. There is an appropriate *kirki* for each stage of life and for each position on the social scale. Moreover, there is an appropriate *kirki* for each gender and each status within that gender – parents, grandparents, widows, divorced women, prostitutes, businessmen or women, ad infinitum. *Kirki* has many manifestations that stem from one source.

The Hausa in discussion come enticingly close to confounding *kirki* with the Hausa soul, life force, or "genius." In a manner close to Kohlberg's conceptualization,[4] Hausa see a progressive development of moral thinking. Unlike Kohlberg, they see that thinking is intrinsically linked to moral behavior. Behavior flows from a state of being and thinking (*barewa tayi gudu danta yayi rarrape*). Moral thinking revolves around the guiding theme of *kirki*. It is an organizing and referential theme. It mobilizes appropriate behavior and all behavior is referred to it for evaluation. Thus, when thinking about themselves, Hausa assess their identity in terms of its fit with the demands of *kirki*.

Certainly, for Hausa ego development, their sense of identity, involves increasing ties of relationship, multiplying bonds rather than moving toward independence. In sum, the examination of the Hausa theme *kirki* suggests that the concept of developmental stage is more than a Western construct, indiscriminately applied to indigenous cultures. These cultures have their own views of development that perceive it as a progressive series of stages. The Hausa do see development as leading to greater self-knowledge; that is, identity. They define identity communally. Moreover, they do appreciate moral cognitive development as an unfolding of understanding and thinking about moral issues. These issues tend to concern *kirki*. Nonetheless, they do not distinguish between thinking about *kirki* and exhibiting its influence in behavior. *Kirki* speaks to a person's essence in a rather Platonic fashion, and a person (male or female) behaves according to his or her essence and cannot help doing so.

The Hausa data also suggest that female cognitive moral development parallels, but is different from male development. However, the indigenous Hausa categories are univocal in supporting those who contend in the need to attend to separate, but related, development schemes for male and female. Finally, the Hausa data are clear in asserting the need to heed relational elements in development. Attention to indigenous systems sensitizes us to the value of culturally defined relationships and the manner in which these enter into day-to-day relationships. This work takes the next step; namely, looking at another Nigerian group, which has had great interaction over time with the Hausa; namely, the Yoruba.

For the Yoruba *iwa pele* functions in the same manner as *kirki*; that is, it serves as a cultural ideal to which children are socialized. *Iwa pele* is best translated as good character. It takes precedence over every other goal, for if a person has a good character, then he or she has all the other virtues as well. That person will know what to do in every situation. It will also enable its possessor to compete in the battle of life, excelling in the struggle to uphold the honor of one's family and community. The acceptable child is one who can negotiate with others, gaining accolades in his or her field of endeavor

4 Kohlberg (1966); Kohlberg and Gilligan (1971); Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1983).



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be it parenting, trading, ruling, or surviving amidst the struggles of everyday life.

Additionally, Yoruba are raised to keep a cool head. Neither should they be the first, nor the last to embrace a cause or ideal. Rather they should be judicious in examining its merits, evaluating its costs and gains, and then supporting it strongly. It is not only material benefits, which are taken into account, but spiritual and familial concerns as well. The need to keep one's character above reproach comes into play, at least ideally, in these decisions and actions. One must be a person of good character to be taken seriously and to advance one's family interests. Child-rearing is geared very openly toward that goal. Nancy Munn (1975: 579) defines rituals from the "inside out" as "a symbolic intercom between the level of cultural thought and complex cultural meanings, on the one hand, and that of social action and immediate event, on the other." It is from that perspective that we have examined child-raising in this work. There is a clear connection between the concept of *iwa pele* and the manner in which Yoruba seek to raise their children. Babatunde and Setiloane (2011) write:

> Anthropological literature on African infant care practices (Babatunde 1992) reiterates that children are being prepared to seek group survival through acquiring a sense of belonging and loyalty to the group. Living in a harsh environment with rudimentary technology, other people constitute ones' technology (Turnbull 1974). So Yoruba parents teach their children obligatory sharing. They also teach them practical lessons by withholding portions of meat, eggs, and other animal foods from children because they believe that when children acquire tastes in these expensive and scarce commodities, the desire to satisfy them will make children steal (Ransome-Kuti 1972). From a more pragmatic economic perspective, it was also considered most uneconomical to eat an egg that could produce a chicken, which would in turn produce more chickens. Thus, in the attempt to teach discipline, self-denial and deferred gratification, this pattern of food distribution within the family leads to unintended nutritional crises. Although claims about these crises were made in qualitative research studies, only in the 1990s were the claims empirically confirmed by quantitative research findings (Setiloane 1995).

Thus, even at the risk of individual danger, child-rearing patterns may persist if there is seen a possible gain for the group as a whole. This fact is in conformity with the concept of *iwa pele*, for an integral part of good character is to work for the good of the family first and then the group. One's destiny is fulfilled in such sublimation. Yoruba upbringing is directed toward promoting family solidarity, for such solidarity is a protection against others who may threaten the family. It is also a means for protecting family members against dangers of the environment.

Child-rearing among the Hausa and Yoruba, then, fulfills the expectation of Margaret Mead. Both societies prepare their children for the adults they wish them to become. While the specifics may differ, the overall goal remains the same: to produce adults who will carry on family honor and tradition. Each society may have different ideas of what this may consist. However, for the Hausa the concept of *kirki* encapsulates the highest of Hausa virtues as does the concept of *iwa pele* for the Yoruba. Both concepts are communal ideals in which the individual's self-actualization is found in promoting the highest interests of group solidarity and cohesion.

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