

Religio-Cultural Foundation and Resources of Human Relations in Africa

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Abstract

Human life is more meaningful and fulfilling only when lived and shared in healthy group relations. This way of understanding life is a fundamental influence and concomitant to the dynamics of building structures of association and wholesome co-operation. Human relations extend to all dimensions of life-hence: to live is to interact and, to interact is to relate. With the methods of phenomenology, this paper qualitatively analyzed the cultural foundations and religious fabrics of human relations. Culture and religious import of human relations underlie African peoples' worldview, values and patterns of interaction, communal living, hospitality, etc. In the industrial aspect, religious beliefs and practices, such as God's providence, intercessory prayer, staff fellowship, thanksgiving service, and retreat, are veritable tools for peace, motivation and viable operations.

Keywords

Africa, Nigeria, Human Relations, Culture, Religion, Fabrics, Resources

1. Introduction

Confucius, the Chinese sage and founder of Confucian religion forthrightly remarked that "Human beings draw close to one another by their common nature but habits and customs keep them apart" (in Samovar & Porter, 2003: p. 6). Humans make conscious effort to build structures of co-existence, good relations and appreciation of the apparent diversity and interests. Life makes meaning, only in group structure and, shared value system. This is why to live is to interact and, to interact is to relate. This is the fundamental drive of human existence. Through interactional processes subsumed in, and, defined by culture people exchange meanings and have reciprocal effect and affection upon one another's behaviour, expectation, thought, etc. The cultural fabric and fulcrum of human relations also take the form of interpersonal relations, which, however, develop out of sustained social network and patterned behaviour (Hogan, 2006: pp. 210-211).

In all aspects of life, the individual will meet and experience other people. No matter what one does for a living, or how well one does in his endeavours, relationship with other people is key to success or failure. The individual needs others in all effort to lead wholesome life. Divine root of human creation is the platform and inclination to relate. All world religions and worldviews crystallize profound story of creation in which the spirit and the physical substances in the human came together in a hypostatized union. The inseparable union is the driving force of all human cravings. The two facets of the human interact to determine personality disposition, action and, or inaction. The physical activities of the human being are seemingly focused towards sustaining wholesome relationship with the spiritual horizon. The sacred hypostatization is further underscored by the idea of destiny and fate in many religions and culture.

Wholesome life is guaranteed and consummated in recognition and interaction with others. Thus, the structure of human relations is founded on religious and cultural fabrics of society. It is the premise of human relations that bond and crystallize into all aspects of life, as in work organization-industrial relations. To buttress this phenomenon is the attempt made in this paper. Towards this end, the paper is logically structured to host a review of the evolution and early culture of humans, with a view to underscore the general human relations frame therein, as a content in the belief system and culture of the pristine age of history. In the next section, the specific fabrics of human relations in the African culture and lived experience further crystallized the argument. The thrust of the paper is yet advanced with an analysis of religious resources and content base of human relations, in the modern workplace organization and behaviour. The method of study is ethnographic and phenomenological approach of knowledge inquiry and qualitative analysis. This is skewed in Geertz phenomenological-hermeneutical perspective of explaining meanings in cultural patterns, (see [McGee & Warms, 2004: p. 596](#)).

All conceptions of human relations are about the human person and, how he gets along with his family, groups, and every human setting one comes into contact with and, interact. In sum, human relations are concerned with developing sustainable principles that promote profound understanding of human nature, cordial and harmonious existence. To analyze how these structures are built, promoted and sustained in African culture is the thrust of this academic exercise.

2. Culture and Early Signs of Human Relations

Culture consists of virtually everything a group of people do for survival-in thought pattern, belief, political organization, economy etc. Perhaps, it is biological issues and development that may be rightly excluded in conceptualizing the contents of culture, ([Iheanacho, 2012: p. 53](#)). Considering the conceptual frame and functional dynamics of culture, against the backdrop of human relations we consider plausible the views of [Wuthnow and Witten \(1988: p. 50\)](#), that culture is built into all social structures and relations, which put together constitute the underpinning assumptions and expectations upon which social interactions depend. Therefore, culture provides the frame and principles for the relationship of individuals within network of meanings, giving them sense of solidarity and making them distinct from other groups.

The renowned anthropologist, Haviland traced the evolution of human culture to the time when some population of early hominines started to make stone tools with which they butchered animals, for their meat. The foremost tools and evidence of this meat eating culture is traced back to about 2.5 million years ago. The period coincides with the appearance of the genus Homo, which was identified to be significantly enlarged, more than any of the early hominines. From this period onwards, there was importance attached to learned behaviour. This, in turn enhanced the improvement of culture as the fundamental force through which humans controlled, adapted and survived in life. Between 400,000 and 200,000 years ago, the human brain reached its modern size and potentials, and culture has continued to evolve and change, to the present time ([Haviland, 2002: p. 55](#)). As culture continues to evolve and change from one state and form to another, one underlying factor complementary of the human component is human relations.

Human culture evolution and development is therefore the function of human craving for adaptation and survival. That is man's quest for meeting his needs for existence, especially the need for food, to exist and nourish his physical component. Thus, man must eat, but, to eat, he must toil. This is why the human person is a worker—an industry in his make-up. In his cravings to exploit nature, especially the environment for survival, humans found it necessary and functional to come together, co-habit, co-operate and lead life of interdependence. This is against the backdrop of the essential dimensions of sociability and of limited capabilities ([Iwe, 1990](#)). Taking premise from the meat eating culture, humans came together in groups to hunt and gather fruits. The

evolving trend of this mode of production laid foundation for the human culture of group hunting, group formation and organization, planning and strategizing for successful pursuit of common interests, solidarity and sustenance of the institutions of society. Humans made further stride in mode of production and cravings, with the emergence and development of science and the technology of making tools. This development in culture empowered man to increasingly assert his dominion over other “more physically powerful” species of creation, and generally over nature. Therefore, the tools with which humans work, and the manner in which they organize labour and the spirit of industry are important fabrics of cultural evolution and development.

Another important human relation factor in the evolutionary trend of the hunting and gathering culture is the establishment and institution of division of labour and stratification order. Thus, while men hunted game, women gathered fruits. Consequently, human beings, wherever they find themselves have demonstrated and developed the culture of improving their potentials for living a more wholesome and satisfying life through the exploitation of nature, progressive trend in the configuration and regulation of interpersonal and inter-group relations. This is the cultural foundation of human relations—a functional and evolutionary tendency, on which basis (Kluckhohn, 1952) referred to culture as a design for living, held by members of a particular society.

According to Karl Marx, human culture is the function of human social origin, not deriving from nature. He believed that culture had a material origin in human labour, and that material circumstances and economic activities shaped human consciousness. Hence, once humans come together, they form group and engage in productive activities. When they over produce what is needed for simple survival and living, humans begin to produce things for their aesthetic appeal and expressive motive that are of mere pleasure. This trend, for Marx makes human beings to create their own culture in the various groups they find themselves, (see Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: pp. 667-668).

Within the complex content of culture lies crucial issues of human relations, which include political organization of groups, for exercise of authority and social order. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), crystallized this human relation trend in his “problem of order”. The increasing need for reproduction and companionship gave rise to the institution of marriage and family ties. The necessity for nurturing man’s spiritual essence led to human search for religious relationship and foundation of religious institutions and traditions, which define human existence and interaction with other humans and, seen and unseen forces. In spite of all these, human culture is yet evolving with variation in patterns of adaptation and goal attainment. This is where human intellect and technological strides come to limelight. Thus, the strands of human relations, in all aspects of living are fundamentally rooted in culture. In other words, human relation structures are rooted and shaped in the evolution and development of culture. From the culture origin human relation ideas and practices are adapted and expressed in all dimension of living.

3. Perspectives of African Culture and Foundations of Human Relations

The Fabrics of Worldview: Worldview and cosmology are synonymous. They imply a people’s pattern of thought and understanding of the universe. From such conception, the given people derive the meaning and fundamental knowledge of their relationship to nature, the idea of supernaturalism, and convictions on the essence and purpose of the world.

All over Africa, there is the belief in the existence of God, who created the world. Man’s understanding of himself is that he is at the centre of God’s creation, and as the hub which regulates and relate other created beings. Humans, therefore, have limited power in relation to the almighty power of the creator. There is the common belief that humans are endowed with the capacity for deriving the things which they are able to pursue and achieve. However, this is not without some invisible influence, including the force of divinities and spirits, also believed to be part of God’s creation. In spite of the interaction between humans and the spiritual realm of the universe, it is still the family, village, the kin group and society at large that shape the human personality against the background of divine ordinance, for order and stability in the world. For Africans, the meaning of this conception is that humans are not meant to live in isolation, but in association with their kith and kins. To be cut adrift from one’s group is tantamount to “living dead”. Human life can only have meaning in association with one’s community members. In sum, there is the common feeling among Africans, of the affinity with the unseen spiritual world. Against this backdrop, humans are perpetually interacting with plethora of forces. The forces include both those seen and those unseen—they determine and influence human destiny here on earth, (Iheanacho, 2002: pp. 68-78).

Africans strongly believe that humans have dual nature, comprising of the body and the spirit. With this nature the human is believed to continue existing as spirit in the hereafter, beyond the physical disappearance of the body from this world. This means that African understanding of the world is that death does not mark the final end of the human person. Rather, at death the human being change from a physical being on earth to a being in the spirit world, yet, retaining earthly status, as in cultures like Etche, Yoruba, Ashanti, Fon etc. [Iken-ga-Metuh \(1988: p. 62\)](#) captures the situation when he averred that the strands of the invisible world of spirits and the visible world of physical beings extends into, and mutually influence each other. This is the spiritual foundation of human relations.

The Fabrics of Collectivism and Corporate Existence: Africans in their various cultural groups and social structures are conscious of collective living and corporate existence. The bond of relationship make the people live and depart from the physical world in the company of others. The individual does not exist alone, but in membership to the wider group. The type of community relations that is referred to here is made lucid in the words of [Mbiti \(1969: pp. 105-109\)](#), that:

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being... whatever happens to the individual happens to the group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say; I am because we are, and since we are therefore, I am.

The idea of collectivism and communal solidarity prevails both in joyful moments and sorrowful events. This is why such event as death is received with deep feeling of sorrow. Kidnap, disaster and other calamities are collectively addressed. The orphan in most African cultures is taken care of by the extended family or kin group, hence, the little or no presence of destitutes and professional beggars in the traditional societies. Conversely, joyful moments as marriage, childbirth, festival etc., are also celebrated collectively. Everybody is a stakeholder, contributor and benefactor in African traditional societies. [Talbot \(1962: p. 3\)](#) had long noted this profound human relations feature of the African people that:

The negro is perhaps the most gregarious of all men; his great joy is to be found in amusing himself with companions in dance, "plays", etc., and perhaps his greatest grief is solitude, unpopularity and the ridicule of his townsmen.

Such pattern of relationship still prevail among the people, though with threat from modern forces of change, especially the idea of individualism. In modern Egypt, culturally instituted relationship structures and values are maintained as necessary ways of living and relational harmony. Relationship principles shroud all aspects of life, and such is of great pleasure to Egyptians, ([Samovar & Porter, 2003: p. 90](#)).

The following subsisting proverbs (see [Samovar 2003](#)), from across the cultures of Africa crystallize the faith and eulogy of the people in living, solidarity and good human relations:

- “When spiders web unite, they can tie up a lion”—Ethiopia.
- “A brother is like one’s shoulder”—Somalia.
- “When the bee comes to your house, let her have beer; you may want to visit the bee’s house some day”—Congo.
- “When the ants unite their mouths, they can carry an elephant”—Burkina Faso.
- “Go the way that many people go; if you go alone you will have reason to lament”—Zambia.
- “The elephant never gets tired of carrying his tusks”—Liberia.
- *It is the duty of children to wait on elders, and not the elders on children*—Kenya, (see [Leslau & Wolf, 1962: p. 19, pp. 23-24, p. 56; Pradervand, 1989: p. 131; Stewart, 1997: p. 31, 121](#)).
- “Umunna (community) is power”—Igbo, Nigeria.
- “When the eyes shed tears, the nose also shed its own fluid”—Etche, Nigeria.
- “When the alligator is dissected, the lizard look downcast”—Etche, Nigeria.
- “Man is God to his neighbour”—Ikwerre, Nigeria.

Interdependence and reciprocity is a fabric of African people’s collective living and complementarity. It is the people’s response to the self insufficiency of humans. Thus, the African culture of collective living and interdependence is founded on the people’s yearning;

To eschew extremism, demonstrate the ceaseless dialectics inherent in human existence, and enunciate the

inscrutability of life...; to discourage arrogance, promote discipline, foster sublimation, minimize crime, reduce tension and, on the whole, humanize relations (Ifemesia, 1979: p. 68).

The Fabrics of the Extended Family System. The extended family system is another common feature of African culture, *ipso facto* human relations. It is in this social structure that the foundations of collectivism and corporate existence are formed and sustained. This is why the extended family institution is very important, and of high value. Grandparents look after the children while the biological parents go to work, or engage in other activities. Other members of the extended family or kin group also feel concerned and care for one another—it is a feeling of responsibility to share the other members’ circumstance, natural and social location, for good or for bad. In many instances, the eldest direct affairs to ensure the training of his siblings and other members of the extended or compound family. The economically viable members co-operate with the elder to accomplish this target. The extended family relations form aggregation for kinship bond which emphasize the rules of exogamy, regulating sex and marriage, (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950: p. 40).

The Fabrics of Fostering. This is another common factor of human relations in African culture. The practice is founded on the cooperative virtue of the extended and compound family systems. In many communities, it is common practice for children to spend some stage of their life with other relations, different from their own parents. Such relations may be an uncle, half brother, aunt, nephew, a kinsman, or other distant relations. “In Botswana and Lesotho, there are instances when childless couples will be given a child or children by members of their extended family who already have many children” (Van Der Veur, 2003: p. 83). This practice is also common in West African communities, especially in the cultural groups of Nigeria.

The Fabrics of Diaspora Kinship Associations: In spite of the threat of modern ideologies of individualism, capitalist cravings, urbanization and migrant adventures, the African compound family and kinship system is carried along by the people. This is the galvanizing foundation of African city ethnic associations, within and outside the continent. It is the background of “abroad” association, union, family or meetings. In such forums, the cultural ethic of brotherhood, kinship tie, dependency and cooperation are highly emphasized and eulogized. The “abroad family/associations” are very common among the Igbo, Yoruba, Annang, Urhobo, and Tiv, to mention but a few cultural groups in Nigeria.

From the southern end of African, Pradervand (1989: pp. 81-97), spotlights the traditional African ethic of collective living and cooperation as a vital factor for co-operation and boosting the spirit of self help among Zimbabwe’s National Farmers’ Association. In Kenya, there is a renascent emphasis on the African spirit of collectivism, co-operation, and self help. Kenyan women recall that co-operation and group help were rules in the days of their grand mothers. This cultural pattern of human relations were sources of their strength and success in life. Furthermore, Van Der Veur (2003: p. 83), adds that the modern women are of the firm conviction that, by adopting such culture of co-operation, they will equally surmount pressing socio-economic, cultural and political problems relatively easier, than through the individualism of the modern society.

The Fabrics of Respect for Elders: African’s exhibit high level of respect for elders. Old age is valuable. The people delight in being in the status of elder kinsman, elder brother, elder sister, uncle, aunt, parent, grand parent etc. The young take care of the elderly relations, in their homes. This is unlike Western culture where most elderly parents and relations are kept, in institutionalized welfare organizations, outside the home. The elder is not addressed by his “ordinary name”, but by the cultural nomenclature which expresses the young’s humility, respect and honour.

Respect is in the order of birth of members of the lineage and clan. Given the value and respect for the aged, the traditional political organization of many African societies are gerontocratically based. However, the pendulum of respect is mutual, hence (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950: p. 27), rightly reports that “any relationship of subordination, if it is to work, requires that the subordinate position should maintain an attitude of respect towards the other”.

3.1. The Fabrics of Marriage and Human Relations

Fundamental issues of human relations loom large in African patterns of marriage, such as in; *Exchange of Gifts*. In most African cultures, marriage is accompanied by exchange of gifts, by the contracting families. However, the exchange of gifts is more from the side of the suitor to the maiden’s family. A suitor continues to do this in various ways and proportions, till the end of his life. Bride wealth does not end. The suitor also continuously attract reciprocal gifts, services and favour from his inlaws. The customary activities and gifts’ exchange which

the woman attracts earn for her such attribute as ambassador of relationship, and of goodwill in the peoples' perception. The gifts' exchange is therefore a symbol of mutual acceptance, between the families. Thus, the bride's family accepts the suitor as a son, while the bridegroom and his family accept the bride as a precious gift and, as a great symbol of friendship and goodwill, which has to be reciprocated and regenerated from time-to-time, (Iheanacho, 2007: pp. 139-142).

Apart from the material items which the maiden attract in marriage, she also increase the human wealth of her family, by bringing a suitor into their midst. Hence, an inlaw is regarded as a member of the family of his wife's maiden home. Although, he has limited rights, unlike biological descent members of the family. Yet, he is fully recognized, respected and is responsible in various ways, to contribute to the wellbeing and progress of the family. This means that, in marriage the African daughter "win" for her maiden family, another male member who will be obligated by custom and convention to rationally spend his human and material resources on his inlaws and their affairs. This marital relation's obligation is even more pronounced and expressed at the death of the wife's parent(s). For instance, in Ikwerre and Etche cultures of the Niger Delta North, at the death of a man or woman, it is the first daughter's husband who purchase the coffin for the burial, alongside other befitting funeral responsibilities (Iheanacho, 2007: p. 135). Sorgwe (2003: p. 254) also report that among the Epie-Atissi people of Ijaw, women commit a great percentage of their resources into caring for their parents, especially at old age, and even impress it upon their husbands to put the assistance of their parents on the family budget.

3.2. The Fabrics of Age-Grade Association and Human Relations

The Age-Grade is the name used to identify

a group of persons having an age relationship of a wider span of years and usually encompassing a number of age sets. The groups perform social, political, and even legal functions in the societies of which they are part. As the members of the group move through life, their responsibilities increase with their age (Carlston, 1968: p. 195).

The age-grade, age-set or age group is a fundamental institution of human relations in African culture. It is an old institution common in traditional societies, especially in the sub-Saharan region. The emergence must have been premised on the association of young males, from childhood to boyhood, including the formation of groups or companies for moonlight plays, wrestling, music, dancing, swimming competitions, and other forms of recreation and entertainment (Ifemesia, 1979: pp. 81-85). Again, the necessity for maintaining public utilities of the various communities, in the spirit of solidarity, co-operation, common aspiration and urge to relieve the elders of strenuous duties may have contributed to the foundation and sustenance of the age-grade, age group and or the age set system. In most cultures where they exist, they are noted to be active in construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, water resources, markets, village square, assembly hall, masquerade displays, shrine maintenance, enforcement of laws and performance of rituals.

The age grade is made up of male and females of a given community whose dates of birth are within a period of about two to five years bracket. Those within the given age-frame identify themselves, based on the information of their parents and elders, they come together under one association, with their choice of name. There is usually no condition for admission, as age grades do not reject their mates. However, among the Edda, and other Cross River Igbo, of Nigeria, belonging to age set association requires initiation rites. Also, in the Igbo main culture, the age grade association is structured according to specific responsibilities and administrative purposes. The youngest and the oldest age-grades are on the lowest, and apex status respectively. Thus, the determinant factor for stratifying age grades and assigning duties is the order of seniority (Ifemesia, 1979: pp. 81-82).

There is profound fabric of fraternity among age-sets. They cooperate, and see themselves as relations with corporate identity and aspirations. What concerns one or, affect the other mate is conceived to apply to the group. Meetings are held at the residence of members. At the meeting, members feel free as if they are in their respective homes. They chat, make fun, joke, entertain themselves and, share their moments of joy and, of sorrow. Among the Yako people, it is the age mates of the groom that hand over the materials for marriage "payment" to the bride's father or foster-father (Ford, 1950: p. 323). Among the Massai people, it is a very serious offence for a man to have sexual intercourse with the wife of a man belonging to his father's age-set or with the daughter of a man belonging to his father's age set (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950: p. 27).

Nnoruka (2009: pp. 221-222), underscores the fraternity, solidarity and human relations content of age grades

in Africa, in his analysis of some of the corporate names they adopt in the Igbo culture of Nigeria. Some of those he identified are: *Njikoka*—meaning that unity is valuable than any other thing. And, that the members should be ready to contribute towards their unity and common good; *Obinwanne*—meaning fraternal pulse, on which basis the members conceive themselves to belong to the same fold, hence mutual help is encouraged; *Udoka*— meaning that peace is of utmost importance, hence it is a “sacred” demand for co-operation and co-existence; *Igwe-buike*—meaning that there is strength in large number. Thus, with the collective strength of the group explored in form of synergy for their common help, craving for life chances is made easier; *Ofuobi*—meaning unity of mind—this is another way of re-emphasizing the importance of unity and speaking in one accord, devoid of bitterness and bickering.

As a group, the age-set guard against public morality. Within its fold, members are made to be amenable to discipline and good conduct—each group is always conscious of its name. Erring members who bring disgrace or smear the image of the group are punished. They also initiate change of existing regulations that can no longer stand the test of time in their community. With the age-set system, youthful intellect and physical resources are directed towards beneficial endeavours for community cohesion and human relations. In modern time, we see age-sets embark on community development projects, to demonstrate the group’s fame, pride and respect in the community.

3.3. The Fabrics of Hospitality and Human Relations

Hospitality in Africa is the product of the people’s communal living—an ethic and quality of good living, neighbourliness and of friendship. The virtues of hospitality are incorporated in the processes of socialization and enculturation—such that it is internalized as a vital ingredient of interaction and harmonious functioning of the social system. Many African tales, proverbs, myths, folktale, sacred histories and wise sayings crystallize and eulogize the virtue of hospitality in human living (see Peek & Yankah, 2009).

Among the Sango people of Central African Republic, the stranger in their midst is conceived to be sacred, and as a human being to be revered, sheltered and protected. And among the Fang people of Gabon, a visitor is conceived to be a “passing ancestor”, and should be entertained very well (Guerikouale, cited in Echema, 1995: p. 35). In parts of West Africa, like the Igbo people of Nigeria, hospitality is celebrated. An example of this is in the presentation of kola-nut to the stranger—an important gesture of warm reception and hospitality. The gesture is accompanied by goodwill speeches and prayer in ritualized aura of expressions. The kola-nut presentation is the first thing offered a stranger in the Igbo culture. The sharing and eating of the kolanut together symbolize acceptance, communion, and preliminary covenant of open mindedness.

In modern time, the African people’s culture of hospitality is made more manifest in the acceptance and accommodation of the numerous refugees and displaced peoples across the continent. It is on account of this hospitality culture content of the people that it was possible for Ghana to accommodate over one million of their nationals expatriated from Nigeria in February 1983—a period in Ghana’s history that was characterized by severe economic depression and hardship (Echema, 1995: p. 35). It was also the spirit of hospitality that made it possible for Liberian refugees, during the 1989 political unrest and civil war to find asylum and solace in neighbouring countries, especially Nigeria. We yet see the African spirit of hospitality in the resettlement of the displaced Bakassi people of Nigeria, against the backdrop of brotherly spirit and harmonious agreement between Nigeria and Cameroun, over the legal ownership of the oil rich territory.

Hospitality is also extended to internally disadvantaged and displaced people in African societies. These include child-orphans, widows, victims of disasters and socially dislocated persons. Members of such community extend gestures of goodwill, assistance and charity to the vulnerable. It was on account of this, that in the traditional setting and pre-colonial societies, there were no destitutes and beggars who besieged roads and the neighborhoods, as is the case in our cities today. The traditional societies had functional human relations systems that enabled every person to have essential needs. Everybody was carried along, and together they formed various dimensions of their corporate cultural identity. It is the spirit of care for one another that group co-operative labour and projects are initiated to alleviate individual labour intensity and, the suffering of the less privileged. This type of co-operation is practiced in agrarian societies like the Tiv, Etche and Yako in Nigeria, and the Mende of Sierra Leone to mention but a few.

During festivals, Africans exchange gifts, visits and goodwill messages. They invite and celebrate with their neighbours, in-laws, friends, well wishers etc. Such hospitality impulse and gestures also characterize other oc-

casions like naming ceremony (especially in Yoruba), marriage ceremony, child birth, funeral, etc.

4. Religious Resources and Contents in Modern Industrial Relations

From the prism of industry and organizational behaviour, human relations is the skill or ability to work effectively through, and with other people, against the background of genuine desire to understand them, their needs, limitations, resource endowments and competences (Lamberton & Minor-Evans, 2002: p. 4). In other words, human relations in the workplace setting concern how people stay and work together (team spirit), satisfying both personal needs and group objectives. If an organization is to succeed, the relationship between and amongst the workforce and management must be maintained, channeled, and sustained along the course of cordiality. This is the thrust of human relations in the industry. Thus, industrial relations is a major branch of the broad subject of human relations.

The essence and principles of industrial relations are founded and shaped by cultural values and religious beliefs and practices. Industrial activity is human “participation in the creative action of God...” (Composta, 1988: p. 138). Furthermore, scholars of religion and culture have long reported that religion permeate all dimensions of African peoples’ life, so integrative that any endeavour devoid of the religious content and alignment is unpopular.

Belief in the providence of God looms large in modern formal organization and bureaucratic institutions. The believe, reverence, worship and supplication to God in the industry is a transcendence from the peoples’ religiosity, especially believe in the Supreme Being, variously acknowledged in different African communities, in different nomenclatures. In modern workplaces, God is believed to be supernatural and all-powerful. This is the basis of dependence on Him. Accordingly, this make corporate organizations to adjust and conceive their operations to be somewhat in alignment with divine purpose. This is the reason, “the claim of fear of God” is a popular strategy for effective marketing and public relations in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, etc. The biblical passage cited in tandem with this industrial tool is taken from Wisdom (13: 1ff), “The works of God reveal the workman” (see McKenzie, 1968: p. 941).

Early invocation, veneration of ancestors and prayer to God before commencement of the day’s work and activities in African traditional communities is another religious resource which is now renescent in modern industrial relations. Although the practice is adopted with modifications skewed in Christian and Islamic traditions, the fundamental rationale and essence are seemingly the same with the traditional religion and culture of the people. It is now a routine practice among many organizations—banks, oil companies, schools, etc. to open the days operation with prayer session. Others who do not open business with prayer session organize staff fellowship—a religious knowledge sharing programme and prayer meeting. Some organizations also organize intercessory prayers and deliverance services. These religious products involve invitation of acclaimed men to pray for the holistic operations and viability of the organization and the human components. Religious tool for managing organizational behaviour and corporate objective take the form of “deliverance” during perceived and seeming phenomenon of intense conflict, corporate doldrums and dwindling fortune and profit. Some organizations do not even wait for such experience before they organize deliverance service. Thus, the practice is a periodic episode in the profile of many organizations.

There is yet the annual thanksgiving service in churches and mosques. In this practice the entire staff and employers in an organization go for a formally organized worship session on a Friday, in the Mosque or Sunday, in the Church. They thank God for the previous business year and ask for his blessings in the next year. They offer items which appear symbolic and reminiscent of corporate *zakat*, in Islam and, “corporate tithing and harvest”, in Christian parlance. In such religious session the organization dedicate its operation to God and pray for continued viability of its business.

Religious ideas and pedagogy are therefore incorporated into work ethic and human relations. In Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians (3: 23-24) is the admonition “whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not man, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ”. This is one popular scriptural citation used by management to boost the morale and commitment of workers, *ipso facto* industrial peace. This religious content in industry is underscored by Max Weber in his protestant ethic thesis (Weber, 1958). Weberian thesis vivified Luther and Calrums’ conception of trade and commerce as aspects “of an economy of grace, rather than simply as works of mercy” (Wells, 2008: p. 117). Of course, seemingly religious devout and profound characters are given premium consideration in job opportunity and as-

signment of responsibility—the phenomenon of “born againism” as basis for thrust. The import of religious resource in industry is further underscored by Composta, when he notes that Christianity promoted work by attaching nobility status to it. Henceforth, work became “a moral and soteriological criterion, insofar as work frees man from sloth and prepares for the reward” (Composta, 1983: pp. 38-39).

The people’s understanding of group co-operation and bond as veritable tool for greater achievements in life is a cultural fact in building structures of trade union, (see Hale, 1990: p. 179). Apart from the prism of conceiving and interpreting God’s creation account as activity of the archetypal worker, Christian ethics provide principles and fabric of trade unions. Some religious groups and clergy are even vociferous in their support for workers unionism and militancy, (Wells, 2008: p. 116).

In Nigeria, the religious content of modern industrial relations is again underscored by citation of the scripture in industrial dispute and collective bargaining. Both management and employees (trade unions) use biblical and Qu’anic passages to reinforce their arguments and interest. During strike, one popular passage cited by management to justify the action of “no work, no pay”, is 2 Thessalonians (3: 20) “If anyone will not work let him not eat”. Trade unions also reply from the scripture that there is dignity in labour and that the worker deserve his wage, (see Genesis 2: 15). The significant impact of culture and religious resources’ transcendence into modern industrial relations is observed in the relative understanding and harmony in most organizations. Everybody is made to adopt some form of religious oriented conduct in the work place, as basis for acceptance. The phenomenon culminate into building structures of industrial peace, personnel respect and wholesome operations.

5. Conclusion

Since the evolution of culture, human beings found it necessary to live in association, tolerance and co-operation, as the only pattern of existence that is in tandem with the sociability content of human make-up. Thus, to live is to interact and, to interact is to relate. It therefore becomes important to build and sustain structures of human relations, as the only way to guarantee peace and healthy living.

From a phenomenological survey of the African social systems and values, the paper found that the fundamental fabric and driving force for all aspects and strands of human relations are rooted in the fabrics of culture and religion. Profound human relations ideas and structures loom large in the people’s worldview, values, symbolism, etc. Yet, modern industrial relations in Nigeria and, other African countries are replete with religious resources and tools. This approach to industrial relations is growing in popularity, functionality and appreciation.

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