

ISSUES:

THE POLITICS OF CULTURE:  
THE CASE OF FESTAC

by

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*Introduction*

Those trying to follow the development of Festac '77 (to occur in January 1977) in Lagos (Nigeria), may be somewhat perplexed on days when the front page of Lagos *Daily Times* is covered with news of the resignations of such prominent Nigerians as Wole Soyinka and Fela Ransome Kuti from Festac committees, while one of the headlines reads "Festac: All Is Well".<sup>1</sup> This is merely one recent twist in the long story of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (Festac).

The notion of an international festival of African art and culture grew out of the traditions of negritude, and was first actualized largely through the energies of Leopold Senghor of Senegal. The first "World Festival of Negro Arts" staged in Dakar in April 1966, provided many pleasant surprises to unsuspecting visitors: art, drama, and dancing. Nigeria accepted the invitation to host the second and nine years, four dates, two coups, and one civil war later, amid feverish preparations for the November 1975 date, nearly cancelled the whole festival. Tribunals of enquiry were appointed, the President of the festival was dismissed for "indisciplines", and controversies arose which forced Senegal to withdraw, although later deciding to come back in. The new target date is January 1977, but the whole thing has now lost its glow.

The Festac was launched in April, 1972, with the modest aspiration of being "the full expression of the Black Personality."<sup>2</sup> But, an examination of the unfolding events reveals that the aims of "revival, resurgence, and propagation... of Black and African Culture" have had less to do with the direction of events than has the ebb and flow of Nigerian politics, and to some extent African international politics. Granted, the whole festival is a government instituted and organized event, but even the best intentions cannot obscure the fact that political factors dominated the decision making processes. For this paper I define "political" as something other than idealistic cultural aims. It embraces the whole

range of ulterior motives and machinations of individuals and organizations involved in the decision making processes, and the competition among city, municipal, state, national, and international agencies. Since these "political" factors were responsible for the near disaster of the festival, it becomes necessary to examine the course of events that led to this situation in order to avert a recurrence in the future.

In Part One, I will reconstruct the background of the events of the summer of 1975 when the whole future of the festival was placed in doubt by the Nigerian coup, examine the festival precedents, the decision of Nigeria to host it, its administrative organization, aims, and basic program. In Part Two, I will outline the major areas of controversy over Festac '75 as they were dramatically revealed in the months following the July 29, 1975 coup. In Part Three, I will present current developments in the Festac saga up to fall 1976, and the story of Festac '77. Part Four will be a discussion of the "lessons" to be learned, and their bearing on any subsequent festival of arts and culture in Africa, especially the third Festac that is already being spoken of.

#### PART ONE

##### *The Precedents*

In his opening address, at the first festival at Dakar, Senghor declared, "In a word, if we have assumed the terrible responsibility of organizing this festival, it is for the defense and illustration of negritude."<sup>4</sup> This statement is revealing. First, the guiding principles of the festival were the complex of ideas called negritude." Second, the "terrible responsibility" was actually a chance, taken advantage of, on behalf of Senegal's national interests. It can be inferred that, frustrated in its efforts to once again be a political capital of West Africa in the Mali Federation, and a victim of falling groundnut prices, Senegal was trying to secure its role as a leader in Africa by asserting itself in cultural affairs. The three weeks festival (April 1-24, 1966) was a gala, high-energy event, due perhaps to the francophone sense of style and to the large number of visitors that arrived in Dakar in a holiday mood. There was something for everyone, and enough dancing for all.

However, amid the festivities, "politics kept popping up."<sup>5</sup> The dominance of the francophone presence distressed the anglophones, though special care was taken to at least balance the awards presented. Smaller things caused tension, such as the fact that though provision had been made for simulta-

neous translation of the colloquium proceedings, earphones were available only at the plenary sessions, and for those sitting in the first two rows.<sup>6</sup> The absence of certain parties was significant. Azikiwe was unable to attend due to recent activities of the military in Nigeria. Guinea had refused to participate, though Fodeba's African Ballet group performed. Cuba, with its sizeable black community, had apparently not been invited.<sup>7</sup> Most of the East African countries were not represented, due either to lack of interest or lack of culture (at least the type displayed at Dakar) and certain prominent black performers - Harry Belafonte, Miriam Makeba, and Marian Anderson - had also refused to attend in protest against Senegal's stand on Southern Rhodesia.

Nigeria, designated "Star Country" after Zaire dropped out of the picture in the behind the scenes dealings<sup>8</sup> was officially invited to host the next festival. The criteria for this choice obviously included the great cultural wealth of Nigeria (Nok, Ife, Benin), its fairly large number of prominent literary figures, and its new source of wealth, oil. The offer was duly noted, and a 1970 date mentioned.

The pattern of international festivals of culture took another twist at the Pan African Cultural Festival, held in Algiers from July 21 to August 1, 1969. Another first, though of quite a different nature, its modestly scaled program of activities, was similar to that of Dakar. However, the central symposium, instead of abstractly speculating on the meaning of art in Africa, pounded out the vigorous, strongly worded, Pan African Cultural Manifesto, dealing with the role of culture in development and the struggles for liberation.

Whereas the Dakar festival had been sponsored by Senegal and France and such groups as UNESCO, ICAM, and Presence Africaine, the Algiers festival was sponsored by the OAU, upon whose membership participation was for the most part based. Again, certain presences were significant. Guinea took the Grand Prize for winning 5 out of the 18 competitions. One correspondent commenting on the difference in the character of the American presence, said whereas the "American Negro" was in attendance at Dakar (Duke Ellington and the Alvin Ailey groups), the "Afro-American" was in attendance at Algiers (Eldridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael and his wife, Miriam Makeba).

#### *The Decision of Nigeria*

During the Nigerian Civil War 1967-70, all thoughts of

Nigeria hosting the second festival were shelved. Upon cessation of fighting in January 1970, consolidation and rebuilding of the country occupied Gowon, and the Federal Military Government for a while. But soon a number of political considerations led Gowon to reconsider hosting the festival. Three motivations quite apart from the "revival, resurgence, and propagation of Black and African Culture" can be inferred: repair of the national image dented by the effective propaganda of Ojukwu's information ministry during the civil war, prestige of the FMG, and diversion of the public from civil problems such as the increase in armed robbery. Where before, political will was lacking, it was no more.

Gowon delegated the responsibility for the festival to Chief Anthony Enahoro, a well-known, popular, politician from the days of civilian rule. Enahoro, then Commissioner of Information and Labor, conferred with the Senegalese officials, and Alioune Diop of Presence African, and to ease the transition of cultural leadership, the announcement that Nigeria would host the festival in November, 1974 came from Paris on April 4, 1972. According to Enahoro, the festival would not be a "racial manifestation or a political demonstration ... not a Pan African or a Black power affair,"<sup>10</sup> but he did not say what it would be. The issue disappeared from the press as the administrative organization was set up, and began to operate.

#### *The Administrative Organization*

The two top positions of the festival, those of President and Secretary General were occupied by a Nigerian, Enahoro, and a Senegalese, Diop, until their dismissal in July 1975, and June 1976 respectively. The International Festival Committee (IFC) was composed of the Vice-Presidents of each of the 13, later 16, festival zones. (See Appendix B) The IFC, headed by the President, is responsible for decisions on participation, exhibits, the central colloquium, and for the overall program. No financial resources were provided for the IFC, beyond the \$10,000 fee to be collected from each registering country or community, and whatever funds may be granted by the Nigerian or other governments.<sup>11</sup> The IFC met periodically in Nigeria, and the tenth and last meeting was held in November 1976.<sup>12</sup> Both the IFC and the International Secretariat are housed in Lagos.

The key to the realities of operation of the administration is the ambiguous, yet omnipotent role played by the host country. As do the other participants, Nigeria has a national festival committee, paid the \$10,000 registration

fee and conducted a series of selection competition festivals. (The National Committee is not without its own political struggles, as I will show later.) However, as host, Nigeria took final responsibility to make the festival actually happen. The host's responsibilities include; construction of premises, accommodation for participants and visitors, transportation within the country, and food (a task which was integrated to include importation of special items, such as apples).<sup>13</sup> As keeper of the purse and premises, the Nigerian government is the final source of authority.

Unfortunately, within the Nigerian government, the responsibility for the festival was not vested in one Ministry or organization. Authority was decentralized, and though the Ministry of Information (formerly including Labor) played the most visible role, at least four other ministries were directly involved - Education, External Affairs, Trade and Industry, and Works and Housing.<sup>14</sup> Each had its own officials and divisions, down through which the large appropriations flowed farther and farther from watchful eyes.

In addition, the Nigerian Arts Council, a semi-autonomous, government supported body, as well as artists' organizations, institutes, and universities, sought to and did take part in the policy-making processes of the Nigerian national festival committee. Not to be forgotten were the state governments and the municipal authorities of Lagos and Kaduna, chosen as the festival sites.

### *The Program*

The aims of the festival, and the first program of events had been announced at the IFC meeting in November 1973. (See Appendix A & C) The number and content of the exhibits have changed several times since, but the basic program, similar to both Dakar and Algiers, still stands. A careful look at two elements of the format, the title, and the emblem, provides insight into the various motivations of those involved.

The festival's full, unwieldy title was deliberately chosen. That of Dakar was officially called the "First World Festival of Negro Arts," but Nigeria changed "world" to "Black and African", limiting the contribution to black, geographically "African" peoples. The qualifier was also dropped from the "art", and "culture" added to give a broader scope to the content of the festival. The full title, "Second Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture" was then elipsed to the slick, stylized logo, "Festac '75 (now '77)" convenient to say and effective in obscuring any thought of the implications of the full title.

However, numerous mutants of all three styles flourish in the literature.

The Benin ivory pectoral, chosen as the emblem of Festac, is generally considered a masterpiece of African art. The mask contrasts with the emblem of the first festival, an abstract design created by a contemporary Senegalese artist, Ibou Douf. The latter is an original design, created by a westernized African artist, while the former is a classic from the Nigerian past. The pectoral is now owned by the British Museum. Perhaps its choice alludes to Europe's literal looting of African culture, but, more interestingly, has provided an occasion for Nigeria to press for its return.<sup>15</sup>

## PART TWO

### *Preparations for Festac '75*

By the beginning of the summer of 1975, the festival administration had been in operation for over two years, and preparations for the November 22 - December 20, 1975 date were proceeding at a frantic pace. Contracts for major buildings had been signed, and construction was well underway. National committees were selecting participants and staging mini-festivals, as in the U.K. zone.<sup>15</sup> A massive publicity campaign had started by January, 1975, and a correspondent noted that the posters bearing the festival emblem were "as familiar a sight on London streets...as (posters announcing) the opening of the British opera."<sup>16</sup>

However, public opinion in Nigeria, as expressed in the press, was markedly ambivalent.<sup>17</sup> Although countless articles appeared in the papers explaining "culture", the role of culture, and the purposes of the festival,<sup>18</sup> some people questioned the large amounts of money being spent, and the real justification of this "one big ego trip."<sup>19</sup> Others were not sure it would even happen at all: "If all goes well... (the festival) will be held in Nigeria in November 1975..."<sup>20</sup> One even made an act of faith: "I believe the Black Festival of the Arts will take place in Nigeria in 1975... either way, more information please..."<sup>21</sup> At the late date of July, 1975, one columnist in the Lagos *Sunday Times* wrote that he was glad to hear that "the much talked about Black and African Festival will indeed take place..."<sup>22</sup>

### *The Coup*

In his address to the nation on July 30, 1975, upon leading a successful coup, the late Brig. Mohammed announced

the postponement of the festival, "in view of the obvious difficulties in providing the necessary facilities."<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that the immediate issues, which received the most publicity, all directly related to whether the festival itself could actually be held - port congestion (due partially to the huge amounts of cement ordered for government construction), Lagos traffic problems, and petrol shortages. Indeed, the festival was one of the immediate issues, and its postponement was accordingly one of the first directives of the new government.

In the energetic post-coup campaign against the "indisciplines" in public and private life, a four man tribunal was appointed to investigate the festival finances. Enahoro, along with all the former Federal Ministers, was dismissed and placed under investigation. A new ministry was created to deal with the festival, and Commander O.P. Fingsi took over as Commissioner of Special Duties, and President of the festival. Orders went out to re-examine, and "scale down the scope" of the festival. Many figured that the whole festival was cancelled.

The events of the months following the coup,<sup>24</sup> (up to the October 14 announcement that it was definitely not cancelled) clearly delineated the major areas of the Festac controversy, and revealed the political motives in decisions concerning timing, finances, construction, participation, chosen sites, and the larger questions of the program and the function of the festival.

### *The Areas of Controversy*

1. Each postponement of the festival has been directly or indirectly related to political events in Nigeria. As Fingsi reassured the Senegalese Minister of Culture, Sene, at the November 1975 IFC meeting, "The festival was not postponed for the fun of it."<sup>25</sup> The 1970 date was impossible due to the civil war; the November 1974 and the January 1975 dates were extended because they made unrealistic demands on the pace of preparations; the last date was abandoned after a coup. Another political aspect of the timing can be seen in the coincidence of the increase of festival publicity in the Nigerian press in September-October 1974,<sup>26</sup> with Gowon's unpopular announcement of October 1, 1974, postponing civilian rule past the 1975 deadline. Other coincidences of timing are less easy to interpret.<sup>27</sup>

2. The ever-expanding scope of the festival preparations, from the National Theater down to imported fruit for the visitors, and the decentralization of festival responsibilities

make it very difficult to calculate total expenses. Budget estimates, if they were available, do not reveal the whole story, for as one source writes, "In fact, the government invariably spends more on art and culture than the sums given in annual estimates."<sup>28</sup> The total cost of the festival to the Nigerian government up to the end of 1975 has been estimated at \$300m<sup>29</sup>, ₦ 80m<sup>30</sup>, and £120m<sup>31</sup>. The Nigerian press coined a word for the festival expenses: Squandermania.<sup>32</sup>

3. Construction of premises for the various activities is the responsibility of the host. Four major projects were undertaken for the festival: The National Theater, and Festival Village in Lagos; and the Hotel Durbar, and Durbar Pavillion/race course complex in Kaduna. Other projects include a Festival Village in Kaduna, a ₦9M road project<sup>33</sup> and Tafawa Balewa Square in Lagos. In fact, much pre-coup discontent had resulted from expenses and problems associated with the former government's huge construction program.

The saga of the National Theater complex is perhaps the most sensational. Begun in April 1972, according to Enahoro,<sup>34</sup> the contract with the Bulgarian firm, Technoexportstroy (whose architects and engineers, along with Nigerian labor, built it), was signed in April 1973, at a cost of ₦24.5m for two years completion.<sup>35</sup> Various estimates for the theater are around \$40m<sup>36</sup> or £16m<sup>37</sup>. The range of criticism of the theater however extends beyond finances. Some assert that since most of the cultural events it will house usually take place out of doors, it is unnecessary to build a theater.<sup>38</sup> Others offer aesthetic and structural criticisms of the theater's "futuristic" design which is copied from that of the Palace of Culture and Sports in Varna, Bulgaria.<sup>39</sup> Finally, the site of the Theater in Surulere in Lagos is variously described as "the Lilipond",<sup>40</sup> "a reclaimed area in the heart of the city",<sup>41</sup> or as a swamp into which the whole thing will soon sink.<sup>42</sup>

4. The issue of participation has proven most surprising and emotional. Enahoro, as President of the festival, launched it when he stated, "it will not be a racial manifestation nor a political demonstration,"<sup>43</sup> and then went on to reject applications from several countries because he did not want "races not qualified by either culture or color to be injected into the festival."<sup>44</sup> Guinea, for example, refused to participate because "the political problems raised by the festival should be analyzed: by magnifying negritude it will help to divide the continent culturally," and that such festivals "conceal the socio-economic realities."<sup>45</sup> (Guinea has now decided to join the festival, probably in response to the policies of the new Nigerian government.

The racial aspects of the participation issue are a problem that will remain unsolved since the root cause is the attempt to make distinctions among the varying degrees of being "black" and/or "African" in skin color, geographical origin, nationality, or cultural affiliation. An example of an absurdity to which this problem can lead is the attempt to judge who is more qualified to participate, the black-skinned Menalesian or the Arab African. Into this morass are injected political considerations, which have served as the final criteria for any judgement, from the Senegalese effort to exclude North Africans from the colloquium as "outsiders"<sup>46</sup> to the Nigerian decision to accept North African participation on the basis of their membership in the OAU. (I will go into this more in Part 3)

5. The other area of controversy, is the choice of the two sites for the festival. Kaduna, a former administrative capital, was chosen for being northern, but safe. Lagos was chosen for obvious reasons, but the housing situation, road system, port congestion, and general overcrowding and pressure on resources in the capital city have provided immediate reasons for each postponement. The city was simply unable to receive the thousands of visitors. Various measures have been proposed, from a one month moratorium on road construction (as during the All-African Games in January 1973) to the closing of schools in Lagos for a month. Two days before the July 1975 coup a headline read: "You are warned - Lagos is heading for a nervous breakdown." <sup>47</sup>

6. The final area of controversy is the proposed program and the basic function of the festival. As expected, the North American delegation will be one of the largest, and Americans as much as a quarter of the visitors, which indicates a significant orientation of the festival. The concept of "art and culture" that led to the formulation of the colloquium-exhibition-performance format will also be dealt with later. As an example of the decision-making processes, it is interesting to see the correspondence (three out of five) of the exhibitions cancelled at the November IFC meeting with those exhibitions whose directors were fired for "indisciplines" at the end of August, 1975. The two that were retained were major exhibits, not easily cancelled, crafts for its size and the durbar for its construction commitments.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of the soaring rhetoric of "revival, resurgence, and propagation" and the "Third Emancipation" idea of Enahoro<sup>49</sup> all acknowledge that one of the aims of the festival is to create some unity or solidarity among participating nations and communities. By Fall, 1975, the festival had inspired

little if any positive feeling let alone, unity, to judge from responses in the media. One gem was the application of a paraphrase of Marx to the festival; "Culture is the opium of the poor."<sup>50</sup> Also the analogy to Job 600 was common.<sup>51</sup> One source wrote that, in Lagos, Festac '75 and cement were the subjects of "the loudest whispers of corruption" but also of "all the best jokes."<sup>52</sup>

### PART THREE

#### Festac '77

After consultations with Senegalese officials the Nigerian Government announced on October 14, that the festival would not be cancelled, but would be scaled down in scope. At this point, "non-cultural" motivations were to be frankly admitted to be appropriate. First, Nigeria could not possibly meet the obligations for the November date. Second, cancellation would have caused embarrassment to Nigeria and the other participants involved. Third, the new Nigerian government, known as the "Sweep-clean brigade"<sup>53</sup> still meant to honor previous commitments and could not, in the opinion of some<sup>54</sup>, unilaterally cancel the festival. Fourth, the IFC had no choice but to accept these decisions. When the Senegalese balked at Nigeria's authority, Brig. Mohammed ominously stated "if persuasion fails to check the tendencies of imperialist forces, Nigeria will use other appropriate measures."<sup>55</sup> Festac '77 was set for January 15-February 12, 1977.

The working over of the notorious Festac '75 into Festac '77, has been marked by an almost grim determination on the part of the Nigerian government not to allow anything to prevent the festival from opening on January 15, 1977. The highblown rhetoric has been replaced by reports on what is actually being completed and finalized. The problems of Festac '75, discussed in the previous section continue to plague Festac '77, but the direct manner in which they are being dealt with further reveals the political motives of the decision makers.

The IFC met two times during this period, in March (16-19) and in July (6-9). Under the firm guidance of Fingsi, with constant reminders to ensure that decisions taken be "realistic and practical",<sup>56</sup> the Committee was mainly occupied with the business of accepting new applications<sup>57</sup>, setting deadlines, and working out the final program. Other decisions taken range from the ban on bare breasts for female performers,<sup>58</sup>

the report of the enquiry begun in August 1975.<sup>71</sup> As a result of the findings individuals, including Enahoro,<sup>71</sup> were found guilty of misuse of funds and assessed large amounts to be repaid to the government.<sup>72</sup> This action spread the spirit of accountability to all aspects of festival finances. Contracts for services were now openly advertized and a large number re-negotiated. The Bulgarian company which built the National Theater and other projects is now being investigated for overcharging the government by about N4.5m.<sup>73</sup> Building projects were actually being completed; the Festival Villages, the Durbar Pavillion, and the National. However, the story of the Theater is not over, as seen in the many protests from Nigerian artists over the performance of the Zulu group, Ipi Tombe, on the opening night.<sup>75</sup>

The most surprising development in the story of Festac '77 is the dissension that has arisen within Nigeria over the Nigerian delegation to the festival. The struggles have resulted in the resignations of such prominent Nigerian artists as Ogunde, Fela, Soyinka, and Balogun, from the National Participation Committee.<sup>76</sup> Specifics of the disputes have not been publicized, and many questions are being asked. Haruna, Minister of Information, and head of the Reconstituted National Participation Committee formed in August, announced the final schedule of Nigeria's participation in the festival on October 12. The delegation will be made up of not more than 1500 persons who are already arriving at the Festival Village.<sup>77</sup>

#### PART FOUR

##### *Lessons of Festac*

Plans for the third festival were started by Enahoro, when Ethiopia was designated the "Star Country" for Festac '75, and host of the next. The theme for the festival was also chosen then: "Black Civilization in dialogue with other cultures and civilizations,"<sup>78</sup> and presumably it is planned to be an extravaganza similar to what Festac '75 was to have been. Unless the concept of the festival is re-examined in the light of the experiences of Festac '75 and '77, the same problems will re-occur.

##### *Subsequent Festivals*

First, the ambiguity between the authority of the IFC and the Host country must be resolved. The total identification of the festival with one country has not been productive. Instead, a permanent international festival administration can be set up, as Enahoro has already suggested.<sup>79</sup> This will serve

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and a fund raising party in July,<sup>59</sup> to legislation prohibiting unrestricted use of the Festac emblem by souvenir sellers.<sup>60</sup> Finally, Alioune Diop, was dismissed from his post as Secretary-General, soon after Senegal quit the Festival in April 1976, in order to avoid a "divided loyalty".<sup>61</sup> Ambroise Mbia of Cameroon, formerly Director of Events, took over as Secretary-General.

Certainly the most spectacular development has been Senegal's threats, resignation, and re-joining of the festival. Fingsesi's statement "Why is it now that the festival date has been changed, for obvious reasons, that Senegal threatens to opt out? The present Senegalese stand is suspicious."<sup>62</sup> showed how mystified observers were by Senegalese antics.<sup>63</sup>

Senghor was one of the principal movers behind the Afro-Arab Ministerial Conference in Dakar on April 22 at which representatives of 67 African and Arab countries signed an "action program" which covered an all encompassing range of cooperation, including "strengthening contacts by ... cultural missions and festivals."<sup>64</sup> In spite of the strong words of the "Dakar Declaration", the meeting ended rather inconclusively. Observers noted that the Arabs were interested in "extracting the ritual denunciations of Zionism" while the Africans seemed cautious.<sup>65</sup> However, Senghor had actually gone to the conference to openly advocate "the merging of the Arab League and the OAU,"<sup>66</sup> a curious stand for a leader whose country had just withdrawn from Festac to protest North African participation.

The very inconsistency of Senegalese stand on Festac leads one to look elsewhere than official statements for an explanation. It is likely that one of the true issues, the rivalry between Senegal and Nigeria, was revealed in the exchange of insults between Senegal and Nigeria at the lowest point of the Festac rift.<sup>67</sup> In objecting to North African participation, Senegal was testing Nigeria's authority, and surprised the festival did not fall apart when they quit, was convinced to rejoin in August. Seneglese minister of Culture, Sene, spoke of "The realities of Lagos..."<sup>68</sup> and the headlines of the *New Nigerian*, August 26, read ironically, "African Brotherhood Triumphs."<sup>69</sup> Diop, a casualty of the dispute, probably was right when he observed that the Arab countries were "minimally interested in Festac" anyway.<sup>70</sup>

The next major development was the completion of the enquiry into Festac finances and the action taken upon it. In late March Lt. Gen. Obasanjo, who had become head of State after the assassination of Mahmmmed in February 1976, received

to remove the festival from national politics, as well as imbue it with an appropriate image and ensure continuity.

Since Africa does *not* need another bureaucratic organization like the OAU, three link-ups are possible. First, the Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Health Commission (ESCHC) of the OAU could establish a section in charge of the festivals.<sup>80</sup> This association would also secure a certain level of financial status for the administration. A second possibility is to go regional and to associate with an organization such as ECOWAS, which is already using sports meetings to strengthen economic cooperation.<sup>81</sup>

The festival could also be tied into whatever comes out of the UNESCO sponsored First Inter-Governmental Conference of Ministers of Culture in Africa, which took place in Accra on October 27-November 6, 1975. Though no earthshaking decisions were reached, the general tone of the rhetoric indicated a receptiveness to this idea.

The financing of the festival is the second area that needs reform. Never again should the festival depend so totally on the good will of the host country, chosen in the first place because it happens to be wealthy enough to afford it. With independent financing, the budget might probably be smaller, but the festival will not be used as a sop to the peoples of an unpopular or incompetent host government, or as a private gold mine.

Participation would hopefully resolve itself as the previous two areas are worked out. Affiliation with the OAU, ECOWAS or UNESCO would tend to limit the amount of foreign (geographically) participation. Beyond this, the value of the contribution, rather than the racial characteristics of the participant should be the criteria for participation.

Finally, once the concept behind the festival begins to be reoriented, a whole range of alternative programs are possible. The present festival format emphasizes the display of objects and activities, and limited participation of those actually present. A new concept should emphasize the "doing", the processes and activities themselves, and the means of making them accessible to those not present. The use of mass media, particularly film, will help increase the involvement of a wider audience. Perhaps the festival could add a series of internationally produced films on a central theme, which can then be distributed world wide afterwards. In fact, the number of exciting alternatives is the main reason why the festival should be salvaged.

*The Aims of Festac*

The lack of correspondence between most of the stated aims of Festac (see Appendix A) and the festival as it has/ is actually shaping up, indicates that terms such as *culture*, *government involvement*, and *festival* were never defined in the first place. The elevated rhetoric of aims I, II and III provide no operational base from which to begin to plan, execute, and evaluate their attainment. Instead they are a spring board from which each party involved took off in a different direction, as evidenced from the pronouncements made by Enahoro, the Senegalese, the Guineans, the present Nigerian government, and the press. The two aims which will be accomplished by Festac '77, are IV and VI. Certainly individual "Black and African" artists will get publicity and world attention. There can be no doubt that many will take Festac as an opportunity to experience their "return to origin", if only judging from the size of the North American representation. But who benefits from this?

The one aim whose achievement is crucial to any "success" of this type of festival is V..."to promote better international and interracial understanding." Admittedly vague, as I, II, III, it is much more modest; merely a "better", not a superlative. This aim actually is a starting point from which it is possible to work out what African governments are able to and should be doing in the realm of cultural matters.

*African Governments and Culture: Responsibility*

The reality of Africa today is the unit of the nation-state. The primary responsibilities of each national government are, of course, to the people of the nation. The most pressing problem today is that of development, which concerns the quality of life of the majority of the people. "Cultural development" is now considered one aspect of overall development. 82

Responsibility for cultural action in developing countries has fallen to the government, in the absence of other bodies or individuals in possession of the resources required for such tasks. As culture is enlisted in the service of development, cultural action should aim at the "democratization of culture", through which participation in government initiated cultural action becomes not only accessible to all, but a right. "Culture" in Africa has never been the monopoly of an elite, nor a luxury, nor something one must travel to the capital city to see in a museum, nor poor people dancing for the rich. Any festival that does these things is definitely a

failure.

On the international level, there is also room for governmental cultural action, if a common interest or concern can be established. The existence or display of some cultural values inherent in a darker skin color has so far not proven sufficient as a common interest. A more viable one would be a shared colonial experience, or similar economic situations, or the concern of governments for the bombardment of their citizens through the mass media, with "foreign" values associated with modern technologies governments are promoting.

An international extravaganza of the scope of Festac, staged in an ultra-modern national theater, attended by the cultural elites of the various countries, is not an appropriate cultural action for the government of a developing country. The closest most of the people get, besides footing the bill, is as a few thousand participants or entertainers.

Therefore, I conclude that failure to define the role of the national governments in international cultural action led to numerous misconceptions as to the proper character of such an event as Festac, and, in the absence of any consensus, the immediate political interests of those involved filled the void in the decision making processes.

It is now nearly certain Festac '77 will come off next January as planned. This look backward has been necessary in order to access the happening itself. It is possible that the actual event may be duller than its long and tangled story. The surprises are not yet over.

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Footnotes

1. *Daily Times*, Lagos, October 13, 1976, front page.
2. *Africa*, No. 9, May 1972, p. 22.
3. *Festac '75: Information*, Aims of the Festival, p. 2.
4. *African Forum*, V. I, No. 4, Spring 1966, p.6.
5. *West Africa*, 9 April 1966, p. 399.
6. *Ibid.*, May 7, 1966, p. 517.
7. *West Africa*, April 30, 1976, front page.
8. *Sunday Times*, Lagos, August 31, 1975, p.7.
9. *West Africa*, August 2, 1969, p. 884. The second in this series is yet to be held, though Zaire was considering hosting it, and then Ethiopia and Uganda. See *OAU, 9th Special Summit*, September 1972, p. 29,46.
10. *Africa*, No. 9, May 1972, p. 22.
11. *West Africa*, June 28, 1976, p. 930.
12. The dates of the IFC meetings, which I never found all in one list, are important to list here together. Knowing these dates, one has an overview of the pace of the festival planning, plus, some idea of what times to look in the media for coverage of Festac development, since it was intermittent over a long period of time. They are
 

1st in Spring 1972,	6th in July 1974,
2nd in ?	7th in November 1975,
3rd in November 1973,	8th in March 1976,
4th in March 1974	9th in July 1976,
5th in ?	10th in November 1976.
13. *Sunday Times*, Lagos; August 31, 1976, p. 7.
14. Fasuyi, Unesco, 1973, p. 26-34.
15. Thus far efforts to have the Benin piece returned have been unsuccessful. The most recent request was made through the British High Commission in Lagos at the end of June. The reply was, "Even if Britain or the Commonwealth and the Foreign Office wanted to help, the problem still lies with the British Museum which has the final

34. *Ibid.*, No. 9, May 1972, p. 22.
35. *African Research Bulletin*, Political, Social and Cultural Series, V. 19, 1973, No. 5, p. 2873-4.
36. *News from Nigeria*, San Francisco, V.1, No.1, July 1975, p.4
37. *Africa*, No. 39, November 1974, p. 63.
38. *Sunday Times*, Lagos, August 31, 1975, p. 7.
39. *News from Nigeria*, San Francisco, V.1, No.1, July 1975 p.4.
40. *Festac '75: Information*, The National Theater.
41. *Afriscope*, V.4, No. 2, February 1974, p. 11.
42. *Sunday Times*, Lagos, August 31, 1975, p. 7
43. *Africa*, No. 9, May 1972, p. 22.
44. The rejected countries are believed to be from South America and the Far East. See *Africa*, No. 37, September 1974, p. 49.
45. *African Research Bulletin*, P,S,C Series, January 15, 1976, p. 3879. Guinea's decision to rejoin was based on their view that "The objectives of the Festival were now streamlined to conform with the spirit of Pan-Africanism." *Festival News* V.1. No. 9, Aug./Sep. 1976, front page.
46. Also supporting Senegal were West Africa (Francophone) Zone II, North America, United Kingdom and Ireland, Europe, and Central Africa. See *West Africa*, December 15, 1975, p. 1558.
47. *Sunday Times*, Lagos, July 27, 1975, p. 23.
48. *Ibid.*, August 31, 1975, p. 3; and *News from Nigeria*, New York, Report on December IFC Meeting.
49. Enahoro formulated the idea of the Third Emancipation, which he believed would have been accomplished by the Festival. The first emancipation was the abolition of slavery, the second was the end of foreign domination of Black States in Africa and the Caribbean. "These two," he said, "led inevitably to an equally great historical movement...namely, the cultural and spiritual emancipa-

say... it's an independent body." The article quoted a Festac official as saying that "a replica would be used as a last resort..." See *Sunday Punch*, September 5, 1976, front page.

16. *Ibid.*, op. cit.
17. *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, September 23, 1974, p. 17.
18. *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, October 14, p.5; Oct.15, p.5; Oct.16, p.7; Oct.18, p.5; Oct.19, p.5; "New Role to Revive Culture" is the title of the series; Parts 1-5; by Ola Balogun.
19. *Africa*, No. 39, November 1974, p. 63.
20. *Ibid.*, No. 35, July 1974, p. 66.
21. *New Nigerian*, Lagos, September 14, 1974.p.3 of Saturday Supplement.
22. *Sunday Times*, Lagos, July 6, 1975, p.9.
23. *BBC Summary*, August 1, 1976.
24. *BBC Summary*, August 15, 1975.
25. *BBC Summary*, December 8, 1975.
26. See the *New Nigerian* in the months of September and October, 1974.
27. One possibly significant decision for which to find political correlations is the November, 1973, IFC decision to institute a North African Zone.
28. Fasuyi, Unesco, 1973, p. 31.
29. *Africa*, No. 25, September 1973, p. 29.
30. *Afriscope*, V.4, No. 2, February 1974, p. 11; and *Africa*, No. 37, September 1974, p.49.
31. *Africa*, No. 37, September 1974, p. 49.
32. *Sunday Times*, Lagos, August 10, 1975, p. 14, and September 7, 1975, p. 7.
33. *Africa*, No. 37, September 1974, p. 49.

67. The Senegalese said that Nigeria thought they could dominate the festival and impose their will just because they had oil. They complained that the Nigerians were "Nigerianizing it (the festival) away from the original international standing" (*West Africa*, June 14, 1976, p. 854). While the newspapers were talking about the Nigerian leaders' "lack of commonsense and logic", Senghor got his say, "The Nigerian Government does not have many cultural qualities... and is confusing culture with politics." (*West Africa*, June 7, 1976, p. 795.) The Nigerians countered these attacks with comments on how Senegal seems determined as the "flag carrier of Franco-phonie" (*West Africa*, June 7, 1976, p. 795) to be a leader of Africa, but though "Senghor has always been a beginner of good things, he has never at any time made a success of them." (*Times International*, Lagos, July 19, 1976, p.2) Comments continue about Senegal's "intellectual bankruptcy" (*Times International*, Lagos, July 26, 1976, p.2). The *Nigerian Herald* summed it up with, "Senghor is a black Frenchman who attacks the progressive government of Nigeria when his masters in Paris are busy signing an agreement to provide South Africa with an atomic bomb." (*Times International*, op.cit.)

In essence, Senegal chose the issue of North African participation in Festac as a challenge to Nigeria and lost.

68. *West Africa*, August 30, 1976, p. 1269.
69. *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, August 26, 1976, front page.
70. *West Africa*, June 14, 1976, p. 854.
71. For specifics in the case of Enahoro, see *West Africa*, May 24, p.741-2; June 14, p.854; June 28, p.930; July 5, p. 967; all 1976. See also, the *Daily Star*, Enugu, June 12, 1976.
72. Two Festac officials in Kaduna, Alhaji Umaru Dikko and Alhaji Gidado Idris, from the Ministry of Information of the North Central State, are to either repay or account for ₦50,000, which they received as Supervisor and Secretary of the Durbar Exhibition. See *West Africa*, May 24, 1976, p. 741-2.
73. *West Africa*, June 7, 1976, p. 795.
74. The Nigerian artists were protesting the implication of

tion of the Black man, that is, the Third Emancipation." See *Africa Diary*, June 11-17, 1975, p. 7469-7470; and *Africa*, No. 39, November 1974, p. 63.

50. *Sunday Times*,
51. *Ibid.*, September 7, 1975, p. 7; and conversations with sources.
52. *African Development*, March 1976, p. 271.
53. *Africa*, No. 49, September 1975, p. 10.
54. *West Africa*, October 20, 1975, p. 1260.
55. *BBC Summary*, December 2, 1975.
56. *BBC Summary*, July 8, 1976.
57. New participants were Sudan, Somalia, and Surinam. See *Festival News*, No. 7, April/May 1976, p. 8. Guinea also decided to join, see *Festival News*, No. 9, Aug./Sep. 1976, front page. By the deadline of Aug. 31, 1976, a total of thirty-six participants had paid the registration fee (*New Nigerian*, Aug. 23, 1976).
58. The implication is that African culture is more than naked dancers, and that such exhibitions are degrading to African culture. See *BBC Summary*, July 24, 1976. Another source headlined this development with "Festac Cover Up". *West Africa*, July 26, 1976, p. 1083.
59. The sum of ₦22,115.17 was raised that evening. *Festival News*, No. 9, August/September 1976, p.5.
60. See *Daily Times*, Lagos, August 17, 1976, p. 5 and *Festival News*, No. 9, August/September 1976, p.2.
61. *West Africa*, June 14, 1976, p. 854.
62. *BBC Summary*, December 8, 1975.
63. See *West Africa*, April 5, p. 478 and April 12, p. 515, 1976, for a coverage of the withdrawal of Senegal.
64. *BBC Summary*, April 24, 1976.
65. *West Africa*, April 26, 1976, p. 669.
66. *Ibid.*, op. cit.

of all the physical and human resources available."  
 (Cultural Policy, Unesco, 1969.)

\* \* \* \* \*

EMBLEMS



DAKAR



LAGOS

- Ipi Tombe's presence as meaning that there were no Nigerian artists good enough to perform. *Daily Times*, Lagos, September 28, p.2; October 1, front page; and October 7, p. 16; all in 1976.
75. Refer to *Sunday Punch*, Lagos, September 17, 1976, p. 2; and *Daily Times*, Lagos, July 21, 1976, p. 5 and October 13, 1976, front page.
  76. If there are 1500 persons in the Nigerian delegation, this means it will almost equal the American Delegation. *Festival News*, No. 9, August/September 1976, p. 6. See also News Release No. 1281, Federal Ministry of Information, October 12, 1976.
  77. *Africa*, No. 25, September 1973, p. 29.
  78. *Ibid.*, op. cit.
  79. *Africa*, No. 25, September 1973, p. 29; and *Afriscope*, V.4, No. 2, February 1974, p. 12.
  80. In June, 1976, Haruna announced Nigeria's being selected to serve on a committee to organise "the proposed pan-African Cultural Festival...which might be held in 1979." This proposed festival seems to be associated with the African Cultural Ministers' Conference which was held in Addis Ababa in June 1976; perhaps it is also connected with the OAU. Another festival plan, presumably aborted now that Senegal has re-joined Festac, was Senghor's planned rival to Festac, which was to be organized by a group called the "International Black Festival of Arts Association". See *West Africa*, June 14, 1976, p. 854.
  81. See *West Africa*, August 23, 1976, p. 1236, for the story of the first ECOWAS Games. (ECOWAS = Economic Community of West African States).
  82. "The idea of cultural development, considered as an essential aspect of development in general, is directed to ensuring this creative renewal on the basis of the broadest possible participation, for the benefit of society as a whole. This idea, first emerged and, as we know, proved successful... at the International Conference on Cultural policies organized by Unesco in Venice in 1970." (Maheu, Unesco, 1973, p.17) A cultural action is one action taken toward cultural development, and is a part of cultural policy, which is defined as "the sum total of the conscious and deliberate usage, action or lack of action in a society, aimed at meeting certain cultural needs through the optimum utilization

APPEND IX A*Aims of the Festival*

The principal aims of the Festival are:

- (i) to ensure the revival, resurgence, propagation and promotion of Black and African culture and Black and African cultural values and civilization;
- (ii) to present Black and African culture in its highest and widest conception;
- (iii) to bring to light the diverse contributions of Black and African peoples to the universal currents of thought and arts;
- (iv) to promote Black and African artists, performers and writers and facilitate their world acceptance and their access to world outlets;
- (v) to promote better international and interracial understanding;
- (iv) to facilitate a periodic "return to origin" in Africa by Black artists, writers and performers uprooted to other continents.

SOURCE: *Festac '75, Basic Information.*  
*Also New Nigerian, Festac Supplement, August 7, 1976.*

APPEND IX B : The Zones

## 1. South America Zone

Brazil  
Ecuador  
Columbia  
Venezuela  
Panama  
Peru

## 2. Caribbean Zone

Guyana  
Haiti  
Jamaica  
Trinidad and Tobago  
Cuba  
Dominican Republic  
Bahamas  
Barbados

## 3. North America Zone

\* United States  
\* Canada

## 4. United Kingdom and Ireland Zone

\* United Kingdom & Northern Ireland  
\* Irish Republic

## 5. Europe Zone

\* France  
\* West Germany  
\* Netherlands  
Black Communities in all other Western  
and European countries not in any other  
zone.

## 6. Australasia Zone

\* Australia  
\* New Zealand  
Papua/New Guinea  
\* India

## 7. Eastern Africa Zone

Ethiopia  
Sudan  
Somalia

APPENDIX C: List of EventsSOURCE: *Festac '75, Information*

## A. EXHIBITIONS

1. Exhibition on "Africa and the Origin of Man"/"Africa the History of Man.
2. Exhibition on "Traditional Domestic Arts"/"Domestic Arts"
3. Exhibition on "Crafts"
4. Exhibition on "Visual Arts"
5. Exhibition on "Traditional Musical Instruments"
6. Exhibition on "Books"
7. Exhibition on "Traditional Costume"
8. Exhibition on "Black Contributions to Science, Technology and Invention:
9. Exhibition on "Liberation Movements"
10. Exhibition of "Mounted Animals"
11. "Star Country" Exhibition by Ethiopia
12. Exhibition of "Influence of African Art on European Art" by France
13. Exhibition of "Durbar" in Kaduna by Nigeria
14. Exhibition on "Impact of Black Culture in Brazil: by Brazil.
15. New: Exhibition on Planetarium

Dropped: Exhibitions on Traditional and Contemporary  
 Architecture Tribute to African Woman  
 Religion - fired  
 Royalty and Chieftancy - fired  
 Canoe Regatta - fired

## B. PERFORMANCE

1. Dance- Ritual, Masquerade, Ceremonial, War, Acrobatic, Vocational, Creative, Popular Entertainment, Youth (Maidens and Boys), Elders (Male and Female), Traditional Afro-American, Traditional Australasian, Contemporary Dance Theater.
2. Music (many categories)
3. Drama - Modern, Traditional.
4. Films- Documentary, Feature, Shortlength, Children.
5. Literature - Poetry, Novels, Short Stories, Fable & Legends, Texts for Children.
6. Popular Dressing
7. Celebrity Day

Malagasy  
Mauritius

Algeria  
Morocco

8. East Africa (Community)

Kenya  
Tanzania  
Uganda

16. Liberation Movements Zone

Also, Anglophone, Franco-  
phone, and Dutchphone,  
Non-Independent Caribbean  
Territories.

9. Southern Africa Zone

Zambia  
Malawi  
Botswana  
Lesotho  
Swaziland

\* Black and African Communities  
in those countries.

10. Central Africa I

Zaire  
Rwanda  
Burundi  
Republic of Congo

11. Central Africa II

Cameroon  
Gabon  
Chad  
Central African Republic

12. West Africa (Francophone) I

Senegal  
Mauritania  
Mali

13. West Africa (Francophone) II

Ivory Coast  
Upper Volta  
Niger  
Benin  
Togo

14. West Africa (Anglophone)

Ghana  
Liberia  
Sierra Leone  
Gambia  
Nigeria

15. North Africa Zone

Egypt  
Libya  
Tunisia

Sergeant Cyril Agumo is a non-commissioned officer who had served under British officers. He is a man of action who hates to argue or to contemplate, a man "not used to rationalizing away his fears and errors.." During times of crises, whenever excitement takes possession of him, instead of thinking out a solution, "most, if not all his actions became instinctive, thus giving him some measure of invincibility." A religious man, his favorite Biblical passage was the one which reads:

*To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant  
and a time to pick up that which is planted;  
A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break  
down, and a time to build up;  
A time to weep, and time to laugh;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance...*

This was Cyril's guiding light, which always consoled and nurtured him during difficult times and whose appropriateness no matter the occasion, never failed to impress him. The passage's philosophy explained to him the co-existence of failure and success in his life, helped him to justify his killing first a deserting corporal and then his own boss, and enabled him to accept his eventual downfall and death.

In a quick flashback, we learn that Agumo rose to the top the hard way. Married to Maria--for whom he had paid an unusual 150 pounds (about \$400 and a lot of money for an ordinary Nigerian) in dowry--and a father to six children, Agumo had not been successful in becoming an officer. Because of this his wife was ashamed of him, setting the children against him, and constantly nagging him about his not fighting at the front and his not getting promotions like his fellow soldiers. As if this was not enough, to show how much she despised her husband, Maria started going out with other men. Agumo would sometimes spend hours and hours daydreaming, hoping for that day when he would put on an Officer's uniform with those stars sitting squarely on his shoulders and so restore his manhood.

After becoming an officer, Agumo did all that he could to become what he thought was a good and exemplary leader. He believed that close attachments to people were not appropriate for an army officer. He also believed in discipline and knew that this could only be learned if the leader provided guidance to those who looked up to him. He despised those who deserted the army, and would not stand any form of disobedience. He warned his men, "If I find anyone disobeying my instructions, I will not waste my time reporting him to any officer, I will shoot him there and bury him..." And this is exactly what he does.

APPENDIX C: (continued)

## C. COLLOQUIUM "Black Civilization and Education"

1. Black Civilization and Pedagogy Traditional and Modern
2. Black Civilization and Development of an Indigenous National Language
3. Black Civilization and Religion
4. Black Civilization and Political History
5. Black Civilization and Mass Media
6. Black Civilization and Industrialization
7. Black Civilization and Modern Government

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## BOOK REVIEW

THE ANONYMITY OF SACRIFICE by I.N.C. Aniebo

Heinemann. London, 1974. pp. 117.

I.N.C. Aniebo's *The Anonymity of Sacrifice* will always have a special place in African literature because it is the first novel to focus on what the Nigerian civil war must have meant to those who were involved in it.

The book covers only three days of the war. Its drama is centered on two major characters: Captain Benjamin Onwura and Sergeant Cyril Agumo, both career soldiers fighting on the Biafran side of the war. However, neither man is aware of the other's existence (except on the impersonal and official level), attitudes, temperament, class or upbringing. So when they finally confront each other towards the end of the novel, they clash in a violent encounter which results in their destruction.