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## **Engendering Development in Nigeria through Cultural Heritage Research**

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**ABSTRACT** Today's Nigeria is witnessing a paradigm shift with respect to anthropological scholarship vis-à-vis human development. Increasingly, anthropology is being conceptualized of and practised within the domain of clearer understanding and better appreciation of the intriguing cultural diversity of the country. This philosophical orientation is certainly at variance with the goals, methods and practice of anthropology in the 19<sup>th</sup> and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Anthropology in Nigeria during the above period was largely a tool of imperialistic exploitation and political oppression. This attitude was a reflection of the wrong and generally arrogant notion that the people being studied were "relics" of primitive barbarity and they should therefore be related to as objects rather than subjects. However, the discipline is now evolving into a truly scientific engagement aimed at liberating technologically weaker societies from the bondage of poverty and disease. In this regard, anthropologists today in Nigeria have started (at least minimally) to address such issues and problems as environmental degradation and/or abuse; health with particular reference to HIV/AIDS; poverty; conflict management and cultural diversity. All these form the core of sustainable development – a complex human phenomenon that remains a dreadful monster staring Nigeria as well as other African countries in the face.