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Globalisation and African Culture: The Nigerian Experience

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Abstract:

Globalisation has generated increasing concern over the years by scholars and this is centered on how the world is being compressed into a single space now referred to as a global village. African scholars are now compelled into accepting uniform moral principle of what is right and wrong within the global culture. Supporters of globalisation have therefore conceived it as a veritable phenomenon which brings about conspicuous development in some sectors. Opponents of globalization, on the other hand, especially among African scholars, have argued that globalisation is destructive to African culture and development. There is plethora of literatures on the economic aspect of globalization while neglecting other aspects, more importantly its cultural aspect, as well as its impact which is so evident in our present day society. Using the historical and analytical approach, this work therefore examines the impact of Globalisation on the Nigerian culture. This work undertook the examination of available data which will be gathered from different sources. Primary source includes oral interview. Secondary sources include books, journals, conference papers and so on. This work would unveil issues surrounding globalization particularly its cultural aspects. Asides from this, this work would bring to the fore the positive and negative impact of globalization on the African culture and this would encompass discussions on the African youths, music, food pattern, dress culture, and so on.

Keywords: Globalisation, Culture, African values, development

1. Introduction

There were more than 450 linguistic or ethnic groups for Nigeria before the dawn of Western colonialism¹. Finally, British colonialist united many diverse groups altogether and name it as it "Nigeria"². This paper therefore critically examines globalisation and the African culture, within the Nigerian experience. It is divided into six sections. This section is the introduction while section two dwells on the concept of globalisation and culture. Section three focuses on African culture. Section four looks at Africa and globalisation. Section five critically examines globalisation and African Culture using Nigeria as a case study and the last section centers on conclusion.

1.1. Conceptual Discourse

1.1.1. Globalisation

Globalisation which is interchangeably used with "One world" and "Villagization" has been in use since at least the early 1990s to characterize the present period in which we live³. However, over the years, the concept has attracted many definitions. Kiely defined globalisation to a world in which societies, cultures, politics and commerce have, in some sense, come closer together⁴. It is also defined as a set of processes changing the nature of human interaction across a wide range of spheres including the economic, political, social, technological and environmental⁵. The concept also refers to the rapid expansion, through giant multinational companies, of capitalism to several areas of the world, including areas where it had hitherto been resisted or put in check⁶.

Samuel defined globalisation as inexorable integration of markets, nation states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before in a way that it enables individuals, corporations and nation states to reach around the world faster, farther, deeper and cheaper than ever before, the spread of free market capitalism to virtually every country in the world⁷. Globalisation is defined as the removal and elimination of barriers to trade, communication, and cultural exchange. The world today has become very different from what it was previously, because of globalisation. With advances in

¹ Eze, D. (2014). Nigeria and the Crises of Cultural Identity In The Era of Globalization. Journal of African Studies and Development. 6(8), 140.

² Nnoli, O. (1978). Ethnic Politics In Nigeria. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers. 35.

³ The Challenges of Globalization in Africa- What Role for Civil Society and Other Stakeholders, (2002) Conference Paper held in Addis Ababa .4.

⁴ Kiely, R. (1998). The Crises of Global Development. In R.Kiely. (Ed.), Globalization and The Third World. P.3. London: Routledge.

⁵ Erinosh, L. (2004 July 16). Globalization and its Paradoxes in The Guardian P.9.

⁶ Madunagu E. (1999 July 26). Globalization and its Victims in The Guardian P.53.

⁷ Samuel, O. (2005). Globalization and Labour Management In Nigeria: The Facts and Fictions In A.O Fadeyi and R. Someye (Eds.), African Perspectives on Globalization and Sustainable Development P.122. Rocsom Publishers.

technology and communications, the world becomes deterritorialized (weakening of ties between culture and place)⁸. The constraints of geography shrink and the world becomes more singular and unified⁹.

Globalisation is not a recent issue. Historically, the origin of globalisation is linked to the quest for commercial empires, internationalization of trade and production and the development of capitalism. Various scientists have conceptualized it to suit their usage. In the literature, globalisation has been construed to mean, among others, the transformation of relations between states, institutions, groups and individual; the internationalization of certain practices, identities, and structures; and perhaps more significantly, the expression of the global restructuring that has occurred in recent decades¹⁰.

Globalisation has a long history, but then, within that process certain raptures and qualitatively new expressions have emerged over the past three decades¹¹. However, certain conceptualizations of globalisation are of relevance; of particular relevance in this context is the thread that globalisation is the emergence of new world order¹². This refers to transition from the bipolar order of the Cold War era to the new order with the dominant player in the global political order. In addition, globalisation is viewed as the emergence of a new international division of labour, or an unequal polarized global economy or the restoring of local economies and their integration through trade liberation and deregulation¹³.

Culturally, globalisation is the universalization of western artifacts, lifestyles and dominant culture. Globalisation refers to the global economy, the international division of labour, capitalist institution, domination, inequality, exploitation and injustice¹⁴. Globalisation is an old enemy in a new disguise¹⁵. Conceptually, globalisation discourse is an old phenomenon of modernization debates and convergence thesis of Western industrialization and development portrayed technologically¹⁶.

1.1.2. Culture

The German word '*kutu*' is the origin for the word culture, which means civilization¹⁷. For Linton it is the way through which ideas and habits can be learned, shared from one generation to another¹⁸. For Ajetonmobi, it is heritage. Culture, collection of knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills passes through one generation to another¹⁹.

It portrays the sum total of all what a human society has accumulated over the whole period of its existence. Culture has certain attributes. Culture is universal. This means that, it is found in every human society. It is global. No matter the level of development of a society, distinct cultural traits are still found. Culture is also shared. Both young and old members share the same culture that has evolved and transmitted from previous generations. Culture is learned. It is not something that is innate. This is why it has to be learnt by new generation. It has to be learnt from the older generations. Thus an infant has to learn the acceptable behavior through socialization process. The young members of the society learn to become responsive and responsible adult members of the society through the process of socialization. Culture is also said to be stable. To point out the stability of culture, there are some culture such as forms of greeting, eating habits and ceremonies that people are used to which are difficult to change. Culture is also dynamic. Though we have alluded to the fact that culture is stable yet it may be altered. A change in culture may occur as a result of a change within or as a result of coming into contact with another culture.

2. African Culture

African is the second largest continent in the world. It has an area of 30.3 million square kilometers (11.7 million square miles), which is roughly one-fifth of the earth's land mass²⁰. It is occupied by many noticeably different human populations of a great complexity of cultures. The peoples of Africa, like all other peoples of the world, are inseparable from their history, culture and civilization. This is largely because their history is the record of what they did, thought and said; and their culture and civilization are the totality of ideas, concepts and values that characterize their societies²¹. It is significant to note that the indigenous peoples of Africa are so culturally diverse that no single language, social organization, economy, custom, myth or legend is common to all of them.

In examining African culture, one must consider the diversity of the population that makes up the continent. However, despite this diversity Africans share certain common worldview such as religion and theology, morality and social organization²². Africa, the continent of the Black race, has its cultural values that distinguish her from other continents of

⁸ Robertson, R. (1996). *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage. P.12.

⁹ Waters, M. (2001). *Globalization*, Second Edition. Routledge. P. 11.

¹⁰ Tade, A. (1996). *Globalization and Social Policy in Africa: Issues and Research Directions Working Paper Series*. Dakar. CODESRIA. P.8.

¹¹ Tade, A. (1996). *Globalization and Social Policy in Africa: Issues and Research Directions Working Paper Series*. Dakar. CODESRIA. P.8.

¹² Nnedum, O.A. and Ezeokana O.J. (2008). *Globalization and Cultural Expectation in Igbo Cultural Area of Nigeria*. In *Globalization and African Identity*. Vol 5. International Journal of Philosophy. P. 98.

¹³ Tade A. (1996). *Globalization and Social Policy In Africa: Issues and Research Directions Working Paper Series*. Dakar. CODESRIA. P.8.

¹⁴ Nnedum, O.A. and Ezeokana O.J. (2008). *Globalization and Cultural Expectation in Igbo Cultural Area of Nigeria*. In *Globalization and African Identity*. Vol 5. International Journal of Philosophy. P. 104.

¹⁵ Nnedum, O.A. and Ezeokana O.J. (2008). *Globalization and Cultural Expectation in Igbo Cultural Area of Nigeria*. In *Globalization and African Identity*. Vol 5. International Journal of Philosophy. P. 104.

¹⁶ Tade A. (1996). *Globalization and Social Policy In Africa: Issues and Research Directions Working Paper Series*. Dakar. CODESRIA. P.9.

¹⁷ Linton cited in Fageyinbo, M.O. (2005). *Essential Themes in Tertiary Social Studies*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Loud Book publishers. P.1.

¹⁸ Fageyinbo, M.O. (2005). *Essential Themes in Tertiary Social Studies*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Loud Book publishers. P.1.

¹⁹ Ajetonmobi Cited in Fageyinbo, M.O. (2005). *Essential Themes in Tertiary Social Studies*. Ibadan: Loud Book publishers. P.1.

²⁰ Ajayi, A. (2005). *The Concept of Culture*. In A. Ajayi (Ed.), *African Culture and Civilization*. (P.9) Ibadan: Atlantis Books.

²¹ Ajayi, A. (2005). *The Concept of Culture*. In A. Ajayi (Ed.), *African Culture and Civilization*. (P.9) Ibadan: Atlantis Books.

²² Olaoba, O.B. (2005). *African Culture and Development in Time Perspective*. In A. Ajayi (Ed.), *African Culture and Civilization*. (P.35) Ibadan: Atlantis Books.

the world. In Africa, emphasis is placed on human relations among the peoples. Thus, greeting at different periods of the day is given prominent attention. The African culture has a pride of place for elders. Among the Yoruba, for example, a young man prostrates and a young woman kneels in greeting elders. The young are duty bound to render assistance to the elderly in every task where they require help. In African culture, it is customary to show hospitality to strangers, visitors and the needy. Mutual concern and hospitality were thus the pillars of the African traditional society. One of the most important features of African culture is the family institution. The institution has a way of solidifying the relationship between two different families or lineages as opposed to two individuals operating in Western societies. In other words, individuality and monogamy, as upheld in Western value system, stand in contradiction to the African culture.

The African culture also gives significant place to names and naming ceremonies. Nobody exists in African society without a name and such names are often symbolic. Some of these names have praise-poems (Oriki) accompanying them. Another aspect of African culture is the type and mode of dressing peculiar to the people. Dress is essentially an index of culture. African dresses reflect African personality often to suit the climatic conditions and also reflect the African artistic design and embroidery. Music is also an important characteristic of African culture. Africans are always singing and dancing. At festivals, songs and dances keep the African soul mirthful. Music is a social enhancer of performance in African culture as demonstrated in African festivals. All these and more are classified as the various aspects of African culture. Thus, the colonial epoch became the worst period for African culture. It was the period that African cultural values were trampled on by foreigners.

3. Globalization and Africa

The world today is not static and no continent can be said to be static. New developments are bound to take place from time to time and within the context of these new developments, no country in this modern world can survive as an island. Through the wave of globalisation, nations become more and more interdependent. Globalisation as a concept is not new to the world. As indicated earlier, Scholars believe there has been three major phases of globalisation: 1870-1914, 1945-1980 and from 1980 till now²³. This however depends on how one defines and explains globalisation. With regard to Africa, international contacts and exchanges are not new. Africa's history is marked by foreign involvement e.g. European involvement. Africa, had significant interactions within it. Europe and America started way back in the 15th century²⁴. George Ekwuru calls it "the deculturisation" and "depersonalization" of a people within their own land²⁵. Some scholars define it as essentially "a system of political, economic, and cultural domination forcibly imposed by a technologically advanced foreign minority on an indigenous majority"²⁶. The next stage of Africa interaction with the world particularly Europe was during the era of independence from colonial rule. Therefore, in the last decade of the 20th century and the 21st century, Africa's linkage with other parts of the world has entered a new phase commonly termed as globalisation.

4. Globalisation and African Culture-The Nigerian Experience (An Appraisal)

For most of the researchers, globalization is an incident which creates scope for trade, networking and collaboration²⁷. Whereas, some see it as a new form of colonialism²⁸. For many Nigerian it has stopped the process of growth as it has established pave for poverty²⁹. Some researchers also accused globalization for the creation of inflation, collapse of infrastructure, weakening of the currency, ethnic and religious violence etc.³⁰. Many studies focused on Africa also have same thought³¹. Whereas, it has been treated as a tool for improving cultural pressure for European culture³². From cultural point of view, it is another form of imperialism or colonialism³³. Before the 19th century, Nigeria was mainly colonized by disparate ethno-linguistic groups such as the Oyo Empire, Kanem- Borno Empire, Benin Kingdom and Sokoto Caliphate etc. British forcefully collected them as one country but a national culture was yet to emerge because each of the numerous ethnic groups has jealously guarded their cultures. This is why English language is still the country's lingua-franca³⁴.

Ogunjimi and Na'Allah highlighted that the pop culture become popularized in Nigeria by globalisation³⁵. Kwame Yeboah (2007), mentioned that a distorted value system has been created the impact of colonialism (which is an earlier form of globalisation) on African culture³⁶. Farming activity has been changed a lot. Ability to write and speak in the

²³ Ajayi, I. (2003). Globalization and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Myth and the Reality. Nigeria. 12.

²⁴ Obioha, P. (2010). Globalization and The Future of African Culture. Academic Journal. 2(1)..3.

²⁵ Ekwuru, G. The Pangs of an African Culture in Travail. Owerri: Totan Publishers limited.

²⁶ Geller, S. (1995). The Colonial Era in Africa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 3.

²⁷ Walter and Afisi cited in Ugbam, O. Chukwu, B. and Ogbo, A. (2014). The Effects of Globalization on African Culture: The Nigerian Perspective. Journal of Business and Management. 16(63), 66.

²⁸ Walter and Afisi cited in Ugbam, O. Chukwu, B. and Ogbo, A. (2014). The Effects of Globalization on African Culture: The Nigerian Perspective. Journal of Business and Management. 16 (63).66.

²⁹ Amiwu. L.E. (2004). Globalization: The Human Resources Challenges. Management In Nigeria. 39(2).

³⁰ Aluko, M.A. Akinola, G. O. and Sola, F. (2004). Globalization and the Manufacturing Sector: A Study of Selected Textile Firms in Nigeria. Journal of Social Sciences, 9(2).

³¹ Oni, A. (2005). Globalization and Its Implication on African Culture and Development: Challenges for Education. International Journal of African and African American Studies (4)2.

³² Walter and Afisi cited in Ugbam, O. Chukwu, B. and Ogbo, A. (2014). The Effects of Globalization on African Culture: The Nigerian Perspective. Journal of Business and Management. 16(63), 66.

³³ Wilfred, F. (1997). Globalization and Cultures: The Other Voice. Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, 9(12).

³⁴ Walter and Afisi cited in Ugbam, O. Chukwu, B. and Ogbo, A. (2014). The Effects of Globalization on African Culture: The Nigerian Perspective. Journal of Business and Management. 16(63), 66.

³⁵ Ogunjimi, B. and Abdul-R.N. (2005). Introduction to African Oral Literature and Performance. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press Inc. P. 36.

³⁶ Kwame, Y. (2007). The Impacts of Globalization on African Culture. University of Southern Denmark.

colonial master's language had been seen as an indication of education. Local language had been underestimated. Whereas, colonial languages were valued over and above African languages. Secondary and tertiary institutions had seen great changes³⁷. Such evils as admission racketeering, exam malpractices, sexual harassment of students by lecturers and vice versa, sale of marks, lack of sense of duty, indifference to social responsibility and public property, indecent dressing and the general decay of the moral sense³⁸. Adoption of western culture has restricted the practice of African's culture³⁹. Dressing, dancing skills had been affected a lot due to the effects of globalization⁴⁰. The cultural practice of Nigerian youths had been highlighted by Nicolaidis (2012)⁴¹. South Africa have for the most part abandoned their African culture and language, and often religion and try to be hip by imitating their mainly American rap artist role models⁴². Mainly studies have highlighted the teenagers and youths and the teachers as main influencers for promoting culture⁴³. Culture never become stagnant, rather always develops⁴⁴. Mind changes, changes in the spirituality always happen while contact happened with other cultures⁴⁵. Nicolaidis (2012) acknowledges the fact that in some cases, ethically sound values on issues such as human right and democracy are spread through Americanization⁴⁶. Beyond these issues, Nigeria has benefitted tremendously from globalisation in other sphere of life. Culture in Nigeria, as far as mass communication is concerned was to use town-criers who are equipped with nothing but their voices and a gong. The demerits and limitations of this mode of communication are obvious especially when compared with the internet or digital phone today.

Nigerian culture has also contributed to the world globally. This can be seen in various aspects of their culture. For instance, the local language has attracted some foreigners in to Nigeria. Some of these foreigners can be seen in Nigerian universities learning native dialect like Yoruba. This process has thereby brought the native people closer to the foreigners and this has resulted into globalisation. In the area of fabric, foreigners now purchase the local fabrics like *Ankara*, *Adire* etc. to wear. Also, in the area of music, Nigerian music has integrated the world globally and brought about a sense of togetherness. Nigerian arts are being transported to the world globally, the Benin arts exemplifies this. One can state that globalisation, as a double-edged sword, has impacted both positively and negatively on the Nigerian cultures to the extent that one cannot convincingly prove that its net effect is negative and to state also that the negative effects came as result of Nigerians copying what was wrong in foreign cultures of their own freewill. Globally, Nigerian culture has also contributed to the world.

5. Conclusion

Needless to say, globalization has bought enormous benefits to the world with greater unity and cooperation, appreciation and understanding among nations, races, cultures and institution⁴⁷.

Many developing countries, like Nigeria have been benefited from globalization. But for some cases, countries had come out with many worse, pauperized with most of their value systems and institutions virtually destroyed.

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⁴⁵ Walter and Afisi cited in Ugbam, O. Chukwu, B. and Ogbo, A. (2014). The Effects of Globalization on African Culture: The Nigerian Perspective. *Journal of Business and Management*. 16(63), 66.

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