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African Cultural Development and the Challenges of Globalisation: A Critique

Alabi Oladimeji Mohammed

Abstract

Africa's economic, social and political development are closely tied to her cultural settings, which have been contributing to the continent's progress since the precolonial period. However, the increasing influence of globalization has continued to place heavy challenges on the continent's cultural progress. Globalization, it has been argued, seeks to integrate people around the world so that economic, social and cultural barriers and restrictions are removed to facilitate smoother commercial and social relations among nations. The advocates of this phenomenon however fail to consider the cultural diversities and unequal levels of development among societies around the world, with particular regard to Africa. Thus, the gains of globalization have largely been lopsided, with the advanced countries obtaining greatest benefits while the less-developed countries, mostly in Africa, play the followers role. It is on this premise that this paper examines Africa's performance in the international system before globalization; the impact of the trend on the continent's cultural progress; and how she can benefit from the global community without losing her unique cultural identities in order to remain relevant in the global environment. These include African communal social values like respect for elders, greeting, dressing, language, songs and dances, respect for human dignity and regard for sacred institutions in the society. Also very important are the continent's economic potentials which were anchored on traditional productive systems in agriculture, indigenous industries, intra and inter regional trade and commerce. The historical research method was adopted in the study with the use of relevant source materials. The paper concludes that African countries should strengthen their cultural indices and productive capacities to become strong participants and take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the global trend. Through this, the continent would achieve greater relevance and benefits in the global setting, rather than a dogmatic enlistment in the

jamboree, which could turn Africans to mere consumers and spectators in the increasingly competitive international environment.

Key words: globalization, culture, Africa, cultural indices, precolonial period.

Introduction

Globalization has remained one of the hottest subjects of debate in contemporary society. As one of the most popular buzz words of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the concept describes the inter-connectivity and hyper linkage among countries so that barriers are speedily removed for smoother interaction. The proponents of globalization have, however, exaggerated its benefits for the developing and underdeveloped countries, particularly, in Africa because the idea of unity in diversity, which globalization supposedly promotes, appears more like an illusion than reality. Globalization, it is assumed would promote rapid transformations in social and economic life of nations across the globe through speedy integration. This conjectural assumption is upheld without due consideration for the unequal levels of development among nations, particularly, the peculiar nature of Africa, whose development is greatly tied to her cultural milieu.

Indeed, if culture is accepted as the total way of life of a people (encompassing the economic, social, technological and political modes), then Africa certainly had formidable styles of doing things before her contact with Europe and other parts of the world. The continent's culture in the precolonial period was entrenched in the traditional social, economic, technological and political mechanisms, dictated by the nature and level of development available in her society. These unique systems were developing steadily before the continent's contact with Europe. However, these pristine ways of life suffered gradual set-back from the middle of the 15th century, when, for instance, Europe established contact with Africa. This is because, rather than being symbiotic, Afro-European relations, have remained largely parasitic, with Europe, benefiting more. In fact, from the era of slave trade, to the so called 'legitimate trade', to colonialism, now, to neocolonialism (tactically coined as globalization), Africa's

relations with the outside world, particularly Europe, has largely remained a sojourn of unequal benefits, the same old-wine in new battles; a relation of exploitation of the continent by the developed countries.

Thus, this paper seeks to critically examine the impact of globalization on Africa's cultural development with particular reference to the economic, social, technological and other aspects of life of her people, to determine the cost and benefits inherent in the trend for the continent and give suggestion to chat new a course for a more beneficial participation in the global system.

Conceptual Clarifications

The term culture, like civilization, is derived from Latin, the language of the ancient Romans, whose culture (or civilization) spread to all except the most northern parts of Europe in antiquity.[1] Culture has a wide range of application, depending on the perspective of the user. Sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and historians have given definitions of the concept in relation to their areas of specializations but they all emphasise the ways of life of people. Simply defined therefore, culture is the total way of life of a society or the way people live. Culture embraces all the characteristic activities and interests of a set of people. The concept can also be defined as learned behaviour of the society and how the behaviour is shared and transmitted by members of the society from one generation to another. Such learned behaviour could reflect in the various aspects of the society like rules and regulations, songs and dances, religion, language, beliefs, moral, behaviour, art and craft and general ways of doing things. Culture can also simply be employed to describe specific characteristics, which are identifiable in a group. It could also be used to describe the process of preservation of these features and how they are transmitted from one generation to another.[2]

The descriptions above significantly accommodate Africa as a continent whose people express their culture in virtually all aspects of their life. Indeed, the socio-economic, political and technological modes in the continent all depict adequate representation for the pristine traditional systems of past generations, which have been

handed down by the progenitors of the various people from time immemorial. Furthermore, culture has been viewed as a phenomenon having three basic stages, which every society must pass through in its march toward civilization. The Greek intellectuals, having been conscious of the fact that all contemporary civilized peoples (themselves included) had, at some time in the past, been savages, formulated a theory of societal evolution along a spiral of development broadly divided into three stages. According to this theory, societies gradually progressed from the lowest of these stages (savage) to the highest (civilization), unless their course was blocked either by constraints of their geographical environments, or by their isolation from more advanced societies; for the rate of progress might be considerably accelerated by external influences. The movement up this ladder was seen as 'culture progress' or as a process of improvement in manners.[3]

The first in this theory of culture formation and culture change, according to the Greeks, was the pre-culture stage; the condition of simple and nomadic food collecting human groups. This refers to people, who did not produce their own food (by agriculture and animal breeding), but depended on nature's bounty, collecting naturally-grown fruits and vegetables and hunting wild animals for food. The next stage (the first cultured stage) constituted a broadly well-ordered mode of life with an economy based on food production. Any made of life that seemed to fit this description was described by the term *hemeron*, (cultivated society). Such a society was broadly characterized by social and political discipline, respect for law, adequacy of material goods, in term both of quantity and quality, a systematic deployment of resources, of labour and of specialized skills and internal and external commerce. Third stage (which was described as the highest and most refined form of cultivated society) included a knowledge of writing, and exact sciences, sophisticated arts and crafts and what Greek intellectuals called the qualities associated with the process of living together in cities; that is, what is now called the socialization of urban civilization.[4] While there is ample evidence that African culture has been progressing based on the positions above, certain constraining

conditions, emanating from both internal and external factors, have prevented the continent from taking full benefits from relations with outside, as theorised by Greek intellectuals. These conditions include poverty, unequal access to economic resources, lack of qualitative education, lack of trust in indigenous capability and over-reliance on foreign methods in socio-economic spheres.

Globalization like culture has also been described in different ways, depending on what sphere of life it is being used to address. Its central focus however, is the integration of all peoples of the world into a global village. Thus, there is a nexus between culture and globalization; the main area of different however, is that while culture agrees that every group has some peculiar features, which set it apart from others, globalization seeks to promote the integration of these different cultures and ways of life into a web so that with time, peculiar cultural indices may wither away. Globalization could also be viewed from the economic perspective as the integration of markets, removal of boarder restrictions for free flow of goods and services so that trade and commerce could be less cumbersome. For instance the International Monetary Fund, defined globalization as the rapid integration of economies worldwide through trade, financial flows, technology spillovers, information networks, and cross-cultural currents.[5] Countries will open their economies to foreign capital investment since in globalization, neither distance nor national barriers will impede economic transactions.[6]

Others see globalization from the angle of faster and more effective communication and flow of information through the internet and satellite technology, which accelerates human contact, leading to the idea of the world becoming a global village. However, the fundamental element in globalization is the integration of people and their cultures around the world. Integration has been described as the cumulative effect of individual allegiance to and identification with a society and its goal.[7] From a related perspective, which appears more acceptable to this paper, integration is summarised as bridging the gap between groups by subsuming their narrow interests in terms of

culture, language and ethnic affinity, to the larger interest of the national or international community.[8]

From the description of culture and globalization above, some deductions can be made with respect to whether Africa stands to benefit from an integration of its culture with those of other parts or the world. In the first place, in Africa, culture embodies not only the traditions, values, moral and ways or life of the peoples, but also encompasses the productive modes. These are of both materials and non-material components, which all represent the uniqueness of the continent. Material culture, for instance, refers to the tangible, physical indices through which the styles and values of a people are expressed. They include buildings, works of art, tools, clothes, pots, swords, cutlasses and other artifacts, which are created by man out of the bounty of nature and represent the peculiar ways of every African society. These material components of culture help us to reconstruct the history of past societies and their peoples through the study of the remains of past generations. For instance in Nigeria, excavations at Ile-Ife, Iwo-Eleru, near Akure, Benin, Igbo Ukwu, Daima and Nok, have given reliable information about past inhabitants of the areas.[9] The non-material components of culture, on the other hand, are abstract things, which a society values and cherishes and are also used to express their culture. These include attitudes and values of a society such as its religion, philosophy, literature, language, songs, dance, and patriotism. If the concept of social change is considered as the process by which different aspects of a society and its component parts are affected or modified in the course of time, then one may be tempted to view globalization as an aspect of social change on African cultural development. However, it would be dangerous for Africa to allow aspects of her pristine cultural practices to be eroded by the forces of globalization all in the name of social change.

A Brief on Africa's Potentials before Globalization

Before contact with the outside world, Africa had a formidable system, which revolved around her traditional environment and culture. This dictated the continent's progress in economic, social

and political life, and her performance in these spheres was quite impressive. Rodney, for instance, maintains that Africa's development up till the 15th century was at par with those obtainable in Europe and other parts of the world. He claims that it was the turgidity and viability of the African economy that attracted the Europeans into the continent, and blames Africa's retrogression in the later period on Europe's imperial ventures in the continent.[10] Africa had been a continent of remarkable improvement from the period of early man. Beginning from communal agriculture, the continent witnessed transformations at different stages until she was noticed by the Europeans. The transformation in agriculture was made possible by the discovery and use of iron, which started at varying periods and different places in Africa. From communalism, her political system became transformed into states, chiefdoms, kingdoms and later empires. All these indicate Africa's strength in political organization and administration.

African science and technology, like that of the West, had also unfolded since the down of human history. For instance, the first evidence of tools used by African ancestors was interred in Valleys across Sub-Saharan Africa.[11] It is further explained that modern man first developed in the Great Rift Valley of Africa, the first development of tools is found there as well; the Homo *Habilis*, residing in East Africa, developed the first tool making industry, the *Oldowan*, around 2.3 million BC. This tool industry spread to Middle East and Europe around 800,000 to 600,000 BC. Homo Sapiens or modern humans created bone tools, and back blades, which became characteristics of later stone tool industries.[12] The oldest abstract art in the world is a shell necklace dated 82,000 years in the Cave of Pigeons in Taforalt, Eastern Morocco. The second oldest art and oldest rock art is found in the Blombos Cape at the Cave in Southern Africa, dated 77,000 years.[13]

There are yet other evidences of African technology in fields like maritime and architecture. For instance, in 1987, the third oldest canoe in the world and the oldest in Africa was discovered in Nigeria by Fulani herdsmen near the Yobe River, in the village of Dufuna. It

was dated 8.000 years, cut out of African mahogany. Based on "stylistic sophistication", the tradition of canoe building must have gone further back in time, noted one archaeologist.[14] While, in the field of architecture, the Egyptian pyramids are outstanding monuments in building engineering; the magnificent cities of Zimbabwe and Mozambique of the 12th century represent massive hubs of stone complexes, which signify great architectural masterpieces. The walls of Benin City in Precolonial Nigeria, also represents great man-made structure, even though, they were partially destroyed by the British in 1897. Peace described the wall as follows:

> They extend for some 16.000 kilometres in all, in a mosaic of more than 500 interconnected settlement boundaries. They cover 6.500 square kilometres and were all dug by the *Edo* people. In all, they are four times longer than the Great Wall of China, and consumed a hundred times more materials than the Great Pyramids of Cheops, the single largest architectural phenomenon on the planet.[15]

According to Rodney, bearing in mind the history of Japan, it should be noted that the first requests for technical assistance came from Ethiopian and Congo Empires, which in the 16th century, were at a level undoubtedly comparable to most European feudal states with the important exception that they had not produced the seeds of capitalism. During the 18th century, the great African states of Dahomey, and Asante became prominent, they had passed out somewhat feudal class stratification along with specialization in many activities such as the working of gold, iron and cloth. Asante's society under Opoku Ware had already shown a capacity for seeking out innovations, by going to the trouble of taking imported silk and unraveling it so as to combine the silk threads with cotton to make the famous *Kente* cloth. In other words, there would have been no difficulty in such African societies mastering European technical skills and bridging the rather narrow gap, which existed between them and Europe at that time.[16]

In the economic aspect, Africa certainly had a sound trade and commerce that even transcended its geographical boundaries in the precolonial period. Indeed, Ogunremi, posits that for a thorough understanding of the present economy of West Africa, there is a need to study the past economy. The present mode of cultivation, production of agricultural and non-agricultural commodities and distribution of all types of products are all entrenched in the past economy. Indeed, according to him, the basis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADEC) or the East African Community (EAC) can be traced to the inter-regional trade that had existed among the African peoples for hundreds of years in the precolonial period.[16] This inter-regional trade was even more soundly based than the era of ECOWAS, SADEC or EAC because some of the economic apparatuses such as the currencies, were more widely spread. For example the same cowry shell that was used in Kano, Nigeria could also be spent in Salaga, in northern Ghana. Since there were no distinct international boundaries as there are today, traders moved freely within Africa, even though there were also local restrictions regarding payment of tolls. Itinerant fishermen, canoe-builders and cultivators were common and were accepted by their hosts.

The above analysis shows that integration had been evident in African society before contact with Europe. The long distance trade as exemplified by the inter-regional trade, was used to diffuse products of various parts of Africa to other places. The Trans-Saharan Trade, which spanned over six centuries is a typical example of the huge volume of exchange between West Africa and North Africa. For instance, there was exchange of products of the Mediterranean and Europe on the one hand, and of the Forest zone of West Africa such as gold, kolanuts, iron and slaves, on the other.[17] Western Sudan as well as North Africa used the revenue from this trade to develop their states while individual trader also recorded prosperity. Furthermore, the trade performed the function of social integration through the introduction of Islam to West Africa, which also epitomized another factor of change. According to Afigbo, the pilgrimage, which it encouraged brought the states of the Sudan into

contact with the most advanced ideas of the time and so kept them up-to-date and progressive. Idris Alooma of Borno (1511 -1603) for instance, learnt of the use of firearms in the course of his pilgrimage, introduced its use into Borno army and thus won himself a place in history as military reformer and conqueror.[18] Islam also introduced new form of dressing and Arabic scholarship, which enhanced record keeping in Western Sudan.

The economy and commerce of Africa was sustained by agricultural products and the products of local technologies spread across the continent. Meanwhile contact with Europe brought a new dimension to Africa's situation as the gradual integration and progress was shattered by the 1884/85 Berlin Conference, which was used to share Africa among the major powers in Europe. Consequently, since the era of colonialism, the continent seems to be leaning more towards the developed world in economic, political, technological, socio-cultural initiatives largely to the detriment of the traditional African ideals.

On the social scale, Africa certainly has a lot of values which are inherent in her traditional society. These are entrenched in the children as part of the primary education and socialization process. The African child is made to accept certain standards as part of the norms of his society and he grows to protect those ideals. Indeed, the African traditional society has mechanisms for inculcating morals and acceptable behavior in members of the society. These values include language, songs, dance, respect for elders, respect for traditional institutions and the laws of the society. For instance language has proven to a veritable tool for reward, warning and rebuke among most societies in Africa. Proverbs and wise sayings play vital role in molding character.

On dressing, Africa respects the dignity of human person and as such places high premium on descent dressing

Africa and Globalization

"Before even the British came into relations with our people, we were a developed people, having our own institutions, having our own ideas of government". J.E Casely-Hayford, 1922 African (Gold Coast) Nationalist.[19]

The first significant thing about the internalization of trade in the 15th country was that Europeans took the initiative and went to other parts of the world. No Chinese boats reached Europe, and if any African canoes reached the Americas (as is sometimes maintained), they did not establish two-way links. What was called international trade was nothing but the extension overseas of European interests. The strategy behind international trade and the production that supported it was firmly in European hands, and specifically in the hands of sea-going nations from the North Sea to Mediterranean.[20] They owned and directed the great majority of world's sea-going vessels and they controlled the financing of the trade between four continents. Therefore, by control of the seas, Europe took the first steps towards transforming several parts of Africa and Asia into economic satellites.

To date, the experience of Western Imperialism remains the most decisive event in Africa's economic history,and since the phenomenon (imperialism) is so important for our assessment of the likely impact of globalization on African societies, it is imperative to understand that it goes beyond a mere relation of dominance on account of unequal power as western writers would always present it. For instance, for some western authors, imperialism generally means principally, or exclusively, the relationship between two countries based on unequal power or more vaguely, that it is the collective heritage of "*dim past*" of mankind, attributable to psychological and other non-economic phenomenon. Such descriptions of imperialism are designed to obscure its exploitative character and distract the attention of the oppressed people from revolutionary ideas.[21] The Europeans' scramble for African colonies must be seen as a culmination of stages of unequal interaction between Europe and Africa, which has been going on over a long period. By the end of the

19th century, the Europeans had scientific, industrial and political revolutions and also possessed unprecedented means to create material wealth and power in the history of mankind. With this power, Europe was able to impose herself in Africa.[22]

The positions above can be used to form a theoretical argument that globalization, appears more like another stage in the array of unequal relations between Africa and the advanced economies of the world. However, it is pertinent to examine Africa and globalization before such a conclusion can become valid.

In the International system, it is often said that no nation or continent can survive in isolation. This conclusion is predicated on the opportunities that are available to countries who relate with others in the international system, and the losses that an isolated country may face. Africa is to a certain degree, an important player in the global economy. Nigerian oil, South African gold and Ivorian cocoa are traded around the globe. Students access the internet from Dakar to Maputo. The continent is also benefitting, especially in aspect of information and communication whereby several (remote) places in Africa, which were hitherto little known, have been connected and made accessible. The revolution in communication is particularly singled out as offering great benefits to Africa by not only making contact easier but also providing employment. The phenomenon has become an instrument for promoting peace and discouraging war as the cost (losses) of war will increase since nations are interconnected and thus pursue common interests.

With globalization, it would appear, Africa does not necessarily need to pass through the Technology Life Cycle of pre-introduction, growth and standardization to achieve developed technology; rather, the continent, through globalization, could adopt and adapt already developed technology for her use. A suitable avenue for achieving this objective, according to the proponents of globalization, is the use of Multinational Corporations, which have been implanted in various parts of Africa. This system, it is argued, offers quicker, cheaper and less complicated methods for technological development.

Furthermore, business and financial transactions have become easier in the continent with globalization. The phenomenon has improved banking services to meet the demand of increasing volume of business. There are now banking services like Money Transfer, On-line Banking, Credit Cards and other related customer friendly packages, which make cash transit much easier and less cumbersome. Africans now receive money from any parts of the globe through such services while businessmen have less troubles transacting their businesses world over.

In the area of education, globalization is said to offer great potentials for Africa as students from the continent now study in various parts of the world. Through such study, African students learn and uphold new ideas and methods. Indeed, one of the factors that aided Japanese technological development was such overseas trainings, particularly in the western world. Such studies would not only bring latest ideas to the continent but African students will also be able to interact with the cultures and civilizations of other areas.

The foregoing suggests that globalization offers great opportunities for African countries but in actual fact this may not be entirely correct. Roger Tooze, in what he titled an "*Uneven Globalization*" showed that some countries/continents are more globalised than others.

> More and more advanced economic activity takes place amongst the three most developed regions of the world. The process of technological, economic, and socio-cultural integration amongst the three most developed regions of the world (Japan plus the NICS from South East Asia, Western Europe and North America) is more diffused, intensive and significant than "integration" between these three regions and the less developed countries, or between the less developed countries themselves. Thus the national economies outside the Triad are increasingly marginalised from the process of wealth creation whilst the level of economic interdependence within the Triad are increasing.[23]

This may imply that Africa is not well placed to participate and take full benefit from the global union, rather it has only been enriching the already rich economies of the developed world through her patronage of their products. Even the revolution in communication has become another tool for tapping Africa's meagre financial resources abroad. For instance, Africa has the lowest telephone density in the world yet the highest telephone charges, and three times the rate of faults per line than in other developing regions.[24] The internet industry is another avenue for exploiting Africa by the developed world.

From another angle, Multinational Corporations in Africa operate like states within African states. They have hijacked the African market producing what the local producers would have been producing thereby making productive activities in Africa to dwindle. Thus globalization, in this sense could be viewed as an instrument for blocking access to foreign technology while retarding local initiatives in technology, a condition that completely negates the theory of commonwealth of all nations, which exponents of globalization, claims the idea stands for. Traditional technologies and industries, which formed the bedrock of Africa's productive economy in the Pre-colonial days have become increasingly neglected. This situation is not unconnected with European imperialism in Africa. Indeed, writers like Hobson and Lenin appear to agree that the impetus for imperialism comes from economic interests, which they believe is related to the process of capitalist accumulation. Hobson for instance argues that as a result of the development of capitalism in the West, industries became more productive and there was greater need for importation of raw materials. Africa thus became a "grazing zone" for Europe not only for raw materials but also markets for finished goods.[25] This is why some writers believe globalization is a mere expansion of Europe's dominance in terms of military, economic and socio-cultural influence over the world from between 16th century and the Mid. 20th century when the United States become the dominant power, and also joined the trend.[26]

Since the 1990s, the trend towards a global integration of trade has gained momentum; that is, a globalised economy, which seeks to erode the powers of national governments and subject nations to the whims of Western dominated organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In this regard, globalization portends negative impact for Africa's sub regional groupings such as ECOWAS, SADEC, EAC and others because they may disintegrate in the face of stronger western dominated organisations. Globalization by nature presents a scenario that threatens the collective aspirations and prospect of regional these blocs because, whereas national governments are the building blocks of regional integration, omnipotent market forces of globalization will render them impotent thereby facilitating the disintegration of the regional blocs as nations would seek to embrace the provisions of the latest global arrangement on individual basis.

It also portends greater marginalization for Africa because it conditions the continent much more than ever, to the charity and goodwill of the advanced countries, who have not been known to offer such free goodwill. For example, if globalization had been so beneficial, African countries ought to have gained technological advancement or at least be seen to be making good progress in developing modern technology in line with western type through collaboration. The much publicized *"Technology Transfer"* is yet to impact positively on the African countries in spite of their friendship with the West. During the precolonial period, the lines of economic activity attached to foreign trade between Africa and Europe were either destructive as slavery was, or at best purely extractive, like ivory hunting, cutting camwood trees and so on.In fact, some African leaders sought European technologies without success. Examples include Emperor Lebna Dengel of Ethiopia in the 16th century, Agaja Trudo of Dahomey in the1720s and *Asantehene* Opoku Ware of Asante all to no avail.[27]

Well into the nineteenth century, Europe displayed the same indifference to requests for practical assistance from Africa, although

by that period both African rulers and European capitalists were talking about replacing slave trade. For instance, in the early 19th century, a ruler in Calabar (Nigeria) wrote to the British, asking for a sugar refinery; while around 1804 King Adandozon of Dahomey was bold enough to ask for a firearms factory. By that period also many parts of West Africa were going to war with European firearms and gun powder - Europeans were also fully aware that their arms technology was decisive and there was not the slightest chance that they would have agreed to teach Africans to make firearms and ammunition.[27] Furthermore, during colonialism, the Europeans deliberately failed to industrialize their colonies in Africa to prevent their competitive ability. Faluyi opines that a major criticism of the colonial administration was its failure to encourage the industrial growth of Africa. It is generally believed that part of the continent's under-development arose from non-industrialization.[28]

From the foregoing, globalization, in its current form, is most likely a subtle avenue for neo-colonialism in Africa. The developed world especially Europe and America appear to have put mechanisms in place in African countries for the continuation of colonialism. They have implanted Multi-national corporations in many parts of Africa, through which they continue to discourage local initiatives, and above all, dominate her markets thereby increasing poverty in the continent and strengthening dependence. The foregoing are among the negative impact of globalization, which its exponents have failed to emphasize or have been passive about.

Towards a Better Globalised Africa

Instead of a dogmatic wholesale acceptance of Western dictates in the name of ideologies such as free trade and market, technology transfer and lately, globalization, African countries need to first intensify efforts to improve their local economies through the transformation of their productive capability. The starting point here would be proper understanding and reassessment of the traditional values and cultural practices of African peoples to determine which aspects of foreign methods are relevant and be adopted. This relates to both material and non-material components of African culture. For

instance, the quest for Technology Transfer by African countries has remained a frustrated attempt in spite of globalization. This is a clear case of marginalization in globalization.

In this sense, the case of cultural integration, as exemplified by the Chinese is a model worthy of emulation. Perhaps it should be emphasized that technology transfer is not only about copying and importation of skilled manpower and equipment as most African countries perceive it to be. The Chinese example offers a reliable practical example of cultural integration in technological growth. Even the West and America were amazed by the fact that 19th century China refused to acknowledge the superiority of Western technology over their indigenous machine and tools.[29] Instead, China continued to pursue a policy of cultural integration in technological development by shutting its doors to wholesale importation of Western technology. The result is that today China is able to feed her population of well over 1.2 billion people through simplified up-to-date agricultural technology without Europe's *"foreign aid"* or America's *"food subsidy"*. The Chinese have also excelled in the area of traditional medicine, which unfortunately, many African countries have neglected, in spite of huge potentials in this aspect of culture. The medicinal value of herbs, roots, leaves and plants are enormous and they have a long heritage among Africans. Aside from their easy accessibility and affordability, the techniques of turning them into medicine are simple and quite easy to assimilate. However, with the increasing tide of foreign influence, Africans have continued to lose interest in these valuable heritage in favour of imported drugs at a much higher cost, sometimes, with devastating side-effects due to preservatives embedded in them.

It should be added that African traditional medicine cover a wide spectrum of human life and thus, has enormous application. Indeed in the opinion of Olaoye, unlike the Western orthodox medicine, which concentrates solely on the physical aspect of man and disease, traditional medicine regards man as a combination of body, mind and spirit.[30] This, perhaps, is why the traditional medicine practitioners are able to delve into, and distinguish themselves in

both physical and metaphysical human ailments. Their diagnostic and treatment mechanism are more embracing than those of the orthodox medicine; sometimes traditional medicine practitioners resort to divination in order to get to the remote cause of the ailment. Unfortunately, this unique aspect of African cultural life is threatened by unwarranted reliance on western imported medicines. There is thus the urgent need for renewed attention on African traditional medicine as a way of sustaining the heritage and contributing to the global market.

Related to the above is the need for increased scientific enquiry and innovation in areas of technology among African countries. Manufacturing and industrialization are largely tied to this factor as exemplified by Europe, America and Asia in their pre-Industrial Revolution era. Every industrial society pursued scientific enquiry and innovation before achieving technological breakthrough, and Africa should follow the same pattern. There is the need to encourage creativity among Africans so that talented people are not lured away from the continent, particularly in this era of *Brain Drain*, which has become another instrument of neocolonialism in recent time. African countries need to make effort to create wealth to invest in the productive sector so that they would not be permanently tied to capitalist financial outfits like the IMF, the World Bank and others, who serve to promote western interest.

This can be pursued through continuous diversification of African countries economies to other areas of potentials, particularly in the mono-causal economies. Clarke revealed that not less than forty sub-Saharan African states are oil producers.[31] Nigeria has risen over the years to her present status as the largest producer of oil in Africa and among the ten largest producers of both crude oil and gas in the world.[32] For instance Nigeria is a country that depends almost entirely on proceeds from crude oil for her foreign exchange and budget; a condition, which put her at mercy of international oil price, which unfortunately, has been dwindling in recent time. Aghalino maintains that studies have revealed that the performance of nations that hinged their economic viability upon oil and gas is, nothing but

miserable. As a result, states that tie their developmental agenda to the accruals from the sale of crude oil and gas and other derivatives from the Federal Government are simply between the devil and the deep blue sea.[33] With such heavy dependence on oil wealth, African countries are susceptible to economic recession because other productive sectors are neglected. This is why several African countries are always affected seriously anytime there is an economic recession as witnessed recently in 2009 Global Economic Melt-down and the current one hitting Nigeria. There is thus the urgent need to diversify Africa's economy in keeping with the challenges of globalization.

Regional integration, through such groupings as ECOWAS, SADEC, EAC and others needs to be strengthened so that economic ties among African countries would be improved. The idea of a common currency being pursued by ECOWAS.....is a shinning example of such integrating apparatus. Through this, goods of various African countries would be accessible to other parts of the continent. The status of African countries being consumer economies would also change if African products are patronised and the proceeds are re-invested in her economies.

From another perspective, African countries need to strengthen their social systems to forestall the erosion of aspects of their cultural identities like language, dressing, greeting, education, family ties and other values, which are being adversely affected by the forces of westernization under the guise of globalization. While globalisation offers opportunity for closer tie and interaction between people, Africans should be wary of cultural colonialism in order not to lose her peculiar values, which could turn her people to permanent followers in the global village. Indeed, Africa has made reasonable progress in the entertainment industry through music and movies. For instance the Nollywood, which is Nigeria's brand of the home movie, has become a household name with great followership not only in Africa but also in the diaspora. There has been appreciable progress in aspect of collaboration among African actors, particularly in West Africa, where Nigerian and Ghanaian film makers have

formed a synergy in producing movies, which have been showcasing the cultures of the two countries. Furthermore, African native languages have become strengthened through movies. African languages like Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Twi, and Kiswahili have gained popularity in the movie industry, especially with the patronage of satellite Television Stations across Africa. In recent time, there has been the translation of movies in other foreign languages like English, French and Latin America, into native languages for better understanding.

In the same vein, African musicians, in recent times, have also been able to break foreign dominance through the use of native languages for their songs. This has been an effective strategy in combating the domination of the continent through songs and also in making her more relevant in the global stage. Indigenous languages have found effective application in musical gene like *Hip-hop, Reggae, Gospel, Rhythm and Blues* to mention but a few, which has enhanced their acceptability and popularity unlike when they were composed with only English or French, which had limited audience among the indigenous population.

However, this kind of progress is yet to be replicated in other productive aspects of African cultural life, which is a serious cause for concern. Potentials in indigenous science and technology, trade and commerce and so on, are yet to be fully tapped for better development. For instance, one factor that is still making the traditional handmade cloth relevant both in Africa and in the diaspora, is its unique indigenous content in terms of raw materials and mode of production.[34] Indeed, most indigenous hand woven clothes are more durable, fashionable and above all, depict the peculiar culture of their local environment. This is why in Nigeria, traditional hand-made fabrics have different names depending on the location of their production. The Yoruba for example refer indigenous fabrics as *Aso Ofi or Aso Oke*; among the Ibo, it is known as *Akwete*; it is named *Andee* among the Tiv. Among the Akan people of Ghana, the popular indigenous fabric is called *Kente*, which is a mixture of cotton and silk.

Conclusion

Culture has remained a strong platform through which Africa showcases her unique identities in material and non material aspects of development since the precolonial period. These include social identities like language, songs, festival, dressing, greeting; economic activities like the long and short distance trades and markets; traditional technologies and various productive activities, which sustained the continent before contact with Europe. These aspects are unfortunately being speedily eroded due to the increasing influence of globalization. Thus, Africa's cultural potentials need to be maximally utilized as the first strategy for effective participation in the global community. So far, globalisation has largely been beneficial to the productive economies; that is, peoples and societies, who have products to offer in the global stage. This is because wealth creation and development are tied to the ability to offer new products in the ever dynamic global market. Thus, Africa can become more relevant in the global environment by revitalizing its cultural, social and economic potentials, as a way of invigorating its local productive capability and economy. By so doing, the continent will become a strong participant in the global trend and obtain full benefits from globalization.

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