



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: DYNAMISM IN ASO OKE PRODUCTION IN YORUBALAND, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the institutions for the production of Aso Oke, the Yoruba end product of the weaving industry to explore the nexus between local knowledge and that of the wider world in a fusion of civilization attainments resultant from globalization developments. The wide fire effect of globalization has not been limited to the internal environment of the state, but has impacted local knowledge, implicated in the porosity of state and has taken local indigenous technological innovations into international dimensions never experienced prior to this new phenomenon. These impacts have not been limited to the area of production, designing (creativity), distribution and innovative resolutions in dimensions that has further modernized the aso oke industry, but has further impacted the use of computer in designing, embroidery applications and stoning (application of creative and decorative stones) amongst other new interventions, ensuring an increased acceptability and promoting the popularity of aso oke beyond the shores of Nigeria. The paper concludes that local knowledge, as explicit in the practice of indigenous institutions play an important role for sustaining a balanced and acceptable socio economic environment further impacted by globalization to promote industrialization and development in Nigeria.

KEY WORDS: Indigenous Knowledge, Industrialization, Globalization, *Aso Oke Production*, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Aso Oke is a Yoruba traditional hand-woven cloth of high repute. *Aso oke* technology pre dated the arrival of European contact but was positively impacted by initial colonial policy; this initial gain was lost in a change of policy, subsequent upon the need to discourage production in the attempt to protect European goods (Ajayi, 2000). After independence however, the need for cultural revival and nationalistic tendencies led to a resurgence, which globalized impacts has projected into a world class acceptance and growing popularity. This paper examines the institutions for the production of *Aso Oke*, the Yoruba end product of the weaving industry to explore the nexus between local knowledge and that of the wider world in a fusion of civilization attainments resultant from globalization developments. It is difficult for local knowledge to distance itself from external contact with the wildfire effect of globalization. Scholars conclude that globalization has turned the world into a global village. This is a truism as there is no free space to the reach of networking through technological available such as telephones, internet, electronic media, fast transportation facilities and other limitless technological facilities. Local technologies such as pottery, blacksmithing, palm oil production, *garri* processing and others have been impacted variedly by technology advantages, increasing production, adding to the finesse of the end product and most importantly , promoting easy sales and distribution.

The impact of globalization on indigenous knowledge has not spared any civilization. Spanning Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the Arab world, globalization has had both positive and negative impacts on local knowledge. Most importantly, it has benefitted local indigenous knowledge through cross cutting edge ideas. It has internationalized awareness of local produce and increased the marketing of such goods to areas beyond the shores of the homeland. The Yoruba *Aso oke* is not left out of this dynamism. From production to distribution, *Aso oke*

technology has experienced a new life in innovative input of ideas and machines that impacted every stage of its relevance. The paper purported that local knowledge, as explicit in the practice of indigenous institutions play important role for sustaining a balanced and acceptable socio economic environment, as impacted by globalization to promote industrialization and development in Nigeria. The paper is subsequently divided into conceptual clarifications, Indigenous knowledge and globalization, History of *aso oke* production in Yoruba land Nigeria, modernization in the production of *aso oke* in Yoruba land, globalization and current trend in *aso oke* production and conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Indigenous Knowledge systems (IKS) are knowledge unique to a given culture or society. The widespread study of Indigenous Knowledge systems accept the idea that development efforts that ignore local circumstances, local technologies, and local systems of knowledge have wasted enormous amount of time and resources and would yield little success. This traditional approach usually examines problems in their entirety, together with their linkages and complexities relying on traditional values and the people, the culture, the knowledge they possess, their way of life etc. Globalization however hypes the importance and network of interchange. Information is diffused from one state or country to another and the influence and impact does not allow retention of local uniqueness. But in some instances the outcome of a newer version is better acceptable.

The first acceptable characteristic of indigenous knowledge is the component of knowledge from previous generations. Woodley (1991) noted that, the knowledge set is influenced by the previous generation's observations and experiment and provides an inherent connection to ones

surroundings and environment. The knowledge is characteristic of the local climate, flora and fauna, and cultural traits (Woodley, *ibid*). It is further asserted that, indigenous knowledge systems is not transferable but provides relationship that connects people directly to their environment and the changes that occur within it. Further, indigenous knowledge systems is learned and identified by communities and people within a cultural context (Fields, 1991 and Bebbington, 1991). These scholars (*ibid*) noted emphatically that, this knowledge base is transcribed and understood by participants through actions, such as, production, methods, verbal; through sayings and myths or cultural events which are unique to the community and environment.

It is a muted idea that, with the advent of globalization, many subsistence societies are fusing modern technologies with their traditional practices- Therefore knowledge systems in a locale are influenced by “immutable mobiles” and adapted ...many cultures adapt certain aspects of this knowledge base to the characteristic in the zone (Gade, 1992, Bebbington, 1991). The final method of modifying local knowledge systems is with the incorporation of ideas into existing knowledge system. *Aso Oke* production in Yoruba land as understood by participants through actions such as production methods and cultural events which are unique to the community and environment follow these adaptations. The advent of globalization has further enabled the fusing of modern technologies with this traditional production practices and has become adapted. Modern ideas are also incorporated into existing knowledge systems to produce a new version that has further developed the economic interest of the industry. A Modern conception of *aso oke* relates to the contemporary conception. This is in comparison to the old /ancient or previous and different in terms of applications of accessories and sometimes design. Modernity is perceived in the context of change from an older trend to a more contemporary acceptable pattern or designs

in *aso oke*: in context, its production, design and marketing strategies. The word modern in its grammatical context is defined as something or occurrence of a present or recent time or times, of styles, in art, music, fashion, new and intended to be different from traditional styles. Modernity connotes contemporary, the condition of being new or modern.

In defining globalization, various scholars have acceded to the idea of space/time compression (Brown, 1995, Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999). In modern and postmodern literature, technology in its various forms is necessary for development and has accelerated the varied conceptions of globalization of international relations especially in the area of economic relations. The globalization of different aspects of state and society in its various manifestations would not have occurred without the input of scientific and technological and accompanying structural changes. Pearson and Payaslian (1999) explained that science and technology are said to be inherently transnational, integral to the internationalization of the economic transformation of states especially through the influence of telecommunications technologies.

Orubuloye (2005) agrees with Grint on the fact that globalization is the capitalist enterprise envisioning the whole world as a unified system of the area and the peripheries, with the peripheries aspiring to adopt the political economy of the former and with the gradual internationalization of the Euro-American socio-political, economic and technological cultures. It is further explained as the gradual connection between different societies (Grint, 1998:28) (Mc Michael, 1996:38 cited in Orubuloye, 2005).

Assessing the politics of globalized science and technology, Pearson and Payaslian (1999) asserted that a fact of modern and "post- modern" life lay emphasis on the positive impact of technology on economic development, while further explaining that telecommunication technologies have accelerated the globalization of international relations,

albeit in the constant promotion of indigenous knowledge networking. In line with this, they reiterated that;

The globalization of the world political economy in its various manifestations ... would not have occurred without the scientific and technological and accompanying structural changes experienced at least since the emergence of the modern nation state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Pearson and Payaslian, 1999:271-275).

Pearson and Payaslian (1999) further emphasized that, from the Nation state perspective, the centrality of science and technology in modern political economy is problematic. Weighing a two side to the coin, they argued:

On the one hand, science and technology, are the foundations for the structures of national industrial production, capital, and information capabilities, all of which contribute to national economic and military power and security; yet in facilitating the internationalization of economic relations, they also challenge the sovereignty of the nation-state. (Pearson and Payaslian, 1999: 271-30).

The impact of technology has also influenced the interactions from outside the state, Cuko and Traore (2011) supported this view, when they noted that: “The cumulative effect of transnational science and technology (also referred to as globalization) has been to deterritorialise some of the activities and processes that influence our life in contemporary states”. The time space compress and comparison with its localizing effect has created the possibility of instant communication between any one place on the earth’s surface and any other. (Taylor, 2005:17-18).

Cultural homogenization is also a popularly acclaimed area of impact, the convergence in lifestyle and cultural values, icons and designs, similar food, and clothing (Taylor, 2005:19, 20). Globalization is an ideology that re-enacts a dictatorial unipolarism (Sara Cuko and Traore,

2011:6). They (ibid) insist that, it is the dramatic transformation in information and communication technology, in transport, financial and human mobility, and the economic restructuring reducing the significance of state borders. It is the gradual connection between different societies (Grint, 1998). The UNDP (1999) adopts the view that globalization is the growing interdependence of the world's people through "shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders". This connotes an instantaneous satellite communication networking and a dramatic advancement in communication information technology and transportation amongst others. Adefolaju (2005) commented further that globalization therefore offers great opportunities for enriching peoples' lives and creating a global community based on shared values. It translates to the integration of economic, political, civil and technological structures around the world (Umukoro, 2002). Adefolaju reiterated further that, it was the response of states to the apparent inadequacy of nation states to tackle many contemporary issues facing them (Adefolaju, 2005:139). It is also defined as a process fuelled by and resulting in, increasing cross-border flows of goods, services, money, people, information and culture. This is global interdependence amongst actors (individual, groups, and nations) and mutual awareness among economic, political, and social units in the world.

In the instance of this research (i.e the Nigerian case study), the influence of technology in indigenous *aso oke* production and distribution is crucial in giving a transnational dimension to internal affairs of the state in respect of economic issues of trade. The internet provides a transnational communication device to promote economic network and encourage cultural and technological borrowings in production processes and design. It is important to highlight that there are divergent views from schools of thought regarding the concept of globalization which range from realist, liberals to historical structuralisms. The point of diversions however, is that

the realist acknowledges the increasing pace of globalization which is at the instance of the most powerful states (Boyer and Drache, 1996, Hirst and Thompson, 1999). Liberals, in contrast, believe globalization, at a significant level, is eroding state control, but the growth of global interdependence is positive – thus, they highlight the importance of technological changes and advances in communication and transportation that are beyond state control. They (liberals) emphasize societal actors such as transnational firms and domestic citizens (Milner, 1988). This is referred to as a focus on the “borderless world” – a world in which obvious market forces influence issues far more than National government (Ohmae, 1990, 1995). In the instance of the liberals, it is believed that there is a significant level of globalized state control erosion, but the growth of global interdependence is a positive development. To this group, technological change and advances in communications and transportation that are beyond state control is the main focus.

Liberals see globalization as leading to a “borderless world” in which market forces are superior to National governments (Ohmae, 1990, 1995). Historical structuralisms argue that though globalization is having a significant positive impact, it has extremely negative consequences for the poorer states and classes in the periphery of the global economy. The dependency school of economics agrees with the analysis of Steven and David, (1993) that globalization is leading to the development of a “transnational historical block” composed of the multinational corporations (MNCS) International Banks, International Economic Organizations (World Bank and IMF) and International Business Group in the most powerful capitalist states. Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investments and aided by information technology with effects on the environment, on culture, on political

systems, on economic development, and prosperity and on human physical well-being in societies around the world (ibid). Globalization is not new however, because many of the features of the current wave of globalization are similar to those prevailing before the First World War in 1914 (ibid).

Bauman (1998) assessed globalization through the social roots and consequences of the globalizing process. For globalization, the causes of division are identical with those which promote the uniformity of the globe (Bauman, 1998: 4-10). It is a two-sided coin which appears to different people from dimensions and points of vantage. In this wise, Bauman (1998) noted “what appears as globalization for some means localization for others signaling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate. Adu (2016) further reiterated Bauman's argument inter alia, analyzing the spate of the historically changing nature of time and space within the premise of pattern and scale of social organization, the stages of development from the past to present within the modern pattern of social control, the idea of political sovereignty under conditions of globalized economy, finance and information, the cultural consequences of the transformations in globalization present itself. Adeyanju (2006) noted that state territoriality is being reconfigured by issues of globalized capital market operations, the integrated system of production and consumption, international labour mobility, diminishing state control of flows across its boundaries, among other issues (ibid:141-142).

INDEGINOUS KNOWLEDGE AND GLOBALISATION

The era of globalization on a note of reconsideration, could be described as the era of celebration of scientific knowledge. Glorification of scientific knowledge is properly celebrated in the porosity of information; secrecy of information is now relegated to the environment of the

archives. Scientific knowledge is shared with a minute by minute advantage by internet users. Sending of information is also done at a speed of light. Theft of scientific information in cyber-crime is not found wanting among researchers and even nation states in a celebrated race of research competition. Indigenous knowledge in its original conception belongs to the environment of the local. Indigenous knowledge is the development that has a cultural orientation and has participation within a particular culture, nation and geographical environment. This development is usually historically based and has existed for centuries with a particular people. This information or knowledge however probably had, to an extent been contained in this cultural domain, but due to the advantages of globalization, such as in the use of the internet, fast transportation, the electronic media and other technological usable, such knowledge finds its way into other cultures and environment. The study of this knowledge sharing is what is called indigenous knowledge systems and is a contemporary research environment. The impact of globalization on indigenous knowledge can only be best appreciated in the future, when as portended by scholars there would have been a tendency towards a diffusion of cultures. Local Indigenous knowledge would also have transformed into a new knowledge, probably more refined, more technology integrated, and better widely accepted.

HISTORY OF ASO OKE PRODUCTION IN YORUBALAND, NIGERIA

Traditional Yoruba spatial conceptions attest to the idea that the evolution of the weaving industry in Nigeria must have resulted from the need to cover the body for protection and aesthetics. The weaving industry was an important economic resource, a means of adornment and an art for the Yoruba cultural group. Ajayi(2005:73) insists that, weaving was not simply an industry, or a trade, but a technology evolved by the people in response to the demands of their environment. Traditional weaving was done within the household, involving majorly

women and in eastern Yoruba land men produced at commercial levels and also the children who assisted in the winding of yarn. Pre-colonial weaving industry manufactured for immediate local consumption and few sales transcending the annexing markets in neighboring towns and villages...

The weaving industry spread from the dying Sudanese empires such as Mali where a cotton industry existed in the 14th century (ibid). The 16th century showed widespread cotton farming across Yoruba land and Nigeria. This product attained international reputation as exportation of cotton was already a common trade before the advent of the Europeans explorers and traders (Ajayi, ibid). For centuries a well-organized weaving, spinning and dying industry grew in intensity. The weaving processes involved collection of fiber, soaking, cleaning and spinning and weaving. Dying is a second process sometimes handled by another artisan. Dyes are extracted from plants and must be well prepared to ensure its quality. Interestingly, the quality of textile influenced by early European contact attracted orders from private individuals in the United States, the United Kingdom the Jos Museum and experimental orders for UAC car seat cover production in Nigeria. The increasing competition with European textile made the colonial government present a lackadaisical attitude towards encouraging further growth in production. The increase in demand for European fabrics killed the fledgling industry in this early period.

The post-colonial era (after independence) saw a revival in the industry. The survival of the weaving industry was dependent on patronage. The industry however maintained a strong survival spirit as ceremonial wears retained a pride of place among the Yoruba. This trend continued into the expanded and reintroduction of *Aso ebi*. The modernization of *aso oke* into several finely refined items, of a wide variety, with a quality to gain international reputation has

brought a renaissance of this important industry. The beautiful array of colours and varieties in festivals and family functions attest to the growing reputation of the *aso oke*. European shopping malls adorn cities such as New York, London and Dubai as evidence of the growing reputation.

MODERNISATION IN THE PRODUCTION OF ASO OKE IN YORUBALAND

The Yoruba textile industry has existed from time immemorial. Pre-colonial *Aso oke* production served the varied needs of the Yoruba society. In the post-colonial period, and with the advent of globalized technological advantages, *aso oke* production, marketing and usages have been positively impacted upon, expanding the industry within and outside the country, and enlisting it as a local industry of repute and a contributor to the country's GDP and national development.

The modernization of *aso oke* production has encompassed the intervention of finely produced treading loom (in the past hand spinning of wool through the thread loom was the order of the day (Adu, this author had witnessed the local spinning of wool from the harvested cotton by her grandmother)also the local weaving procedure using what is locally termed *apasa* or vertical loom was later replaced by the horizontal loom. Industrial production of tread has increased availability and promoted quality. It has given opportunity to produce more and better varieties. Dying is now processed through industrial manipulations (in the ancient times, few colours such as white black and blue were available. Presently, there are several colours and shades, provided to meet individual and group interest to ease patronage.

Production techniques have also been improved upon as the wooding threading loom was switched to a metal addition technology and presently industrial machines are in use. Further some of these threads are imported from China. Cloth weaving was a technology evolved by the people of Yorubaland as a response to the demands of the tribal environment. From time

immemorial, spinning, dying and weaving was usually done by one person. This was because subsistence production was minimal to the local population. With trade and technology, units of production could sometimes be given to sections of the industry. For example, thread making industries provide colourful treads already in spinned balls ready for weaving. The intricately designed *aso oke* is evidence of high level production. In the pre-colonial days, different materials, machinery and terms of labour were utilized. Ajayi (in Olaoye, undated) emphasized that,

Indeed, technology was involved in various processes in manufacturing fabrics. The entire process of textile manufacture demanded expertise in a variety of processes, collection of fiber, soaking, cleaning, and spinning and their reconstitution and elaboration through weaving, dying involved considerable skills in the technology and chemistry of colours (ibid :71).

Ajayi further noted that,

Dyes were extracted from barks, wood, roots, fruits and leaves. Technology was involved in the preparation of the dye and binding it to the material such that it does not damage the fiber and retains permanent coloration throughout the useful life of the fabric as skills by individual artisans, or by a group of collectivized artisans within the industrial process, artisans who apply technology to make things that become part of living, part of life. (ibid:71-72).

European hand weaving technology was introduced into Nigeria in the mid-1940s (NAI, Ondo Prof 1/1 1836B, Textile Centre, Ado Ekiti, 1949:1). This was referred to as a phase of modernization of the local textile industry. The objective was to introduce improved equipment and new techniques to train spinners, weavers and dyers to add value to indigenous methods of cloth production. The output of this was a high quality *Aso oke* which attracted orders from sources such as the United States, United Kingdom (British members of parliament) the Jos

Museum, UAC Lagos (for car seats covers) etc.(See Ajayi, *ibid*). Gradual growth in demand stimulated interest in textile production generally, leading to the establishment of a Nigerian textile industry in Kano and Lagos in 1949(See Ajayi, *ibid*:75). These two mills were unfortunately closed down by 1951 due to some challenges of colonial policy which discouraged local technological development to prevent competition with European goods.

Increased demand for the European type fabric surpassed that of the local industry by 1952. For a new technological innovation to be internalized, it must fulfill the need of the people. Technology can only be absorbed and grow if planted within a preexisting culture. In line with this opinion Ade Ajayi (2004:160-161) argued that,

you cannot borrow some technology, you can begin by imitating some aspects of other people's technology, you can even try to transfer technology, but technology cannot develop... it cannot grow outside the context of culture.....the experiments, inventions and patents grow only when they are acquired.

It is important herewith to note that the failures of the colonial textile scheme was a success in the post-independence era as *aso oke* production has achieved an enviable position in the satisfaction of the locale and export trade (in the era of globalization) thus positively impacting economic development.

GLOBALISATION AND CURRENT TREND IN ASO OKE PRODUCTION

The time space compress and comparison with its localizing effect has created the possibility of instant communication between any one place on the earth's surface and any other. (Taylor, 2005:17-18). Globalization advantage can only be weighed when evaluated from the perspective of the impact on production, designing, sales and promotion of this culturally inestimable and unique attire.

Globalization has ensured that cultural homogenization is also a popularly acclaimed area of impact, the convergence in lifestyle and cultural values, icons and designs, similar food, and clothing (Taylor, 2005:19, 20). This trend is presented in the donning of traditional Yoruba attire by Diasporas to depict the respected value placed on such attires (Adu, 2016). Shops are opened in Dubai and other European locations to provide avenues of purchase to Nigerians and foreigners alike.

The use of technology in designing is also an important aspect of the new trend. Pictures of patterns can be transferred to several locations for easy access to create multiplicity in designs. New and complex patterns can be manipulated using the computer, before such patterns can be attempted manually. Colour matching is another important area whereby the computer has rendered some functional usages. *Aso oke* production now cuts across the usage in production of bags shoes, stools, car seats, artworks and other decorations.

The marketing of *aso oke*, like other items, are now available on the web. Orders can be placed and payments made within a by minute transaction to prompt delivery. Advertisement on the web is also of good advantage. Advertised samples can be placed on the pages of the facebook, whatsapp and other platforms, for to be patronage sampling. Advertisement as to shop or sales place locations are also made available, price lists could also be disseminated through this medium. The necessity to visit miles, in an attempt to access the producer is no longer a thing of compulsion. All transactions, negotiations and orders can be done without stress through the internet and telephony. Beautiful and colourful electronically presented adverts work to the advantage for sales. Availability of easy and fast transportation mediums have intensified the increasing interest in participation in this line of production and distribution. It has provided jobs for unemployed youths and other citizens enhancing national development.

In the future, drones and robotic manipulations might be of advantage in the creation of designs, mass production and even in transportation and supply.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous knowledge in the era of globalization provides us with an interesting dimension of a study of dynamism in *aso oke* production in Yoruba land in the contemporary times. This paper examined the institutions for the production of *Aso Oke*, the Yoruba end product of the weaving industry to explore the nexus between local knowledge and that of the wider world in a fusion of civilization attainments resultant from globalization developments. The Yoruba *aso oke* has benefited from globalization advantages and has undergone a transformation that is celebrated in the cultural environment and has become internationalized in use, sales and sometimes production outside the geographical enclave of Yoruba land and Nigeria. The paper concludes that local knowledge, as explicit in the practice of indigenous institutions play an important role for sustaining a balanced and acceptable socio economic environment as impacted by globalization to promote industrialization and development in Nigeria.

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