

IGBO CULTURAL VALUES: THE ISSUE OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

Globalization has been an issue in developing countries, of which Igbo people are no exception. This issue of globalization has created a lot of misconception in the mind of the populace. Western norms and practices are gradually being transported across the globe as the acceptable way of behaviour. This phenomenon has had its positive and negative impacts since its inception. Igbo cultural values have been relegated to the background through the impacts of globalization. The Igbo seem to be fighting colonialism but have identified themselves most intimately along with all the other ethnic groups in Nigeria with the culture of the white man they have been fighting due to globalization. These call for an immediate cultural revival in Igbo land. This paper will attempt to examine the extent globalization has affected the cultural identity of Igbo people.

Key Words: Globalization, culture, values, cultural values.

Introduction

It is a well known fact that the world is fast becoming a global village. The whole world is looked at as a single community that is connected by electronic communication systems. Ajayi (2003) identifies three major phases of globalization; they are 1870-1914, 1945 – 1980 and from 1980 – till now. You can stay in the confines of your home and still be elsewhere through mobile phones, internet, E-marketing and so on. With all these technological innovations going on in the world, one should not forget his gentle beginnings. That is why Iwunze and Adindu (2009) warn that globalization can cause harm than relief to the “Blackman” if not cautiously embraced.. The transition from pre-colonial to post colonial lifestyle was

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almost total. The break was a sharp one that left the majority, if not all the whiteman's ideology in all aspects of our culture. In the process, some of the noble value systems of the Igbos were almost swept away to the detriment of the society. How these cultures should come alive again should be the concern of all responsible Igbos.

The major problem Nigeria is having, especially the Igbo people, is ignorance or negligence of their culture. The Igbos have a lot of potentials, that when harnessed should lead to national development and economic self-reliance of their people and more importantly it could help to bring the cultural identity of our country to the limelight. Nigeria is endowed with great potentials among the different ethnic groups of the country. Permit me to say that it is unfortunate that it is only in Igboland that white man's lifestyle is prominent in a greater way, such as in the eating habits, dressing, mode of worship, language, and so on. Some of the cultural assets of the Igbo people are immense of economic benefits, and they include arts and crafts, abundant festivals, food habits and systems, language and others. The Igbos are also known for their technological expertise. For instance, Inyi is well known for their pottery production, Akwete for cloth weaving, Awka for blacksmithing and others. All these encourage skills and mental development. Our value system can only be recognized in the world when we first give it the honour it deserves, by placing it on top of priorities. The spirit of kinship, respect for age and wisdom, economic cooperation, discipline, social justice, the fundamentals of collective responsibility and order need to be retained.

Africa's interaction with the rest of the world dates back to the 15th century. The initial contact was through trade including the era of trans-Atlantic slave trade, and then during the period of colonialism when Europeans assumed political and economic control over most parts of Africa and through the era of post-colonization or independence to this present age (Kwame, 2010). The interaction resulted in a certain level of influence that left behind imprints that were either good or bad. Then it can be boldly said that to Igbos interaction with and integration into the global system at any given period has played a role in which Africa is today. There is a global domination of American culture at the expense of traditional diversity.

We should not stay and gaze at globalization trying to destroy our cultural values. Those aspects of our cultural practice that need to be thrown away like the killing of twins, human sacrifice, the maltreatment of widows, and bad masquerading should be dealt with, but ones that need to be

refurbished or retained should be allowed to be such as the initiation into various societies like ozo chieftaincy, Ichies, age grades, betrothal and marriage customs. Ejiofor (2002) noted that all the boy cottable should be boycotted and reviewable should be reviewed, but leaving our culture to imbibe the white man's culture is what should bother every right-thinking Igbo person.

The focus of this paper is on the effect of globalization on Igbo cultural values and perhaps to pinpoint the necessary actions that need to be taken to ensure maximum benefits for Igbos in this era of globalization.

Conceptual Clarification

Cultural values

Value could be defined as the quality of that which we desire. Pepper (1958:7) defined value as anything perceived as good or bad. It can also be anything of interest to man. "The term values may refer to interests, pleasures, likes, preferences, duties, moral obligations, desires, wants, needs, aversions and attractions, and other modalities of selective orientation". Chugozie (2007) noted that our highest interest or desire forms the basic or fundamental value from which other values can be appreciated. He identified nine kinds of values and they are material or monetary value, utility and instrumental value, standard value, extrinsic value, inherent value, intrinsic value, contributory value, moral value, and aesthetic value 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the 6th edition (2000) defines value as how much something is worth in money or other goods for which it can be exchanged or quality of being useful or important. Values can also be regarded as beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life.

Many societies have values and laws by which they are governed and these help to shape the conduct and behaviour of their societies. In the African context of which Igbo is no exception, values include cultural and moral heritage handed down from one generation to another. Values include hospitality, honesty, etiquette, respect for human life, respect for elders, courage, patience, and endurance, among others (Agujiobi – Odoh, 2007). The Igbo people hold their cultural values at high esteem. Cultural values are the life ways of a given society that could be in form of customs, beliefs, arts, crafts, oral traditions, festivals, dances, traditional dishes, social organizations like the Umuada, and cultural norms like folklores, tales by

moonlight, kolanut presentation and among others. These cultural values are cultural emblems of a particular group at any given time that makes the group distinct from others. These cultural values are past on from generation to generation.

Culture

Culture is the totality of the way of life of a group of people that has been developed, shaped and practiced over the years. Culture is the connective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. The interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment (Hofstede, 1980). Culture is the product of a complex inheritance constantly submitted to scrutiny and the need to adopt to a constant conquest to achieve (Jean, 2002).

A notable scholar, E Tylor (1871) in his book, "Primitive Culture" defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society". Hornby (2000) defined culture as "the customs and beliefs, arts, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group". Culture is seen as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together value systems, traditions and beliefs.

Globalization

The term globalization has many definitions and none of these has so far gained widespread acceptance. These definitions have been offered by different experts to reflect their point of view. Nnanyelugo (2009) said that globalization is a cross-border phenomenon. The term globalization reveals interaction and subsequent integration of the peoples and nations into a common system. It is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical wellbeing in societies around the world. Globalization is a complex process because it involves rapid social change that is occurring simultaneously across a number of dimensions in the world, such as in economy, in politics, in

communications, in the physical environment, and in culture and each of these transformations interacts with the others. It is a complicated process to grasp in its entirety (Tomlison, 2006). That is what Tomlinson (1999) calls a process of accelerating "connectivity". By this he means that globalization is all about networking. Globalization can be recognized in everyday routine practices. For example in our use of communication technologies, mobile phones, computers, e-mail, the internet, in the built environment we inhabit, in the sort of food we eat, in the way we earn our livings, and in the way we entertain ourselves in cinema, television and so on. The Igbo people are much more globally connected now than before. But the questions that come to mind is what does this all mean culturally? Are we drawn together for good or ill into a single global culture?.

Globalization is seen as the structuration of the world as a whole (Robertson, 1992) or it is a process through which the entire human population is bonded in a single society (Albrow, 1990). O' Sullivan *et.al* (1994) see globalization as the growth of economic and cultural networks which operate on worldwide basis. The reasons for this growth is the emergence of communication technology and media networks which allow faster, more extensive independent form of worldwide exchange, travel and interaction. (Eregare and Afolabi, 2009). Bilton (1997) defined globalization as a process "whereby political, social, economic and cultural relations increasingly take on a global scale which has profound consequence for individual local experience and everyday lives". In further defining and explaining globalization, Nsibambi (2001) incorporated five concepts. He defined globalization as a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world's countries and peoples facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of cultural values, systems and practices.

The cultural values of the Igbo people

The culture of the people is of prime importance to them and the value of a culture to a people can never be fully measured in monetary terms. Ejiofor (2002) said that the love of culture is not blind, that it is mystic and spiritual. Culture instills pride in man. Without it, the past seems non-existent and the present seems suspended without pillars or props. The Cultural values of the Igbo people are their reputation. People without culture do not exist. Even America as the world's wealthiest nation still lay emphasis on cultural

identity. They eat with fork in the right hand to differentiate themselves from the British who eat with the left. What is culture among the Igbo people? It is a complex whole valued by all peoples since time immemorial, a treasure highly prized by the world's greatest nations, an apple of the eye of many tribes and primitive peoples, a possession daily glorified by many other Nigerian peoples.

The cultural values of the Igbos can be seen in their language, art and crafts, festivals, dishes, clothing, oral traditions, among others. Morality is the number one value cherished by the Igbo people. Igbos has a lot of morals that guides their society and help to checkmate the behaviour of people. However, respect for elders has gone into extinct. The children, youths and adults have a rule on how they should live that portrays the Igbo culture. Children are told a lot of folktales during moonlight by the elders that depict humility, courage, and obedience. Youths, through social organizations during initiation ceremonies, are guided with some norms that help them to live an honest and transparent life. The adults are penalized for their wrong doings. Masquerading serves as a social function bringing people together as one during festivals. In Igbo cultural setting of the past, people lived in villages and groups, and the social ties was close. However today, the city life has crushed the bond of communal ties. People live in cities atimes without knowing the names of their neighbours for months. Among all the ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbo people have adopted the western life and have held tenaciously to it Frankly speaking, we are not proud of our culture. The issue of language has been a problem in Igbo cultural values. English language fluency is mistaken for intelligence. The local languages which is the most efficient medium of education, becomes outmoded because of displacement. It is lamentable that most Igbos, especially elites cannot communicate in their mother tongue. Most parents do not consider it crucial to communicate with their children in their mother tongues, which should rather be the first language. They are well pleased when the children are fluently speaking English. Instead of an Igbo person showing his identity through speaking Igbo language, he will prefer to speak in other languages (preferably Yoruba or Hausa). A lost language is a lost culture, while a lost culture is a loss of invaluable knowledge lost. The Igbos begin their ceremonies by presenting and breaking kolanuts with accompanying prayers such as *ndi be anyi ta oji* (our people ate kolanut) , *ndi be anyi oji abianu*(our people kolanut has come), *onye wetara oji wetara ndu*(who brought kolanut

brought life).....In the Igbo culture therefore, no traditional ceremony is deemed to have commenced without the presentation of kolanuts. Clothing in Igbo culture is another value that should be looked into. In Igbo land an average woman is known for her wrapper and blouse. In the olden times they adorned themselves with beads and "uli" dye. Shirts, gowns, jump as, shorts or trousers are never the dress code among the Igbos. Several cultural values abound in Igbo land with various customs and traditions that are rich, colourful and exciting. These have shaped the lives of its members over the milenia. These cultures have been adapting to the changing times and the evolutions of African society (Kwame, 2010). The Igbo people have myths, taboos and norms that regulate their lives. Baffoe (2005) noted that these myths and taboos were needed at some point in the society's development to regulate life, many of which have outlived their usefulness as a result of urbanization and the trends of modern development. Today, most of all the cultural values have changed drastically due to influence of globalization.

The Effect of Globalization on Igbo Cultural Value

A lot of scholars have expressed their views on the effects of globalization on the individual, nations and the world at large. The focus of this paper focus is to identify the impacts of globalization on Igbo cultural values and to proffer suggestions in what could be done on this era of globalization. The most popular and controversial debates about globalization have to do with the rise of global culture. Globalization cuts across every aspect of our economic, political and socio-cultural life (Adamu, 2003). It is economic when industries and commercial enterprises as well as financial institution increasingly operate transnationally. Culturally, globalization brings people together into one global community When information communication technology (ICT) and media technology break ethnic barriers and erode national identities a homogenous entity is created. Globalization makes the nation state powerless politically. We should not look down on globalization because it has a great influence on both the individual and society. People see globalization in three categories .These is the globalists, the traditionalists and the transformationlists. Globalists believe that nothing will influence the high spread of Globalization. Traditionists recognize that the nation states still have power. The transformationlists question the degree of influence globalization has in the scheme of things (Held *et al*, 1999, 2000). People see globalization in two facets; some see it as a good friend that brought a lot of positive things to our society and others as a monster that has come to ruin

people's value system all over the world. Globalization makes all other cultures local. The culture of the people is central to their lives and shows who they are. According to Jeremy, globalization is a declaration of war upon all other uneducated and the unskilled nationals. As globalization has positive, innovative, dynamic aspects, it also has negative disruptive and marginalizing aspects (UNDP HDR, 1999).

Positive Side

1. Globalization opens people's lives to other cultures and all their creativity and to the flow of ideas and values.
2. Information and communication technologies have eased interaction among countries and peoples.
3. Inhuman cultural practices directed especially at women e.g female genital mutilation (circumcision), widowhood rites, etc are being addressed and modified.

Negative side

4. As cultures interact some cultures are being diluted and/or destroyed at the expense of others and negative values are being spread all over the world with relative ease.
5. The world is now divided between the connected, who know and who have a monopoly on almost everyday, and the isolated, who do not know and who practically have nothing.

Globalization, one can say, is another form of re-colonization. According to Abdul-Raheem (2003) it is the "truimphalism about the hegemony of western value, ideas and civilization". Globalization is a euphemism for Americanization as all people of the world think and dream Hollywood and America. In the spirit of globalization Hollywood films and music could be seen and heard in almost every part of the world (Eregare and Afolabi, 2009). Globalization is all about melting down. It causes melting down of cultures, this means the destruction of the local for the global.

Globalization has some advantages as seen in electronic media, communication and transportation. These were made available to enable the developing countries to catch up with the advanced nations. In Nigeria, the Igbos have been a cultural cornucopia, a rich harvest of indigenous traditions and culture that have attracted several people around the world to witness the manifestation and genuity of such practices. In Igbo cultural

values a lot of things have been affected, the mode of our dressing have been changed automatically to white man's dressing. It is very hard to identity an Igbo man by his dressing mode. English speaking has taken hold in the entire household in Igboland. The language of our youths these days is erotic, this could be due to exposure through the internet. Since the instrument of globalization is the computer. Globalization also affected the moral standard of Igbo person and Nigeria in particular. There are taboos in Igbo cultural setting that help in scrutizing the people in those days. Igbos hated sin and sinners. Ejiofor (2002) took time to assert five aspects of their penal code. They include;

1. Collective Responsibility for Offences

If an offender eluded justice, a member of the extended family was held prisoner until the offender was produced. If a debtor did not pay his debts, the property of his next of kin was liable to seizure.

2. Personalized Responsibility to Fight Evil

Igbo people do not hide the knowledge of any offence to the bearing of every person in the society. Hiding it will bring down the wrath of god.

3. Supremacy of revenge over forgiveness

In Igbo public speeches, in kolanut presentation. The Igbo man openly prayed that those who wish him death should go to bed before the chickens. This attitude has survived till today.

4. Immediacy of Punishment

There were also prolonged court cases or legal loopholes to exploit. Suspects were presumed guilty until proved innocent. If a criminal was caught red handed, he receives instant justice.

5. Severity of Punishment

They do not spare an offender. Fathers disciplined their children with lashes of itching canes.

All this served as the faggot that perpetually kept the "omenala" code burning and steaming. Respect for elders have gone and fear of being penalized by the gods of the land when committed an offence have gone to extinction. People, especially the youth have been exposed to a lot of things that are not mentioned or named of an Igbo moralists. They are exposed to pornographic films and this lowered the standard of moral in our society due

to globalization. Politeness of which an Igbo lady is known of could not be found in them, due to exposure they feel they have gotten, they even put a challenge that they know more than their parents and elders. They use the name "Oko" man and "oko" woman to describe their parent, while "Okongwu" to describe the elders. The Igbo culture was most seriously bombarded by western cultures from the sixteenth century upwards (Ejiofor, 2002). Globalization which have encouraged the global market have affected and narrowed down the nutritional value of our indigenous food. Igbo traditional diet have been neglected by the introduction of cann foods, noodles, spaghetti and other imported foods. Nutritionlists this days have come to realize that indigenous food are more nutritional than the exotic ones. Nutritionlist called for people to eat more of their traditional diets instead of expensive, genetically – modified foods that are imported (Kwame, 2010). Many of Igbo foods are medicinal, nutritious and accessible, since the food resource are found within the community. The effects of globalization on African family is another side that is disastrous. Prostitution have gone deep into the life of our youth. It is unfortunate that laws have been made guiding this very act. Marriage is a contract that is highly honoured in Igbo cultural value. Abortion, free union, same sex marriage, surrogate motherhood have been legalized what a mess to our culture. The Holy Bible is against this acts. Rev. Fr. Barr. Patrick .O. Ezeanya took time to Analyse the universal declaration of human rights from Article I to Article 30 in his write up on socio-moral implication of globalization to the African family. If an Igbo person is caught committing some abominable acts like murder, adultery, theft of yams, goat and cows, child stealing it will attract death.

In the issue of clothing in Igbo one sees a multiplicity of costumes ranging from European shirts, ties and suits through French suits, safari suits, to Chinese suits which are introduced and popularized by our civil servants and rich business men. Igbo have chieftaincy dress that still invoke till today. To an educated and senior public servant of Igbo to be in order is to be in western suit. There are certain positions that you as an Igbo man cannot occupy without wearing suit. Unless one wear suit, he cannot be a lawyer. To carry out an executive function, one must be on suit. To be a bank official suit is mentable dress code. One must wed with suit especially the men. I am looking forward one day when a university will keep aside wearing of a western style academic gown, cap, and hood, for matriculation and convocation ceremony. All this came to us through globalization; and a

typical Igbo man is addicted to western style of dressing. If one should dress on suit you can get anywhere, see anybody, and possibly commit any offence and get away with it (Ejiofor, 2002). These foreign style of dressing have effects on our economic, political, health and cultural life. The Yoruba people look more traditional because of their attire and this has attracted a lot of benefits to them. There is the need therefore for every Nigerian ethnic groups to recognize the importance of presenting our culture through clothing.

Recommendation/Conclusion

As pointed out above, the issue of globalization has its good and bad side. Globalization is re-colonization. Keeping our mind only on the positive side of globalization is not safe, since the negative out weights the positive when we look at it closely.

Globalization introduces us to every aspect of western culture which portrays every other culture in the world as being local. That is the reason why we maintain that it is recolonization in disguise. The Igbo cultural morality have being eroded, due to exposure through the internet. Nobody has fear again when he is caught for an offence because the Igbo man can no longer punish offenders on his own, he hands the offender to the police or the courts. Effort should be made in ensuring that the police and the judiciary are staffed with men and women of character. The Igbo language should not be allowed to go extinct. Teaching of Igbo language should be given its rightful position in primary and secondary schools. The Igbo language should be used in conducting morning assembly and the national pledge/Anthem should be sung in Igbo. Welcome addresses presented to Igbo speaking government officials and church dignitaries should be written and read in Igbo. Igbo newscasts on radio and television should come before English newscasts. Recognized traditional rulers should speak only in Igbo in public. Minutes of meeting of villages, towns and localized societies in Igbo land should be kept and read in Igbo. Let it be one of the prerequisites that to be employed and promoted in Igbo owned establishment one must pass Igbo in G.C.E., Teachers Grade II, NTI and WASC examinations. When people know that they cannot be promoted or employed, they would start learning the local language. The publication of Igbo news papers and magazines should be sponsored by the government. National council for arts and culture should be upgraded to promote Igbo language and Igbo culture. Igbo names spelt in English should be changed and spelt correctly in Igbo, for

example Ezeh should be Eze. Every Igbo person both literate and illiterate should be encouraged to speak Igbo along with English in their everyday speech. The question is how many white men and women can speak Igbo, even after staying with us for a long time? In Igbo social organization, for example the initiation into *ozo* title and age grade should be revived, not to be wiped out entirely. The retrievable need to be retrieved and the boycottable need to be boycotted.

In summary the Igbos should return to their cultural values which are worth more than silver and gold. We don't have to ignore our culture in the face of globalization. All lost Igbo cultural values should be regained and sustained, by the Igbos upholding their moral standards. This is to say that globalization is a wrong phenomenon, all we are saying is that Igbos should remember that not all that glitters is gold. We have to bring out our culture to limelight so that it could be appreciated by all and sundry what we are experiencing now across the globe is "global cultural conflict "inflicted by globalization .

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