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AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GLOBALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCITIES: A CASE STUDY OF NIGER-BENUE CONFLUENCE AREA

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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of globalization and modernization in traditional African societies. It uses the Niger-Benue confluence area as a case study. The study underscores the fact that the area has come under the debilitating influence of globalization, westernization and modernization. This study clarifies, espouses and critiques globalization and modernization within the African milieu. Globalization and modernization have become, after colonialism and westernization, the greatest onslaughts on Africa. The study is an anthropological inquiry into the effects of globalization within the cultural milieu of the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area. In the face of global economic aggression and cultural violence against Africans and multiple economic abuses, political intimidation and collective violence of pauperization committed on the continent, the paper observes that, it is clearly emerging that there is need for anthropological study of the phenomena of globalization and modernization with a view of championing the preservation of relevant aspects of traditional African culture.

Keywords: Anthropology, Globalization, Modernization, Niger-Benue confluence Area, Traditional Society.

1. Introduction

The "world society" which is the kernel of globalization and modernization has incumbency in anthropological studies. The issues of free trade, integrated globalized economy, multinational trade agreements, globalized financial markets and social relations have anthropological relevance in traditional societies of Africa, which this piece contends are of paramount importance to Africans. The study of ancient cultures shows that interactions between human beings across the ages have been reported. Archaeology attests to the interconnectivity of human beings since the prehistoric times, in which the movements of peoples crisscrossed the world and made inventions (Tubi, 2017). Thus, it can be stated that a sort of nascent "modernization" and "globalization" have been present in the long annals of humanity and it is certain that human beings also have always transformed from one type of society to another. This transformation is from the primitive/rural, to urban and industrialized society.

This paper opines that globalization and modernization have consequences for Africa because the continent and its people are competing in a new world of transnational patterns, global connections, phenomenal human mobility, widest outreach and integrated economy. The

paper further opines that these effects are more pronounced in traditional societies. As noted by scholars like Adedeji, (1991); Kodero, (2013);Lawal,(2006)and Tubi (2017) amongst others, globalization and modernization have imposed severe and debilitating effects on Africa. It is in this line of thought that Akindele, Gidado and Olaopa (2002) argue that globalization has unpleasant consequences for the continent, while scholars like Banuri (1987), Erikson and Goldthorpe (1994), and Van Leeuwen and Maas (2010) have argued that modernization has bequeathed some negative consequences to the communities of the world.

2. Area and Scope of the Study

The paper examines globalization and modernization and their impact on traditional African societies by using the Niger-Benue confluence peoples asa case study. The area consists of the Okun, Ebirra, Igala, and Idoma, which are dominant groups. The area also is indigenous to smaller ethnic groups such as Agatu, Kakanda, Bassa Nge and Bassa Komo, amongst others. Archaeologists point to the area as home of ancient peoples and cultures which date to the prehistoric periods (Obayemi, 2004; Oyelaran, 1998; Tubi, 2020). Recent archaeological excavations in the area by Tubi (2020) extend human habitation to the Late Stone Age. Historical studies identified the area as home to indigenous peoples since antiquity (Etim, 1993). A detailed historical discussion of the area has been undertaken by scholars (Akinwumi and Akpata, 2011), which reveals the interconnectivity of the different ethnic configurations of the area. The first published detailed ethnographic study of the area was written in 1955 by Forde, Brown and Armstrong. These scholars provided geographic, anthropological, and economic data and wrote on the traditions of origin and general social cum political systems of the area (Forde, Brown and Armstrong, 2017).

3. Anthropological insertion

The study adopted the participant-observation methodology, which was considered appropriate in eliciting the most accurate data in rural and traditional communities. The study identifies some aspects of globalization on Niger-Benue confluence communities like provision of access to international audience, promotion of civil rights, introduction of efficient technology, new ideas etc. Yet, the outcome of the study reinforces the assertion that globalization has worsened the socio-economic conditions of Africans, obliterating their traditional technology, diluting their religion and causing immense economic imbalance on the continent.

To achieve maximum scholarly depth, the researcher chose some communities of the Niger-Benue confluence area, which are appraised by indigenes for maintaining certain aspects of their culture to a higher degree, for thorough ethnographic study. Thus, the study focuses on the more traditional communities that are located close to the confluence of the Niger and Benue. The focal points were Adankolo, Ajega, Ahoko, Banda, Ganaja, Felele, Oshokoshoko, Orehi, Sintaku and Itobe. These are acknowledged by most people of the Niger-Benue confluence area as few of the most pristine of their communities.

This ethnographic research focused on the study population using participant-observation technique with In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). A deliberate design was made to use FGD and IDI among key informants who are considered germane to the research. FGD discussants involved adults (of 70 years and above) who are indigenes of the area. It also carried along informed adults who are not indigenes, but who have spent two

decades in any of the communities. Indigenes of the confluence area that were sired outside and have not resided in the area for a period of twenty years were excluded from this research. The IDI exercises were conducted with elders of Niger-Benue confluence area. In this regard, those who were invited for the sessions were not less than 70 years old. Persons who participated in the exercises were those who have been domiciled in the area all their lives. These are old enough to tell the traditional political, religious and socio-economic story of the area from the time of British imperialism to the present.

4. Understanding Globalization and Modernization

The World Health Organization defines globalization as "the speedup of movements and exchanges (of human beings, goods, and services, capital, technologies or cultural practices) all over the planet" or "the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries" (W.H.O, 2020). This paper defines globalization as the integration of nations which involves internationalization of trade and commerce, politics and culture. With globalization and its profound effects on humanity, the idea of a closed cultural identity has become a mere illusion. Used as a general term to denote the processes of modern interconnectivity of human beings across the globe, globalization has its advocates and opponents. On one hand, some identify globalization as the basis of much of the problem of the economic crises of the modern capitalist dominated economy. On the other hand, some argue that globalization has the potentiality of enhancing global social contacts, integrated world economy, and politics (Adedeji, 1991; Albrow,1997; Kodero, 2013; Tubi, 2015).More poignantly, Ritzer (1993)sees it as the Americanization of the world. Globalization is exerting immense pressure on Africa and this is more pronounced in traditional African societies as pointed out by scholars like Adedeji(1993); Akindele, Gidado and Olaopa (2002);Albrow (1997); Biersteker(1998); Tubi (2015); Lawal, (2006);Kodero (2013); Ritzer (1993);Joinet(2000) andObadina(1998).Globalization, in general, has posed a critical challenge to Africa (Joinet, 2000) and this study corroborates this assertion.

The Oxford dictionary defines modernization as "the process of adapting something to modern needs or habits". This paper defines modernization as the transformation of societies from a primitive to industrial state, from undeveloped to developed and from rural to modern, which portends great benefit for humanity. One can itemize the achievements of modernization as including but not limited to reduction in mortality rate, standardization of formal education, access to media, eradication of diseases, production of food on large scales, and effective modes of transportation. Despite the advantages of modernization, scholars opine that it is also true that modernization has brought about cultural illiteracy, rootlessness, psychological imbalance, solitary obsession, denial of family values, among others (Banuri, 1987; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1994; Van Leeuwen and Maas, 2010).

In studies that focused on the Niger-Benue confluence area, scholars have pointed out that there are noticeable cultural havocs on the people. In a study of the Okun speaking people, Tubi (2015, p. 1-18) argues that globalization and modernization have affected the socio-cultural, economic and political systems of the people and has inflicted severe cultural shocks and imposed a highly dysfunctional socio-economic set up on the people. Similarly, Egbunu (2009) and Okpe's (2006) examination of the Igala society concludes that the people have been subjected to untold socio-cultural distortions by modernization and globalization. Erim (1993) opines that the Idoma speaking people have come under intense pressure from external

forces. Colonial ethnographic studies among the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area (Meek, 1931; Krapf-Askari, 1960) have shown that colonialism, Christianity, Islam and modernization had long ago impacted tremendously on people of the area. This has been worsened by globalization.

In general, the picture across Africa has been the same. Recent ethnographic work by anthropologists like Ezeh (2004),Ugwu (2010) and Tubi (2015) revealed that there are, in sub-Saharan Africa, effects of cultural contacts which are noticeable changes that occurred within traditional social systems due to foreign contacts. Though the basic structure of the society remains despite the influence of foreign contacts, there is the inevitable shake-up of the social-cultural system of the people. Among the Niger-Benue confluence peoples, this study reveals that there are noticeable changes in primordial cultural settings due to influence of foreign religions, westernization and globalization. Informants say that the various peoples of the confluence area have lost a great deal of their autochthonous cultural life ways as a result of increasing contacts with the outside world (Sasu, personal communication; Ujah, personal communication; Baba Jeri, personal communication; Ajagun, personal communication). However, the resilience of their culture is revealed in this study, which indicates that aspects of the distinctiveness of their cultural identity still exist.

The effects of globalization and modernization on the Niger-Benue confluence peoples are multifaceted. The most germane to our discourse are impacts on ecology, traditional religious system, traditional medical practices, socio-cultural system, political system, traditional economy and traditional technology, amongst others.

(i)Impacts of Globalization and Modernization on Ecology

There are clear indications of the severe impacts of globalization and modernization on the ecology of the Niger-Benue confluence area. The area is undergoing grave ecological crises which are traceable to modernization. These include critical issues like massive deforestation, uncontrolled water pollution, demographic pressure on the environment, over grazing by cattle herders, uncontrolled bush burning, and construction activities of roads, schools, stadia, and religious centres. According to the chief priest of Ogidi, the area has come under severe deforestation as hitherto sacred groves and forests have almost completely disappeared. The chief hunter of Ahoko argues that many popular animals have disappeared or gone into extinction in their forests due to excessive human exploitation of the environment. Ponds and streams that once serve as sources of portable water have been polluted by chemicals released into the environment by companies and the over-use of fertilizers and herbicides. Tubi (2020) declares that ecocide is what is going on in the area under study.

(ii) Impacts of Globalization and Modernization on the Traditional Religious system

The religious system of the Niger-Benue confluence area has come under massive onslaughts of globalization. As a result of this factor, there is the near absence of pristine traditional religion of the people. Traditional religion is almost eclipsed in the area. In the Niger-Benue confluence area, there is the clear dominance of Islam and Christianity. However, traditional religion survives in its immersion into these foreign religions. In this regard, the research points at the practice of syncretism as the noticeable effects of globalization on the religious system of the peoples. Anthropologically, syncretism is the amalgamation of different beliefs. For this study, it is the reconciliation of the differences in Islam, Christianity and Traditional

Religion among the peoples of the confluence area. Syncretism, which this paper defines as a compromised form of religion, is prevalent in Africa, according to Muonye (2011). In a recent study, Tubi (2015) identifies syncretic elements as quite noticeable in the religious system of the Okun people which came mainly from Islam and Christianity. These foreign religions have intruded into the traditional religious system and they are exercising tremendous influence on it. As a result, there is a great distortion of certain aspects of traditional religion. On the other hand, Erim's (1978) study of cultural totemism among the Idoma reveals that the Idoma people have come under severe onslaughts of Christianity, westernization and modernization.

In the Niger-Benue confluence area, traditional religion has taken the back stage, however, traditional religion, Islam and Christianity have symbiotic relationships. Anthropologists will notice that they have impacted on one another among the peoples of the area to such an extent that hybrid forms of the three religions are practiced. Islam is more tolerant of Traditional religion, therefore, it adopted some aspects of the traditional religion like polygamy, the making of charms and use of amulets. Christianity, generally, is the least tolerant of Traditional religion, for it looks at the practices of traditional religion as fetish. Nevertheless, the Christian denominations have acculturated several African religious practices into their worship. The most common are clapping, singing and drumming with African percussions and tunes. African spiritual churches have also incorporated aspects of Traditional Religion into their brand of Christianity, like placing sacrifices at road junctions, use of palm fronds and other propitiation rites of healing which have African background (Ezeh, 2004; Ezeanya, 2004).

During this study, it was discovered that many Muslims and Christians patronise native healers and traditional diviners to find succour in times of crises. Many educated Muslims and Christians also consult and offer sacrifices to the lineage deities so as to gain favours. In any case, ethnographic data elsewhere indicated that syncretism is prevalent in Africa.

The researcher witnessed the recurrent symbiotic relationship between Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam on few occasions. At Iyamoye,"traditional religionists have dwindled to less than 10 members. During the 2012 *Owaja* festival, over 2,000 participants thronged the streets" (Tubi, 2015). This number, however, was certainly an amalgamation of adherents of the three religions. The festival was led by a king who is a Muslim. Also, the funeral rites of a traditionalist which the researcher witnessed at Mopa had more Christians than traditionalists in attendance. In fact, the masquerades were borne by Christian youths. In the same community, the new yam festival was presided over by the Chief priest who is a baptized Christian known to the researcher. The symbiotic relationship is best illustrated by seeing the people freely consulting *Ifa* priests, Christian healers and Muslim marabouts without qualms. Culturally, the Niger-Benue confluence area is undergoing a transitional phase amidst globalization. Thus, the classification of one as Christian, Muslim or traditionalist is a cephalous in most cases. According to a recent survey by Tubi (2015), the traditional priests who chatted with the researcher said that most of their clients were Christians and Muslims. This factor is due to the fact that they form the majority of the population.

This fieldwork revealed that among the Okun speaking people, in general, it is certain that traditional religion is at its lowest ebb. In the course if this research, it was observed that

nobody wishes to be possessed by the deities. Initiation into traditional religion has practically ended in Okunland, with the noticeable exception of Alu and Owe communities where young boys and girls are still being initiated into traditional religion. In most communities, only aged women remain as traditionalists in Okun land. Many youths who participate at traditional festivals do so largely for the revelry that accompanies such rituals, and partly as aspects of their traditional culture. As observed by this researcher, in Ebirra land, Islam has achieved strong footing, while Christianity is following. However, traditional religion is still very popular among the people. Outings of masquerades attract thousands of people on the street. According to the catechist of a local Catholic Church at Ebogogo, it is masquerades that attract the largest crowds in Ebirra land. Similarly, as observed among the Idoma, traditional religion has lost a substantial number of its adherents to the Catholic Church.

Modern technology has made significant inroad into all spheres of life in Africa (Joinet, 2000), especially in traditional religious and political systems. The impact of globalization and technology is clearly seen in the accoutrements of divination and paraphernalia of priests and chiefs (Tubi 2015).

(iii) Impacts of Globalization on Traditional Medical Practices

Herbological practice is another area where the impact of modernization is felt among the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area. Among the peoples of the area, herbology thrives along with modernization and technological prowess (Tubi, 2015). This is not difficult to decipher because of the comatose nature of orthodox medical services in the area. Where they are available, the cost is outrageously out of the reach of the common folks. Thus, traditional herbs are the first usage for most people when they are sick. In these communities, there are experienced herbalists who are adept at their tasks. The anthropological relevance of this is that both men and women are involved in this onerous medical endeavour. Few of these herbalists use modern means of public address system to market their products. They move about in vehicles mounted with powerful loudspeakers through which they advertise their drugs. The ranges of these drugs are quite diverse; from aphrodisiacs to treatment of toothache, backache, waist pain, jaundice, malaria, typhoid, barrenness, and diabetes. Others are blood purifiers and even elixir for retentive memory. The uniqueness of these drugs is that the sellers claim that the drugs are capable of curing all kinds of ailments. The potency or otherwise of these herbs will be left to medical anthropologists to study so as to verify their claims. The conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that, by and large, the people believe in the efficacy of herbs, they see them as affordable and also available.

Tubi (2015) reports that Chinese-made padlocks are used to make charms, which informants said have the ability to lock up the success of a targeted person. People who desire to marry certain individuals can "padlock" their prospective spouses so that they will agree to their proposal. Also, modern products have replaced traditional ones. Herbs and charms which were made with shea butter and red ochre are now made with Vaseline cream. Plastic water bottles and glass bottles are now in use as containers for herbs. Despite this, gourds and clay containers are still used, though on a small scale. Similar trends have been reported in anthropological studies of the Fante by Christeen (1958).

(iv) Impact of Globalization on the Socio-cultural System

The cultures of the Niger-Benue confluence area have come under severe infiltration of Western social norms and practices and lately of Chinese influence too. Through the immense pressures of foreign religions, Western education and modern media, the people are subjected to great cultural infiltrations. The best illustration of this tide is the adoption of personal names. Traditional poetic names which were celebrated at naming ceremonies are being replaced with English ones. Names like Confidence, Favour, Hope, Goodluck, etc., have entered the local vocabulary of the people. Iconic traditional names with socio-cultural meanings have almost disappeared. Anthropologically, Africans give names mostly for three reasons; for proper identification of individuals, historical articulation and teleological guide. Naming children with English names has undermined the traditional historical articulation embedded in names. Also, the spirituality of personhood as projected in the people's traditional culture has been distorted. Due to constant bombardment of the media, the people have been lured away messages of "prosperity" in giving names to their children. These of course are effects of the growing influence of Pentecostalism and its message of prosperity and breakthrough among the people. The noble concepts of naming children among Africans, based on existentialist realties, have been subsumed under the desire for prosperity.

Studies on the Igala people by Egbunu (2009) and Okpe (2006) highlight the eroding influence of foreign contacts on the peoples of Africa. Erim (1978) has studied cultural changes among the Idoma and he concludes that the people have been worsted after coming in contact with Westernization and foreign religions. Tubi (2015) argues that the Okun have been subjected to severe cultural distortions due to foreign contacts.

What can be stated at this stage of research is that among Africans, the increase in societal malaises like pornography, cyber-crimes, cultism, money laundering amongst others have been fueled by globalization and the craze for modernization by youths (Adesina, 2012). This study reveals that there is cultural alienation among the youths of traditional communities who have been bombarded by globalization and subjected to modernization. Dressings, eating habits, linguistic expressions, music and lyrics have all been subjected to jarring sets of ideas from a globalized and modernized world as witnessed among the peoples.

(v) Impact of Globalization on the Traditional Political System

According to Adesina (2012), the people of Nigeria have had terrible experiences caused by globalization in relation to their political systems, a case that is readily noticed among the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area. The Niger-Benue confluence has divergent political systems. On one hand, there are strong mega-kingdoms like the Igala and Nupe, while others have small mini-kingdoms like the Idoma, Kakanda, Okun and Ebira (Erim, 1980; Okpe, 2006; Tubi, 2015). In the mini-kingdoms, there is the absence of ruling families, because the attainment of kingship is opened to any male, who comes from a landowning lineage and is a freeborn. Due to the influence of globalization and modernization which brought in foreign influence among the mini-kingdoms, some families are adopting the traditions of some mega kingdoms of Igalaland, Nupeland, Hausaland and Yorubaland in claiming the status of ruling families. Also due to modern influence, the State government has graded chiefs in the area into classes. Hitherto, all kings among the Idoma, Kakanda, Okun and Ebira were coevals, but with this new arrangement, some chiefs are elevated above the others.

(vi) Impact of Globalization on the Traditional Economy

The Niger-Benue confluence area had an advanced traditional economy in the precolonial period that was sufficiently able to provide their daily sustenance and support their trading networks, (Okpe, 2006; Tubi, 2015, 2017). They were experts producing foodstuffs like yam, millet, beans and soup condiments. They were engaged in brewing, distilling of liqueur and tapping palm wine. Their women were expert weavers and potters. However, their contacts with the outside world have almost obliterated their traditional technological prowess. Data obtained from oral informants assert that their traditional economy has been worst hit by globalization. Traditional industries such as weaving and brewing are dying. Though admittedly, with modern equipment and contacts with the outside world, there is an immense increase in food production, and other agricultural produce. Experts, however, suggest that most mechanized produce are harmful to the health due to the overdose of fertilizers and chemicals now used on plants (Soffar, 2015). Lawal (2006) in his study of the effects of globalization on Africa has posited that globalization has had a catastrophic influence on the continent and its teeming population.

(vii) Impacts of Globalization on Traditional Technology

Archaeological data revealed that the Niger-Benue confluence area had advanced traditional technologies such as metallurgical and pottery systems of production (Bakinde, 2013; Obayemi, 1976,Okpe, 2006; Tubi, 2015).These scholars attest that their productions of brass and cloth weaving have been of the best quality in the ancient period of the Nigerian region. However, when the peoples came under the influence of westernization, foreign religions, modernization, and globalization, the knowledge of metallurgy has practically ceased among the people. Their rich pottery technology attested to by archaeology has been obliterated. There remains a few local cloth weaving activities in the area. In a general study of Nigeria, the scholar Adesina (2012) argues that globalization and modernization have impacted negatively on the traditional technological prowess of Africans.

5. Conclusion

The study examines the impacts of globalization on the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area of Nigeria by discussing how it has impacted on traditional norms and practices of the people such as traditional religion, traditional medical practices, traditional socio-cultural system, traditional political system, traditional economic practices and traditional technology of the peoples. Rodney's (1981) critique of the impoverishment of Africa by Europe gives a penetrating historical analysis of the lamentable condition of Africa in the face of the unjust economic world order since the 1500s.The dispossession of Africa's human, cultural and material resources has anthropological imperatives (Adedeji, 1993; Rodney, 1981). Rodney's observation has been brought into greater severity by globalization and modernization, which are Western and Chinese driven.

Despite their perceived relevance, it is the opinion of this treatise that globalization and modernization have impacted negatively on Africa. By impoverishing the continent and its people, the new world economy occasioned by globalization and modernization has released severe shocks on the traditional social, economic, cultural and political spheres of the people. Modernization and globalization hamper traditional practices and as a result, methods are changing; values are re-defined; and norms are no longer sacrosanct. Civilization is good but it is eroding the influence of the people's traditional culture.

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