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EXTERNAL AFRICAN MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE YORUBA IDENTITY AND CULTURE

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Abstract

Migration as an integral part of the history of mankind and identity has increasingly become an important keyword in the contemporary human society. The Yoruba as part of the African people are inseparable from their history and culture. Their history is the record of what they are, what they did, how they lived, thought and spoke. Certain elements of the origin and migration narratives of the African people such as a common ancestor, common ancestral home, common belief in the Supreme Deity provide a basis for identity formation and recognition among the African people. This paper examined how the African societies came to be, where they are, how their identities and cultures have evolved and to what extent has the internal and external influences shaped the Yoruba ethics, culture and identity. Also, this paper evaluates the elucidation of the historical link between migration and Yoruba identity. This work adopts Arwin Altmal's Social Penetration theory and a qualitative method was use. This work therefore concludes that the Yoruba Identity has greatly been affected by migration. This paper therefore recommends that even though immigration is inevitable, Yoruba people should incorporate the positive values of other culture. Also, Yoruba people should promote their culture in diaspora.

Keywords: African Societies, External Migration, Impacts, Yoruba Identity, Yoruba Culture.

Introduction

Due to the complexity of human life and fast changing socio- economic conditions, human migration is gaining importance day by day. Migration has always played a central role in the livelihood and advancement of the Yoruba people of West Africa. However past and present migration trends and patterns have seen dynamic trajectories. (AWUMBILA, September 2017). Migration is key, because man needs to share his ideas, experiences, emotions, and interact with other people in and outside the society or in his environment. Migration is increasingly seen as a catalyst for development. Yet, while there is growing recognition of the positive impact that human mobility can have on the culture, development and identity of a society, the negative impact needs to be brought to limelight. (Natali, September16th,2009.) The Migration of people from one area to another have been a common phenomenon throughout man's history. Right from biblical and Quranic migration of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden to the first recorded exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. People, races and families have continuously migrated from their homes to establish new and permanent settlements.

Through external migration, families improve their income, increase their access to education and health, and are generally able to provide better prospects for their children. That notwithstanding, the reality of migration today can pose serious challenges to the family and have a potentially negative impact on the identity and cultural values of its members. External migration is a complex phenomenon influenced by a variety of socio-economic factors and mobility scenarios in all regions of the world. People generally migrate to seek better job opportunities and to provide adequate nutrition, housing, healthcare and education for themselves and their families. ((IOM), 2014).External migration has the potential to have the most significant and lasting impacts. It can transform the individuals who move, the societies they move into, the societies they leave behind, their way of life and identity. For that same reason, external migration has the potential to be the most controversial issue, especially in the societies where immigrants settle. As a result, it is very easy when discussing external migration to focus solely on the impacts of immigration. Yet, we know that migration can also have significant impact on the culture of some countries in the developing world.

Migration in Africa

Africa is often seen as a continent of mass migration and displacement caused by poverty, violence, conflict and environmental stress. The diversification of the African culture seems to have been forgotten due to the movement. The migration phenomenon in Africa can be better understood within the context of its historical evolution. The effects of colonization and decolonization on the economy and indirectly on migration are most visible when examined in the context of the pre-colonial, the colonial and post-colonial era. In the pro-colonial era, population movements in Africa were associated largely with the prevailing sociopolitical and ecological conditions, especially warfare, natural disasters and the search for farm land or colonization. The movements were as a result, unstructured, occurred in groups, and the migrants were demographically undifferentiated. (Adepoju, Sept98).The process of people migrating to other areas in search of a better life is not a novel one. What has however gained currency is the increasing voluntary movement in quest of better quality of life by low-skill and low-wage workers as well as high-skill and high-wage workers from less developed rural areas to more developed urban areas, especially among the poor in the developing countries. In this regard, external migration results from the search for perceived or real opportunities as a consequence of inequality in wealth. This inequality developed as a result of the overwhelming concentration of wealth, assets, purchasing capacity, economic activities, and variety of services in the society, as well as the continued neglect and degradation of our environments and areas (Chukwudozie K. Ajaero, 2013). Migration has also been identified as a survival strategy utilized by the poor, especially the rural dwellers. The assessment of the effects of migration on rural areas has remained relevant since migration acts as a catalyst in the transformation process of not only the destiny of individual migrants but also the conditions of family members left behind, local communities, and the wider sending regions. Migrants move within their own country and between countries; some people move for short periods, others permanently; some are forced to move, others do so willingly; some people move with high levels of financial and human capital; others are not so well endowed; While flows can be controlled or managed to a degree, people will migrate, especially where there is war and persecution, where economic opportunities are distributed unevenly across borders, or where there are large inequalities in standards of living around the world. In the last few decades there has been significant growth in the numbers of external migrants especially in the developed countries (Sriskandarajah, 2005).

The Yoruba Culture and Identity

Culture is the complex while which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of the society. Among the feature that characterize culture is that has its own personality and identity (Akinlade, Adedayo and Dada, 2021). Culture cannot be ignored in the history of the Yoruba. Identity is a divine benevolence to man, it is tied to the effective existence of man in the society. The purpose of identity is to enhance good communication and relation. If culture is seen as the sum total of man, then identity is the tool for the expression of culture, the depository of culture and crucial mode of culture transmission. Therefore, it can be deduced that existence and development of the Yoruba race depends largely on the existence and development of the culture and identity. Culture is not just significantly fundamental to the existence of the Yoruba, but it also encapsulates every aspect of their lives, hence the interest of several scholars from different disciplines to this phenomenon. Culture, according to (Ajayi, 2005.) is a relatively specific lifestyle and acquired experience that people employ to interpret occurrences which eventually engender communal behavior. Culture, in a clear and simple term, is a way of life of a people and it cannot be separated from identity. It is also not possible to mention identity without recourse to its cultural substance as a result of their inseparable interconnectivity. All human knowledge, the mysteries of science and man's ability for interpersonal and community relationships are predicated on the culture and identity of the people. Among the Yoruba, the culture differentiates them from the others in whatever society they may find themselves in. For instance, the traditional mode of dressing, greeting and also the way the elders area addressed. Whenever the Yorubas come across each other, the traits that unifies them will unite the people as a form of identity in the diaspora or any country they migrate to. It is forbidden in Yoruba culture to refer to the elders in the community or parents non-chalantly. These two groups of people are to be addressed with utmost respect (Blier, 2015). The Yorùbá people are a near-homogenous and semi-independent peoples loosely linked by identity, geography, language, history, culture and religion. Yorùbá communities can be found in different parts of West Africa but the largest concentration can be found in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. In Togo, the Yorùbá people are known as Anago, Tsha and Ife to the North. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, they are referred to as Aku. There are various speculations on the origin of the Yorùbá people and the time of their migration to their present location but it is commonly believed that they migrated from a region in the present day Middle East between 600 and 1000 AD. The mythological origin of the Yorùbá people is generally traced to a single ancestor, Oduduwa. He was said to have resided in Ile-Ife, commonly considered the cradle of mankind and the place from which all people migrated to their present locations. Yorùbá people are highly urbanized and have resided in cities for many hundreds of years. Yorùbá cities formed the political centers of city-states governed by a king and supreme council within an aristocratic system. Prior to foreign interventions (European and Islamic), each Yorùbá city-state was autonomous and had its own distinct dialect, religious societies and army. These ancient states frequently warred with oneanother, and several centuries ago one of these kingdoms, Òyó, became dominant. Old Òyó, as this state is called, gave cohesiveness to Yorùbá custom and contributed greatly to the collective identity of modern Yorùbá-speaking people. The trans-Atlantic slavery of the 18th and 19th centuries also brought a sizeable number of Yorùbá people to the New World, most especially to Cuba (where they are known as the Lukumi), Brazil (where they are known as Nago), Trinidad, Haiti Puerto Rico and America, where elements of Yorùbá culture and language are still found today. This is especially emphasized in the socio-cultural and

religious lives of the many Yorùbá people in the Diaspora. The Yoruba culture was originally an oral tradition, and the majority of Yoruba people are native speakers of the Yoruba language. Identity involves the belief that there is one, shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as "one people," with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history (Toyin Falola, 2005).

The Causes of External Migration

African migration to the other parts of the world is much more diverse, although Southern and Central Africa is relatively underrepresented in this migration. This may be partly explained by the absence of colonial ties, the effect of the US visa lottery and the comparative openness of the US and particularly Canada, for high-skilled immigration, which may have enabled more diffuse immigration patterns in terms of origin countries. The United States and some other countries in Africa is becoming an increasingly important destination for migrants, (LIĎÁK, 2014).

1. Manifestations of underdevelopment: This is one of the important root causes of external migration, specifically including push-factors such as income disparities between countries, socio-economic instability, and population pressures.

2. Loss of essential human resources: This is often referred to as "brain drain", as well as potential depletion of the national labor force due to movements at all skill-levels. In the past, attention has mainly focused upon these two connections. Increasingly, however, the third and most significant linkage of external migration which could hold important benefits for home country development is the potential for the development of livelihood strategies for under resourced communities which can directly contribute through remittance transfers to poverty reduction at the individual level. Diasporas accumulate human and financial capital during the process of migration that can contribute to the development of their local home communities as well as to national economic and social development. Other causes of external migration are uneven distribution of population and resources, unbalanced utilization of resources and variation in economic and cultural developments (COM, 2012). Furthermore, external migration is as a result of complex interrelated social and economic factors, which are primarily related to the migrants' search for greater well-being. This, of course, does not include those displaced by natural disaster (drought, famine) or those fleeing from war or political oppression (refugees), except for the economic refugees. However, one viable policy instrument to retain a large number of emigrants from poor to rich countries or to attract them back home is sustained development in the labor-exporting countries. This is based on the notion that people migrate in large part when they are unable to satisfy their aspirations within the existing opportunity structure in their locality or country. (Adepoju, Linkages between internal and international migration: The African Situation., 1998)

The Impacts of External Migration on Yoruba Culture and Identity

Nigeria is a society with abundant and rich cultural heritage that are scattered within the diverse ethnic nationalities. These cultural heritages include language, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion, and other tangible cultural monuments, natural sites and cultural landscapes. Some of these cultures have died due to

western cultural influence and therefore needed to be revitalized and uploaded in the net if those who know how they are performed are still alive. Many studies on external migration have concentrated more on issues relating to the reasons, distance and direction of moves as well as the process of decision making, with little attention directed on the retention of culture or identity. As a matter of fact, it has often been assumed that the culture and identity of immigrants dissipates with the passage of time. However, it is pertinent to provide an insight on the retention of indigenous cultural identity by the migrants as they encounter the cultural components of their hosts. The process of migration involves culture contact resulting in cultural diffusion, assimilation and adaptation among different ethnic groups especially in cities where social interaction is more complex and dynamic than the in rural areas. In many instances, certain cultural elements of the host communities are assimilated while some aspects of the migrants' culture are lost over time and younger generation may be ignorant about the existence of such cultural values and belief (Okwuchi, 1992). This problem becomes more visible when a particular ethnic group is highly migratory. In view of this, there is a high probability of loss of certain elements of the group's cultural identity as they move from one location to another in the quest for economic, social and political opportunities. The retention of some aspects of culture could engender stronger evidence of cultural identity among the migrants. External migration poses a threat to the continued existence of indigenous cultures of the Yoruba migrants in their host communities (Onodje1, 2016).

The Positive Impacts of External Migration on the Yoruba Culture

1. Integration of the Yoruba culture
2. Speedy access to the Yoruba culture and tradition in the internet
3. Digitization and preservation of cultural artifacts
4. Global access to the interesting cultural heritage.

Integration of the Yoruba Culture: The impact here is that globally, the Yoruba culture would integrate the host community culture and allow each cultural community to view the other's culture in the internet. This will create an avenue for both sides to enjoy and experience the authenticity of the diverse cultures. It will also give room for interaction of culture across boundaries which leads to adaptation in particular places and practices i.e. pluralization, allows for different cultural flows that originates from different spheres.

Speedy Access*:* Once globalized, Yoruba culture can be accessed online. Cultural access through the internet can be localized. By localization, it means process by which foreign cultures view it in the satellite, TV system or the internet which can be practiced everywhere. This information can be accessed online simultaneously without distorting the contents.

Digitization*:* The Yorubas of West Africa are known to be in possession of rich and valuable artifacts. Digital scanners and cameras can be used to capture digital images of these cultural artifacts for importation into computer systems and other countries. Highlighted are some of the benefits of digitization:(a) Digital images offer unique advantages because information and contents may be delivered directly to end users; (b) The data can be easily formatted, edited, and printed; (c) The digital collections are accessible to a large number of users simultaneously.

Global Access to the Cultural Heritage: Due to the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba people, the host community is fascinated with the culture and identity of the emigrants, which gives opportunity for a collective interest in the culture of the people globally (Conway, 2000).

The Negative Impacts

External migration has some negative impacts on the Yoruba identity and culture in some areas. Akande seems to understand more of this negative impact when he said that western adventures made efforts to undermine the cultural heritage of various peoples around the world through colonization, imperialism and now migration. He said that cultural imperialism left the colonized in a state of cultural disorientation which is vulnerable to cultural invasion.

1**. Commercialization of Culture:** The most important far reaching effect of external migration on culture is the commercialization of culture. Production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services have become commodities along with the essentials of life. Music, food, clothes, fashion, art, sports images, etc are now sold in the market, imported and exported. Commercialization of culture has a disturbing impact on the people of Nigeria. For example, what was once an element of Nigeria's cultural way of life has become a product, rather than something unique which they have made to suit their specific needs and circumstances emigrants are increasingly bombarded with new images, new music, new clothes and new values. The impact is that the familiar and the old artifacts are being discarded. The fact is that these will be lost simply because they are not valued by the people because they are not in a familiar environment. This undermining of the peoples existing values and cultures has a corrosive impact on the sense of who we are, what we want and what we respect. "The cumulative effect words "is a crisis of cultural confidence, combined with economic uncertainty (Akande).

2. **Religion:** In the area of religion, the impact of migration is not left out. The movement to an unfamiliar territory will make the emigrants forget their religion and make do with what is practiced in their new environment.

3**. Proselytization:** Information and communication technology is gradually spreading its influence on the culture and identity of the Yoruba race. This is in the areas and methods of proselytizing and in belief systems

*4***. The Family:** In the Yoruba community due to the impacts of migration on cultural norms, socialization processes and values are affected. For instance some parents are no longer frowning at what the youths put on. The traditional pattern of subordinating when greeting an elder has changed to "hi".

5**. Language**: Today, the use of foreign language, English, has always been an important aspect of official language in Nigeria. Though there is high rate of illiteracy in the rural population, the use of our local languages has its limitations, especially when we are outside our community. Many elite families would like their children to learn English language or the language of their new country better than their local language.

CONCLUSION

Today's societies are multi-culture in themselves, which encompasses a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyle. Most people are shaped by more than a single culture, which is brought about by migration. And globalization which is a concept of uniformity assumes that cultures are becoming the same as the world. In the Yoruba community, the instability of personality, family, community and other activities are largely due to the rapid erosion of our absolute traditional values and not due to the advancement of information technology. Instead, technology has come to accelerate our cultural heritage. Therefore, rejecting advanced information technology or is not a solution for overcoming its disintegrating effects; rather, it may be viewed as a form of escape. The only remedy in ensuring cultural stability is for the agents of change which is the government and the people to repackage andre-inculcate absolute traditional values through the use of libraries, mass media, and advanced information technologies wherever they find themselves to counter negative changes that are emerging today. Therefore the Yoruba people can maintain their culture and identity in any country in the world (Nwegbu, 2011).

Recommendations

In view of the contending issues, impacts and challenges, the following recommendations are made for effective cultural preservation of the Yoruba culture and identity:

- There is the need for the protection of the Yoruba cultural heritage. There is need for the government to revive traditional and popular forms of a people's expression. Government should incorporate programmes relating to traditional cultures, heritage and folklore in education curricular at all levels.
- Government should develop legislative protection for traditional culture, heritage museum, archives, and libraries. Government should provide training in the use of ICT for documentation, digitization and preservation of cultural heritage.
- There is the need to establish "heritage club" where issues of cultural heritage would be discussed as a means of transmission of oral and intangible heritage in every part of the world.
- An international World Day for showcasing and safe-guarding the Yoruba traditional cultural heritage should be established. There is the need to hold seminars, workshops or technical assistance for training of managers and teachers in the field of traditional culture, identity and heritage.

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