

## **Gain and Losses of Gradual Harmonization and Distortion of Culture**

<sup>\*1</sup>Emmanuel O. Elakhe, <sup>2</sup>Walter C. Ngwu

<sup>1</sup>Department of Economics, University of Port Harcourt

<sup>2</sup>Department of Economics, University of Port Harcourt

Corresponding Author: \*Emmanuel O. Elakhe

---

**Abstract:** Various nations of the world had acted independently, not until the 1800s when the western nations began to invade the black race through what we might call colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism and imperialism lays the foundation for the harmonization and distortion of culture particularly in Africa. While some argue that these western colonialists came to the aid of the countries they colonized, others argue that they rather came to exploit the resources of the colony. Different nation or group are differentiated by their cultural identity, nevertheless no cultural identity is mutually exclusive. Harmonization and distortion of culture could occur either by the invasion and domination of external forces or when a given nation give themselves over to such distortions. The trend of distortion of culture particularly in Africa context are on a very high increase. These can be reflected in almost every aspect of living; dressing, food, language, production, economic system, values, religious belief, technology, environment, political system etc. some of these distortions have brought about gains while some others have resulted in losses.

---

Date of Submission: 16-12-2016

Date of acceptance: 08-09-2017

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Various nations of the world had acted independently, not until the 1800s when the western nations began to invade the black race through what we might call colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism and imperialism lays the foundation for the harmonization and distortion of culture particularly in Africa. While some argue that these western colonialists came to the aid of the countries they colonized, others argue that they rather came to exploit the resources of the colony. Culture is defined as people's total way of life, the way people live, eat, worship, produce, create and recreate. It is the totality of a set of bequeathed ideas belief system, values and norms which constitute the common basis generally agreed social action. Arowale Dare (2011). In essence culture covers every aspect of life including social, political, economic, socio-economic etc. Harmonization of culture refers to all the adjustments of differences and inconsistencies in all aspects of culture to make them uniform and mutually compatible with others. While distortion of culture is presenting the culture of a people in a way that makes it look different from the way it was originally.

Culture is very vital in the process of development. It serves as a catalyst for development. Therefore the harmonization and distortion of culture is important because if the right culture is embraced, there are gains. On the other hand if the wrong culture is embraced, it will result to losses. Culture is transmitted or acquired through information or symbols. Different nation or group are differentiated by their cultural identity, nevertheless no cultural identity is mutually exclusive. Cultural identity in this case refers to all the attributes and norms that distinguish a group of people or nation from another. Harmonization and distortion of culture could occur either by the invasion and domination of external forces or when a given nation give themselves over to such distortions. The trend of distortion of culture particularly in Africa context are on a very high increase. These can be reflected in almost every aspect of living; dressing, food, language, production, economic system, values, religious belief, technology, environment, political system etc. some of these distortions have brought about gains while some others have resulted in losses. Our aim therefore is to examine the gains and losses on harmonization and distortion of culture

### **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Arowolo Dare (2010), examined the effects of harmonization and distortion of culture through western civilization in the culture of Africa. He discovered that slave trade, colonialism and missionary are the three platforms through which harmonization and distortion of culture have been achieved in Africa. From his study he identified the following negative effects of harmonization and distortion of culture in Africa.

### **Negative Effects Of Harmonization And Distortion Of Culture In Africa**

- Distortions of natural boundaries without due recourse to antecedent institutions and cultures. The western civilization submerged and dismantled indigenous institutions and, in its place, a foreign rule was established. Traditional institutions before then were regarded as not only political authorities but also custodians of cultures.
- Introduction of Westminster liberal democracy. This does not just work in Africa. It is not that Africa did not have its own pattern of democracy before imposition of liberal democracy but the typical democracy in Africa and its processes were submerged by westernization.
- A major effect of European colonialism was the progressive integration of Africa into the world capitalist system, within which Africa functioned primarily as a source of raw materials for Western industrial production.
- There was imposition of taxation, which forced Africans into wage labour
- Colonial economy also caused agriculture to be diverted toward the production of primary products and cash crops: cocoa, groundnut, palm oil, sisal, and so on.
- There was sudden shift in production mode from production of food crops to cash crops, a situation that caused hunger and starvation in Africa. Africa began to produce more of what she needs less and produce less of what she needs most.
- Africa was perpetually turned to producer of primary raw materials, a situation that caused unequal exchange
- The plunderage method and systematically kleptocratic enterprises established in the colonies to expropriate natural resources of Africa to Europe has, in the perspective of Rodney, facilitated “underdevelopment of Africa while engendered the development of Europe” This required a total reorganization of African economic life, beginning with the introduction of the cash crop and inexorable alteration of economic pattern. In the settler colonies—notably in Kenya and Rhodesia
- Economic Plan: it also altered the way we produce, create and recreate as well as what we consume.
- The infrastructure undertaken by the colonial administrations was minimal, developed strictly as a function of the requirements of the new economy, which saw the rise of the colonial cities such as Dakar, Lagos, Nairobi, and Luanda.
- Neoliberalism: It is an economic process that distrusts the state as a factor in development; it is a nineteenth century philosophy that has continued to be repackaged, its latest form is monetarism. It believes that market mechanism is the most efficient allocator of productive resources and, therefore, to have an efficient and effective economy, forces of demand and supply must be allowed to play a leading role. This changed economy of Africa from communalism to capitalism
- Family/Social Relations: Extended family giving way to nuclear family. Traditional African family values breaking down very rapidly. Extended family that was wonderful instrument like a social verve, social security in our community has given way to nuclear family. Little wonder that there is no more respect for age; no more respect for values that we held sacrosanct in Africa; younger ones now find it very difficult to greet elderly ones.
- Individualism: We now have children of single parents, a phenomenon that is identifiable with America. People no longer communalise, nobody wants to be anybody’s brother’s keeper.
- Building Pattern: The way we build now is different from the way it was; we no longer take into cognizance our own peculiarity in the building process. We now build houses without ventilation.
- Urbanization: It led to rural exodus and the displacement of large segments of the population.
- Corruption: western civilisation has promoted corruption in Africa; leaders in Africa now look up to Europe and America as safe havens for looted funds. It is a consequence of Western civilisation.
- Sexuality: The conception of sexuality has changed completely; the desire to be like Westerners by our children has suddenly made them promiscuous; doing things that were never imaginable several years ago. This does not, however, in any way support cultural isolationism. Cultural isolationism is not possible in the context of globalisation. Cultural ideas and values grow and flow across borders unimpeded, but that should not make us lose sight of the fact that the weak you are; the more likelihood of cultural dominance. Africa has been very weak and vulnerable since the last century. Africa now suffer from level of mental enslavement; cultural imperialism; the need for decolonisation of the mind. The trend of Western civilisation in Africa is pathetic, the strength of wave of Western civilisation is such that Africa is hardly capable of resisting it. The wave is so strong that it has become irresistible.
- Language: Proficiency in our language is declining in Africa because we are compelled to embrace Western culture and civilisation as Western language; Western language has created a dichotomy between an elite and mass of our people who still can not do business with foreign language. It causes alienation for people

who cannot speak English or French. Language is a vehicle of culture, we are in a very serious problem. We must define and design means of helping Africa out of this language, cultural logjam.

- The cultural alteration provoked by the pressures of colonial rule and missionary in all spheres of life are pervasive enough to qualify as the signs of a new cultural coup in Africa. This is more noticeable in the area of science and technology on African experience and consciousness.
- Finally, Modern medicine has largely taken precedence over traditional methods in matters of health.

The researcher concluded that westernization has had predominance over the African cultural values which has led to cultural dualism. Therefore countries in Africa must begin to make efforts do de-westernise themselves from the distortion and harmonization of our culture from the western allies.

### **Positive Effects Of Harmonization And Distortion Of Culture In Africa**

Nwegbu Mercy (2011), Identified the gains of cultural harmonization and distortion, some of which include:

**Global technology:** Through global technology individual cultural groups can have access to their cultural heritage even from a distance. In this regard globalization can bring about nationalization and localization of cultural heritage.

**Digitization:** digitization has also made it possible to capture images of cultural artifacts and make it available in a simple and transferable format. Generally the gains of harmonization and distortion of culture is summarized by write as speedy access to culture, digitization and preservation of cultural artifacts, global access to the cultural heritage etc.

Abdulraheem Yusuf, examined the harmonization and distortion of culture in Nigeria by considering the impact of globalization on culture. From his studies he observed the positive and negative effects of globalization on culture in the following dimensions

- Through globalization most economies have reduced their dependence on government by supporting market and private enterprises
- Many languages are endangered, rather than been preserved. Language is the one of the predominant ways through which culture is expressed.
- Most countries like Nigeria have become more characterized with the menace of AIDS, land mines, Ebola, war etc, due to the influence of global forces.
- Most Africa music have been distorted and harmonized with western beats of foreign musicians like Michael Jackson, Craig David etc. Most youths now prefer the foreign music to the local ones
- The global satellite system has exposed most nations to the same music, movies, news, language to the point that aside the dominance of English language in most nations. French and Spanish are also gaining grounds in Anglophone countries.
- The awareness of globalization has made the female gender particularly in this part of the world to become more active economically
- Our culture has also been distorted in terms of the food we consume. Nigerians and other African countries now prefer foreign produced food to our local dishes thereby discouraging local food producers and making the nation an import dependent nation.

In many areas the culture of our western counterparts have dominated our culture. It is seen by the author as a fresh phase in re-colonization of Africa societies which attempts to continue the promotion of western linguistic heritage and literacy esthetic canons at the expense of African indigenous languages and literature.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The fact that most cultural heritage have been harmonized and distorted is no longer a topic of contention. What is required by each clan, group or nation is to identify the gains in this process and minimize or eliminate the losses. For instance we discovered that globalization brings about harmonization of culture that is uniting individual cultural heritage into just one but at the same time we can enhance our cultural heritage through the globalization and digitization. This is achieved when each cultural group make their cultural heritage available to their members in the global space and in transferable formats

### **REFERENCES**

- Arowolo Dare (2010), 'The Effects of Western Civilization and Culture on Africa'.
- Dreveau Anna (2013) 'Distortion of Evolution of Culture'
- Hacker Dean (2016) ' What Happens when a Culture gives in to Distortion'

- Nwegbu Mercy (2011) et al 'Globalization of Cultural Heritage: Issues, Impacts and Inevitable Challenges for Nigeria'.
- Yusuf Abdulraheem ' The Impact of Globalization on Culture'.

Emmanuel o. Elakhe. "Gain And Losses of Gradual Harmonization And Distortion of Culture." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) , vol. 22, no. 9, 2017, pp. 32–35.