

## The Yoruba Traditional Dress and Contemporary Issues, 1900–1960

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The main argument of this paper emerges from the submission that the advent of globalization resulted in the dynamics that influenced the Nigerian dress culture, particularly among Lagos residents. While insisting that with the aid of globalization through mass media, internet and education, the western dress culture (and civilization) has precariously affected and impacted the traditional dress culture of Nigerians, the paper also points to the fact that the people of Lagos had established, well before the advent of colonial rule, a clothing pattern which included clothing materials and designs (weaving and tie and dye), and clothing styles which was generally accepted and does not go against the Yoruba taboos. The paper further submits that while changes have occurred, the dress culture of the Yoruba people have, through the process of globalization, found its way to other parts of the world, although not at the same pace with the western dress. The paper adopts historical narrative and descriptive analysis to drive home its points. It relies also on primary and secondary data to prove the effects of globalization on the dress culture of the people. It concludes by critically analysing and stating the contributory effect such complex and multifaceted phenomenon have had on Nigerian peoples and their culture.

[Culture/Cultural Dress; Globalisation; Lagos; Traditional; Western]

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### Introduction

Culture is a pattern of human activities and the symbols that give these activities significance. It is what people eat, how they dress, beliefs they hold and activities they engage in. It is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic, and religious norms and modes of organisation thus distinguishing people from their neighbours. This therefore means

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the way people dress is in itself a cultural heritage which of course can be transferred from one generation to another and can be used to identify who a person is and where such person belongs in terms of tribe, class and status. Contemporarily, culture (dress culture) has been affected and reshaped with the current trend of globalisation in the world today, starting with the interruption of colonialism which brought about certain colonial legacy including colonial dress and act and the advent of information technology (ICT) which brought along influx of all kinds of social media platform where cultural heritage was spread and imbibed. The study of dress has so much to do with the contemporaries in recent time. The same purpose which dress serves in the past remain the same.

Gender, age, status, affiliation with local, regional, or ethnic communities, as well as attitudes and personal situations of the wearer may be reflected by the shape and workmanship of garments, which in turn are affected by the often-contradictory influences of social conventions, governmental interventions, changing fashions, and the desire of self-representation. But it is also people who make the cloth and the most important material used for the purpose are textiles, which owe its triumphant advance to the rise of manufacturing and industrial production in association with a process of globalisation that has assumed ever greater momentum since the early modern period. An exhibition like “African lace”, which exemplarily deals with decorated textiles and fashions in Nigeria in particular since the country gained independence in 1960, thus almost necessarily speaks not only on the bales of cloth and dress patterns, but first and foremost of people and their need for identity of markets, and of contradictory interest in the wake of globalisation.<sup>2</sup>

One of the greatest issues is that Yorubaland through Lagos is a heterogeneous society; even before colonialism, the territory was inhabited by different peoples, tribes, and entities. These peoples have different cultures, traditions, and religion. In the present day, the societies are such that contain many millions of people, with many of them living crowded together in urban areas. For human history, the earth was much less densely populated than it is now, and it is only over the past hundred years or so that many societies have existed in which most of the population are city dwellers.<sup>3</sup> Until 1977, when the only cultural

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<sup>2</sup> B. PLANKENSTEINER – N. M. ADEDIRAN, *African lace; a history of trade, creativity and fashion in Nigeria* Gheru, Kortrijk 2010 [np].

<sup>3</sup> A. GIDDENS, *Sociology*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 33–35.

show was performed in Nigeria (FESTAC) there had never been attempts to nationalize Nigerian cultural heritage. So, when we talk or plan for globalization of the heritage it is pertinent to start at home/domestic level before internationalization (i.e. cultural nationalization before cultural globalization).<sup>4</sup>

From the seventeenth to the early twentieth century, the western countries established colonies in numerous areas that were previously occupied by traditional societies, using their superior military strength where necessary. Although virtually all these colonies, including Nigeria, have attained their independence, the process of colonialism was central to shaping the social map of the globe.<sup>5</sup>

The paper therefore with the adoption of historical narrative and descriptive analysis tries to look at some basic issues regarding dress. These issues are discussed to be driven by some agents of globalisation, these agents have tended to affect every aspect of dressing in Yorubaland. With the use of primary and secondary data and with proper analysis and interpretation, this paper intends to focus basically on the Yoruba metropolitan society, specifically Lagos and prove the effects of globalization on the dress culture of the people. Lagos was chosen because it is a heterogeneous society which encompass different people from different places which was mostly triggered with the start of the colonial rule in Nigeria. The work tends to cover the period starting from Nigeria independence up till date, while it also traces back certain developments that took place in Yorubaland with the coming of the foreigners even before the colonial rule was officially started, this is to give a background to the study of the Yoruba society as pertaining to dress.

### **Dress Style and Globalisation**

There has been a great stir going on everywhere about the influence of globalisation which has led to a “cultural explosion”, an expression that leaves something to be desired in view of the definitions of “explosion”. The revolution in communications technology, which gave the west the power to achieve global supremacy, has converted the world into a global village. That is to say, the expansion of global capital and information and

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<sup>4</sup> M. U. NWEGBU – C. C. EZE – B. E. AZOGWA, Globalization of cultural heritage: issues, impact, and inevitable challenges for Nigeria, in: *Library Philosophy and Practice*, Lincoln 2011, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> GIDDENS, p. 35.

communication technologies have affected in a huge way the Lagos people and Nigeria as a whole. The penetration of these forces has influenced the people's culture and self-understanding.<sup>6</sup> This was followed by the increasing diffusion (dominance) of western cultural values that tend to destroy the native cultures of developing nations. Acculturation processes and socialisation have been spurred by foreign culture, social values, lifestyle, dressing, music and so on. Although the word globalization was not coined until the second half of the twentieth century, the origin of globalization has been traced back to the period of 1450–1500 A.D.

It must be noted that, the yoruba textile production and industry have been in existence prior to any visit of foreigners into the land. They already had their own way and method of producing clothes for their own use as well as for others. Some of these include the manual acquisition of cotton, thread and weaving which often in all cases result in the production of quality and long-lasting clothing materials. This which was done through planting of cotton to harvest cotton and then extract thread from the cotton alongside dyeing such threads into suitable colours before they start the process of weaving and was done by both men and women with each of them having the roles they performed. Weaving in Yorubaland have been said to be sustained precisely by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when at this point in time, there had been the planting of cotton in abundance as well as producing excellent indigenous cloth and emphasis was placed on how the cloth produced were already in export trade even before the arrival of the European explorers, that a flourishing weaving industry was already in existence which manufactured hand woven clothes from locally acquired cotton, dyed with natural dyes and indigo; these records were said to as well be kept by the first set of explorers and traders who visited the land.<sup>7</sup>

Globalisation as it entails in yoruba dress has manifested in two broad ways, on the one hand is the influence and incorporation of foreign or other sartorial traditions into yoruba culture, while on the other hand, it is the act of imbibing and wearing of foreign dress culture by yoruba people. Like in other parts of the world, a feature of the second form of globalisation in yoruba dress deals with yoruba people imbibing the western dress, which is often termed as the jean culture. The term jean

<sup>6</sup> A. G. ADEBAYO – O. C. ADESINA – R. O. OLANIYI, *Marginality and crisis of globalization and identity in contemporary Africa*, Lanham 2010, pp. 7–8.

<sup>7</sup> M. O. AREO – R. O. KALILU, Origin of and Visual Semiotics in Yoruba Textile of Adire, in: *Arts and Design Studies*, 12, 2013, pp. 22–34.

culture here is used to describe the western type clothes which included jean, suits, t-shirt, fez-cap, assortment of perfumes, etc. while it may be extremely difficult to date this development, it can however be said that its widespread and usage cannot be separated from the era of the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) in the 1980s, which was due to the sudden and drastic down in the economy, this which led to young men and women in Nigeria became jobless and soon found the wearing of the jeans, t-shirt as a way of coping with the austencity measure, and this today has assumed a mark of not just sophistication but also of civilisation. Hence the jean culture is no longer limited to private use or associated with poverty, but now considered as standard dress. The ending appeal of this type of dress does not lay on popularity and being foreign, but also trendy.

In Lagos, due to the impact of globalization on cultural norms, socialization processes and values are affected. The situation is now such that some parents are no longer frowning at what the youths put on, in cases when they put on bad cloth. This is a period referred to as the mercantilist period and characterized by the development of trade in the quest for commercial empires to broaden their markets. Since then, propelled by incredible advancements in transportation and information technology, globalization has practically made the world into one global village. Initially, globalization was seen as an economic phenomenon and in fact, some economists still define it from a purely economic perspective. However, it is now obvious that although it was triggered by economic motives it has far reaching effects in all aspects of life especially in the areas of politics, culture, technology, and the environment. Therefore, globalisation is a historical process of change that has been with humanity for a long time. It is a system that generates domination and disempowerment, and impacts differently and often detrimentally on individuals, social groups, and political entities.<sup>8</sup>

With the economic integration through globalisation, there was the opening of border which allowed countries to trade in Nigeria; there was the presence of the foreign textile industries, like Austrian, Korea, China and so on. And while in Nigeria the business was largely dominated by Lagos traders and Ijebu-ode, Abeokuta, and the Ibadan axis of the western

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<sup>8</sup> O. AGBU, Globalization: the politics of 'we' and 'them', in: A. G. ADEBAYO – O. C. ADESINA – R. O. OLANIYI, *Marginality and crisis globalization and identity in contemporary Africa*, Lanham 2010, p. 13.

part of Nigeria. So, the traders bought these foreign fabrics and take them back home and sell it out to people, and from there it becomes popular and the new trend.

With the advent of modern fashion designing through globalisation, changes were introduced in the pattern of the old traditional clothe, that in fact it was such a drastic change, even while some people still put on the traditional cloth, globalisation had given it new taste and functions. Different pattern in fabrics became sewn for outings, ceremonies, and domestic use. For instance was the introduction of new machines for sowing modern style clothing, and was the embroidery machine introduced, a means of adding elaboration to ceremonial costume. The following years after independence became a modern development in the style of clothing. There were sewing machines which now produce a wide range of designs on clothing and allow the taste of style of dress to increase.

Globalization is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It is the process of international integration as a product of exchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture in which worldwide exchange of national and cultural resources occurs in the process. Globalization trend has also had an adverse effect on the socio-cultural development of Nigeria. The social aspect is that globalization has deeply influenced the social structure of different societies. Every society used to have its own unique culture with respect to the language, social norms, morality, civic sense, etc. The advent of media which aids this special capability to influence millions at the same time has challenged the social institutions of the society especially family. A particular society following their style of living without being much influenced by the western culture is now seen as “uncivilized” which was a very cunningly designed propaganda of the west to inculcate their culture into the rest of the world, thereby dominating the globe.

There has, therefore, been the hegemonisation of culture by the Western world, changing the culture and orientation of the people in question. The Nigerian culture has been largely influenced by the perception and worldview cultivated because of slavery as well as our colonial and post-colonial education and finally by the current trend in economic globalization. So, globalisation can be said to be in existence for a very long time, but the pronouncement of the economic globalisation makes the word “globalisation” becomes popular. 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. Nigerian markets are increasingly bombarded with new images, new music, new clothes, and new values.<sup>9</sup> Organizations spend billions of dollars each year defining, acquiring, maintaining, and monitoring employees' dress. Employee manuals often include references to appearance that range from very detailed uniform specifications to more general dress codes. Employees failing to maintain dress standards suffer consequences that range from insults and ridicules to termination.<sup>10</sup> This means that because of globalisation, the concept of organisational dress came into existence in which an organization give address code to its workers, which could be gotten from other places within or outside the country. In the banking sector for instance, there is the dress code, and this is applicable to other sectors, all in the name of being organised.

The situation today is that young people in developing countries are undergoing uncontrolled acculturation and are under the tremendous influence of western culture in dress style, music, food, and behaviour.<sup>11</sup> The economic developments caused many changes in Western Yoruba society. As regards this, imported cloths replaced locally woven types of common materials for dress making.

As the world rapidly moves towards a single, unified economy, businesses and people move about the globe in increasing numbers in search of new markets and economic opportunities. As a result, the cultural map of the world changes: networks of peoples span national borders and even continents, providing cultural connections between their birthplace and their adoptive countries, there then came exchange, as in the fact that, as the people move from place to place, they disseminate their culture, like their culture of dressing and also imbibe those of their adopted countries. The situation of Lagos here is of the same experience, as people who move to Lagos to stay brought with them their style of clothing. In fact, there came with them, fashion designers who started sowing for the Lagos people in the style they (the tailors) are familiar with.<sup>12</sup>

There were also some people who are elites and business persons that travelled in and out of the country often, they study the style of clothing

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<sup>9</sup> D. C. OGOHI, Impact of globalization on socio-cultural development in Nigeria, in: *Developing Countries Studies*, 4, 17, 2014, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> A. RAFAELI – M. G. PRATT, Tailored meanings: on the meaning and impact of organizational dress, in: *The Academy of Management Review*, 18, 1, 1993, pp. 32–55.

<sup>11</sup> AGBU, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> GIDDENS, pp. 33–35.

abroad and on coming back brought it into the culture of the society by either merging it with the cultural dress style or adopting it as a new style. Then before you know it, such style has circulated around the whole of Lagos as people start imbibing it, giving it a name. For instance, the *aso-oke* cloth worn by Yoruba women was not embroidered until the experiments of fashion designer like Mrs. Sade Thomas in the mid-sixties. And also did she pioneer the use of *aso-oke* for the *buba*, which had previously been made of high-weight machine-made fabric. Wavy or zigzag lines with curved motifs at intervals were embroidered in orderly fashion all over the surface of the fabric. The embroidery was done on machines by men, but did not all resemble the traditional motifs used on men's robes.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of globalisation and integration of culture, the Lagosians and other Nigerians took over other people's inventions (fabrics), improved on them and represented them to the world, this they improved by infusing an element of something unique, colourful thereby transforming it into something proudly Nigerian.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of cultural globalization, the movement of youths from the rural to urban setting has caused a significant depopulation of youths going to prayer houses in the rural setting. The arrival of Christianity has also depopulated the traditional religious adherents in many parts of Nigeria.<sup>15</sup>

As a result of cultural globalization, the movement of youths from the rural to urban setting with the arrival of Christianity and Islam has depopulated the traditional religious adherents, as it condemns the traditional clothing, terming it as uncivilised, and to the converts, they encouraged them to move on to the western style by putting on the foreign attire. Osita Agbu classified religion as the carrier of evil, and by implication a site for the clash of civilisational differences, as there was disapproval from Islam on western civilisation.<sup>16</sup> An example of the controversy was from 1989 up till the 1990s when wearing of the *hijab* (a Muslim attire worn to cover the head up till the shoulder level) was made compulsory, the *hijab* controversy and the dilemma.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> P. OYELOLA, *Nigerian artistry*, Ibadan 2010, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> PLANKENSTEINER – ADEDIRAN, [np].

<sup>15</sup> NWEGBU – EZE – AZOGWA, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> AGBU, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> H. O. DANMOLE, "From global to local" the media and Islam in Nigeria, 1979–2007, in: A. G. ADEBAYO – O. C. ADESINA – R. O. OLANIYI, *Marginality and crisis globalization and identity in contemporary Africa*, Lanham 2010, pp. 87–98.



Both the Muslims and Christians were involved in this act; as the missionary came, they brought with them their clothes and textile which they brought from their homeland. As they went about teaching, proselytizing their mess it posed to the secular Nigerian state followed rapidly on the heels of anti-*hijab* controversies in the western media age, they included in it some ethical teachings on how people should eat, dress, the kinds of cloth they should wear and so on, and even that parent do not question their children on the clothes they are putting on again, because of the changes in cultural value brought by globalisation.

Some forms of religious belief and practice have acted as a brake on change, emphasising above all the need to adhere to its values and rituals.<sup>18</sup> This included mostly the aspect of dressing; this is because it is most visible to say who you are with whatever you are putting on, or what religion you belong to. With the wearing of *hijab* or *jalamia*, everybody knows that you are a Muslim, and also with the wearing of a shirt and skirt along with a beret or a hat, it is very easy to know you are a Christian. This was because of the teaching and orientation received from the missionary of both religions. For instance, the impact of Christianity was greatly felt, as status based on age grade before gave way to status based on membership of a small elitist group composed of, whose dress was conspicuously European. The western dress became the prestigious dress, it became synonymous with progress and civilisation; traditional dress was associated with backwardness and uncouthness.

As a result, people do not want to be referred to as uncivilised, and so they began to adopt the European attire and to stop wearing the traditional dress. Going to churches and mosque, also increased the demand for clothes. Other agents of change were also at work. Apart from the contributions made by Christian missions and the schools, the colonial administrations themselves initiated actions directly and introduced measures which produced important alterations in the cultural pattern of Western Yorubaland. The very imposition of colonial rule also contributed to the changes in the dress style at this point in time.<sup>19</sup>

In their attempt to civilise the so-called pagans by introducing a “superior” religion and literacy, the Muslims and the Christians were at par. The Muslim gown like the European jacket, symbolized the higher

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<sup>18</sup> GIDDENS, pp. 33–35.

<sup>19</sup> A. I. ASIJAJU, *Western Yorubaland under European rule 1889–1945: a comparative analysis of French and British colonialism*, London 1976, p. 32.

status being sought by those who wore them. Muslim culture favours “an extraordinary variety of over garments, tunics, mantles and jacket worn over the other as tangible signs of social rank and wealth,” and the turban worn over a skull cap was not religious symbol but also an indication of social class. The prophet himself never wore wool [to the Muslims the mark of poverty and asceticism]; he preferred bright colours and it is by no means certain that he insisted upon simplicity in dress. As far as comfort is concerned, there was a little to choose from between the tight-fitting stuffy clothes worn by Christians, and the heavy hand-woven gowns worn in profusion by Muslims.

In Lagos in particular, gifts of clothing, received from charitable individuals or organization were regularly distributed at Christmas to the boarders and day pupils of the female Institution. The missionary ladies were themselves competent dressmakers, and through their sewing class, they imported the knowledge of dressmaking without encouraging its creativity. In these ways, the missionaries help to advertise the wares imported by the traders.<sup>20</sup>

Islam had affected and indeed transformed many aspects of the life of Lagosians. It was common in Lagos to see men and women dresses in keeping with styles of their own Islamic associations. Some men put on the round caps and flowing dresses with the white cap to match. The Muslim women who belong to some associations cover their faces only, while some cover themselves from head toe. These show the Islamic cultural influence on the people.

### **Globalisation and the Media Culture**

The mass media as a member in definition has to do with very large and inclusive groups of the population and all of them together reach virtually all groups. If on any very broad front there is a great increase in popular attention to any aspect of life or increased activity in it, there is always some relation to the mass media. The mass media include a wide variety of forms, such as, the television, newspapers, films, magazines, radio, advertisements, and so on. These are referred to as mass media because they are used to reach the mass audience, audience which consists of very large numbers of people.<sup>21</sup> As a result of tremendous advancement in the

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<sup>20</sup> T. EUBA, *Dress and Status in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lagos*, in: A. ADEFUYE – B. AGIRI – J. OSUN-TOKUN (eds.), Lagos 1987, pp. 139–157.

<sup>21</sup> GIDDENS, pp. 33–35.

spread of the knowledge of information and communication technology, virtually every segment of society, including the press, has been impacted by these developments. Even though the knowledge spread slowly to, or was latently embraced in Nigeria, its effects have been enormous. Not only has it quickened information dissemination, it has also revolutionised the conduct, method and quality of media practices generally. This had a huge effect on the dress culture of the people.<sup>22</sup>

With regard to clothing and fashion, generally, it is the mass media that have brought an intensified awareness of the act of dressing, made it more generally available and usually done both and these are the minimum essentials of any widespread cultural activity: awareness and availability.<sup>23</sup> Also, due to the influence of media, there has been drastic changes on the way people dress and the style of clothes they wear, in as much as it matches with what is going on in the western world, even though it goes against the culture of the land, they don't want to care and the media has always been known as a contributing factor.<sup>24</sup> There has been consciously or unconsciously media imperialism perpetrated by the media networks of the advanced countries of the world.<sup>25</sup> Also the media played a role in the 'hijab' controversy, that by the end of the twenty-first century, it was clearer.<sup>26</sup>

The media through the television and radio brought awareness through different programmes on evolving clothing styles into millions of homes. The proliferation of standard television and radio stations with increase channels, and for radio, "FM" stations, all these factors have put fashion into the scene, and the fragmentation of the audience has made it possible for many of these channels to devote the major segments of their schedules to serious fashion and dress style. For instance, a postmodern reading of Soyinka's "Ake" reveals that the text contains echoes of globalisation. Some indicators of the new world order in the text include the references to a transistor radio and a gramophone, the soldiers and Hitler to produce echoes of the world wars, photography, and fashion designing, and so on. As shown therefore in the text, all of such represented the kind of life lived in "Ake" in as much as other places in Nigeria including Lagos.

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<sup>22</sup> NWEGBU – EZE – AZOGWA, pp. 1–10.

<sup>23</sup> F. STANTON, *Mass media and mass culture*. Great Issues Lecture at the Hopkins Centre, Dartmouth, 1962, pp. 1–46.

<sup>24</sup> OGOHI, p. 38.

<sup>25</sup> AGBU, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> DANMOLE, pp. 87–98.

And on the street were seen signposts bearing “London trained sewing mistress”, and other advertisement post. The “London trained” actually depicts the people’s love for exotic style.<sup>27</sup> The television made the public see and heard some fashion programmes, talks or concerts which could help them to know the type of style in vogue in other places and therefore changed their orientation. The television which brings British and especially American culture (through networks and programmes such as the BBC, MTV, etc.) into homes throughout the world daily, while adapting cultural products from the Netherlands, (such as Big Brother) or Sweden (such as Expedition: Robinson, which later became survivor) for the audience.<sup>28</sup>

Also, in newspapers and magazine, there are certain aspects in which people’s eyes are opened to see what is going on around the world, the kind of cloth for the young men and also the types for the women, creating and broadening public awareness of it. Millions of people became acquainted with new ideas in pages of magazines and newspapers, as it deals with current styles. Also, there was the increment in the fashion consciousness of the people through the magazines; evidence of this is seen in the West African Review Magazines up till the 1960s. There was always a space left out for reports on dress or clothing trends both for the male and the female youth. An example is the publication of August 1957, page 797, which described the way western guys are dressing, and how fast creeping they are in the fashion stakes. The aspect described the kind of cloths in vogue for the male, stating that the fashion-conscious man will have a waisted look. Putting on one or two-button jacket, with back slit, having narrow lapels, and the slim look which will be visible in his trousers (probably a slim fit trouser). It also described the types of colours for clothing, stating that blue and grey are the dominant colours for formal wear. A shepherd check in orange, brown and black was quite in eyeeful, and for the race goers a suit in lovat and red check tweed had its jacket intriguingly lined with a design of horse’s head accoutrements.

With these few descriptions and many others there is the evidence that this has contributed to the changing trends in dress style as the youth of Lagos prefer the western form of lifestyle to the local one, so they will

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<sup>27</sup> A. OGUNSIJI, Beyond memoir: echoes of globalization, identity, and gender struggle in Soyinka’s Ake: the years of childhood, in: A. G. ADEBAYO – O. C. ADESINA – R. O. OLANIYI, *Marginality and crisis globalization and identity in contemporary Africa*, Lanham 2010, pp. 81–88.

<sup>28</sup> GIDDENS, pp. 33–35.

want to dance to the tune of factors like the magazine, to keep them in informed.<sup>29</sup>

On the international scene, cloth appeals to people most especially youth who follow fashion trends set by those at home. Fashion designers as well as traders of fabrics have developed websites and contacts through which orders from abroad can easily be placed. Huge signposts with neon lights and billboards displaying young, attractive models wearing foreign attire, becomes a new way of advertising. Sometimes, well known personalities including home video stars, newscasters on national television in particular became a point of reference for fashion-conscious viewers, who not only tuned in for the news but also on the lookout for the kind and style of dress worn by the newscasters. A number of these newscasters were impeccably dressed in elaborate African-styled garments.

Also, with the introduction of certain soap operas and other television shows, old fashion styles were reinforced while new ones were introduced. Actors like “baba sala” parodied European clothing in the over dramatization of his garments, while the soap opera character chief Eleyinmi of village headmaster fame celebrated Yoruba indigenous dress. “Madam kofo” emerged as a fashionable woman in the 1980s drawing attention to her oversized headgear in the drama series entitled “second chance”. She carved a niche for herself in the world of fashion, transforming it into a brand in an advertorial for one of the leading telecommunication companies in Nigeria. “Madam kofo” sensational dress style broke out from the small screen and become part and parcel of fashion trends reinforced by musical offerings from the Lagos-based musician, Lagbaja. Billboards and magazines were awashed with photographs of “home video” stars and government officials, particularly the wives of the governors and presidents, ministers, high chiefs, and senators. These personalities help in furthering a diverse range of taste in both local and foreign clothes.<sup>30</sup>

### **Globalisation and the Internet Culture**

Globalization and the internet also allow cultural heritage of different tribes in Nigeria to be uploaded, downloaded, and accessed by other people in another side of the world thereby projecting the cultural identity of Nigeria. The internet certainly offers the greatest opportunities for

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<sup>29</sup> E. GWYNNE, Colour captures the male fashion market; reports on men’s clothing trends, in: *West African Review Magazine*, 1957, pp. 1–5.

<sup>30</sup> PLANKENSTEINER – ADEDIRAN, [np].

cultural exchange, causing more books, journal reference and paper-based information media and cultural artifacts to migrate to electronic format.<sup>31</sup>

The advent of ICT has forced libraries and librarians to operate with such concepts and phrases like information society, digitization, computer or information explosion, globalization, cyberspace, and information superhighway. These technologies have forced the developed world to operate in a context of change which automatically affects the ways our cultural heritage are documented, preserved and practiced. Information and communication technology is gradually spreading its influence on religious evangelism. This is in the areas and methods religious society globally use it for teaching, proselytizing and in belief systems. It is now possible for any religion to spread its faith beyond national borders, allowing even small religious movements to engage in overseas Proselytization activities.<sup>32</sup> It has brought the culture, folklore, and heritage of western countries into our doorsteps, reading tables, desktop or laptop with just a press of the computer keyboard or a click of mouse. Some important technological advances during the second half of the twentieth century have completely transformed the face of telecommunications. The numbers of people using the internet keep rising every day, and through the “cyberspace” on the internet, people interact. In the cyberspace, people are no longer “people”, but messages on one another screens, as new channels are being presented for communication and interaction.

Through the communication and interaction, people from Lagos meet with outsider even without knowing them, and they become friends and could start discussing the common trend in each of their locality. Through this, pictures are being uploaded and downloaded; seeing the kind or style of cloth of the other person, might trigger the former to adopt such style. In the process of interactions cultures are exchanged, and this has to do with traveling even while you are at home on your computer, you can be able to know what is happening all around the world, some youth goes to extent of browsing and even ordering for clothes online.<sup>33</sup>

As for education, the sphere of culture and popular education are also under pressure from globalisation, and these have implication on the people’s life, like their way of dressing and their local language,

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<sup>31</sup> NWEGBU – EZE – AZOGWA, pp. 1–10.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> GIDDENS, pp. 33–35.

consumption pattern among many others.<sup>34</sup> In addition, early converts and the ambitious children of the rich and the rulers, who travelled abroad for education in Europe, certainly came in contact with dresses or home textiles made of different fabrics like lace. To them these fabrics obviously appeared fashionable for use at home or as gifts for parents, family friends, relations, benefactors, suitors, and other loved ones, who in one way or the other have contributed towards their education. Thus, the groundwork was laid for these materials to be popular in Lagos and all-over other part of southern Nigeria.<sup>35</sup>

Also was the emergence of the “modern lady” which changed the thinking of the women on how to dress, this was because of their education and the rise in their level of sophistication. The influence of western civilisation since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made a visible impact on the way of life and transformed the social system. It was the era of ‘social emancipation for womanhood’, because it brought educational opportunities to the women which widen their scope of social activities including dressing, thus giving them a basis to make their contribution towards the progress of the nation. And so the ‘modern girl’ dresses gorgeously and decoratively to school and office, and with what she is putting on, she readily tells her boss that ‘abroad where she studied, freedom of movement and fashion is prevalent’.<sup>36</sup>

African countries import used clothes equal to a quarter of the region’s exports. Among suppliers, the United States is the most notable, shipping out some 50 million tons per year, followed by north-western Europe and Japan. Perhaps the most telling datum is this: in 1995, used clothes filled 16% of the containers leaving the United States for Africa, surpassing food, and machinery, while some of the returning ships came back empty. This is just to show the rate at which, foreign wears are taking place in exchange for the existing traditional wears, and in which these traditional wears were not exported but gradually putting an end to its existence. The flow of second-hand clothes could be seen as another instance of “globalisation/Westernisation”. When trying to discuss this issue of globalisation, some scholars have tended to describe this act, as the westerners trying to turn places where these clothes were taken to into dumping ground. In Lagos, there are much of used cloth sold as “bk” or “bend down select”

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<sup>34</sup> AGBU, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> PLANKENSTEINER – ADEDIRAN, [np].

<sup>36</sup> T. ORISARAYI, What it takes to be a modern lady, in: *Lagos Times*, May 21, 1970, p. 6.

and as a consolation, grading it, like saying some are not used at all, those are the first-grade cloth, and so on. Such scholars termed them as “rag trade” or into “industrial recycling”.<sup>37</sup> 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. Nigerian markets are increasingly bombarded with new clothes.<sup>38</sup>

### **Dress Style and Popular Culture**

Popular culture is referred to as the beliefs and practices, and the objects through which they are organised, which are widely shared among a population. This is the locally accepted belief by the socio-culturalist. Second it could also mean the folklore of industrial society, provided a catholic understanding of what counts as “industrial”, has been adopted. The two concepts encompass objects and practices rooted in both local traditions and large-scale commercial system; they include “elite” forms that have been popularised as well as popular forms that have been “sacralised”.<sup>39</sup>

Popular culture as it is discussed here includes both “folk” or “popular” beliefs, practices, and objects rooted in local traditions as well as “mass” beliefs, practices, and objects generated from political and commercial centres. When we open our closet doors each morning, we seldom consider what our sartorial choices say, whether we tend toward jeans and a well-worn concert T-shirt or wingtips and a three-piece suit. Yet, how we dress divulges more than whether we crave comfort or couture; our clothing communicates who we are and how we relate to our culture. But how does a Gucci bag or a tough leather jacket topped by Dolce and Gabbana signify these things? *Fashion and Popular Culture* considers this question. Combining fashion theory with approaches from literature, art, advertising, music, media studies, material studies, and sociology. Fashion, they show, has the capacity to both influence and be influenced by popular culture, and its meaning is also contingent upon context.

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<sup>37</sup> K. TRANBERGHANSEN, The world through secondhand clothes (Hansen’s Salaula) Salaula: the world of secondhand clothing and Zambia, in: *Current Anthropology*, 43, 5, 2002, pp. 822–823.

<sup>38</sup> NWEGBU – EZE – AZOGWA, pp. 1–10.

<sup>39</sup> L. GRINDSTAFF, Culture and popular culture: a case for sociology, in: *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 619, 2008, pp. 206–222.



Globalisation culminates in the growth of popular culture. In fact, some people believe that globalisation is also responsible for popular culture as it stood as a major influence on the popular culture of the people. For instance, the home videos, popular music and so on, have been influenced by foreign culture, and in which most of the actors and actresses wore foreign clothes, like putting on “top and skirt”, “shirt and trouser” combination in the foreign style. The youth, who are interested in watching movies, listening to music and the rest got influenced by these acts in films and other programs in the television.

The origins of Nigerian video film are usually traced to the Yoruba language travelling theatre tradition. Frequently described as “popular theatre” by reason of its audience and producers travelling theatre emerged among Yoruba-speaking communities in south-western Nigeria during the colonial period. Although the itinerant troupes often performed live, some groups were already exploiting the medium of television on a regular basis by the 1960s. The most popular troupe directors began film production for their stage works in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite the success of the early Yoruba films, Nigeria entered a period of significant economic decline at about the same time, making big-screen production unfeasible for many smaller troupes. Discouraged by the increasingly low financial returns on television production, they turned to video technology, and by the late 1980s, Yoruba video film had come into existence. Video film has become a significant cultural and commercial presence within contemporary Nigeria and in the Nigerian Diaspora abroad. Video films brings attention to all those involved in the production and those that featured in the film, including stars like Richard Mofe-Damijo, Liz Benson then, and now the likes of Ini Edo, Genevive, Funke Akindele, Odunlade Adekola, to mention a few. These people were seen as stars and celebrities who most youth in Lagos wants to attach themselves to and thereby chose them as their role model and start to do things most especially dressing the way they see these people dress. The youth believe that whatever these stars wear were the latest style in vogue all around the world. The film function as a conduit for advertising and the spread of modern clothing ideas because different kinds and style of clothes were featured in the film, then the youth get adapted to it.

Released in 1994, the film “Glamour Girls” set the tone for many future influences in dress style and in English. It is the story of five women, Doris, Thelma, Sandra, Jane, and Helen, all living in high style in Nigeria’s capital city, Lagos. The women were seen to appear at various times to have jobs

and businesses, relationships with wealthy men open the door to a level of almost unimaginable affluence. They were seen to be wearing designer clothes in a succession of lavishly furnished homes, driving expensive cars in upscale neighbourhoods. The point here is that these people wear designer clothes, these designer clothes were not locally made clothes, but modern dress in which the designer would either be from Europe or America. As the film is being watched, the youth try to look at the way fashion is being practiced and these designer clothes in order adopt it into their own style of clothing, just to appear current and “civilised”, as they would say.<sup>40</sup>

The popular culture of the normal traditional dress style of three to four pieces suit, but in which the local fabrics were used were affected and changed with the invention of foreign fabrics such as lace. Lace was adapted to suit traditional dress styles and events and was used in place of or to embellish other traditional popular forms of dress. Notably within Lagos territory and other Yoruba world, the traditional clothing of both men and women was increasingly fashioned out of the lace materials. The men’s *agbada* (gown), *buba* (traditional blouse,) *soro* or *sokoto* (trousers), originally made from other fabrics, were now made wholly in lace and all the embroidery was added in matching colours. Also, the women’s traditional of *iro* (wrapper), *buba* (blouse), *iborun* (an accompanying shawl), *gele* (head tie) were all made from lace materials.

The *aso-ebi* was a popular culture which was imbibed into the Lagos culture in the early twentieth century, and then henceforth became a view shared by the people of Lagos. It was a notable factor that promoted the widespread use of foreign fabrics, like the use of lace and lace materials in Nigeria, and especially among the Lagos people. This originally was interpreted by Lagosians to be a uniform mourning outfit which many people strove to have and wear as a mark of respect for the dead. But later on, it became a common cloth for relatives and friends. At social gatherings, for burials, naming ceremonies, coronations or installations, birthdays, or anniversaries and so on, friends, relatives, as well as members of social clubs or business associates all wear a common and uniform dress to celebrate and express their solidarity and group cohesion.

With the use of *aso-ebi* in vogue, the women who belong to an occupational or social club or a religious group will purchase the same cloth

<sup>40</sup> M. ADEJUMOBI, English and the audience of an African popular culture: the case of Nigerian video film, in: *Cultural Critique*, 50, 2002, pp. 74–103.

to make matching wrapper ensembles, of which the result is spectacular when you see a group of women sitting together or dancing through the streets in identical clothes, the practice ensures that wearers continually innovate new patterns, of which more money was expended on *aso-ebi* but rewarded in public praise. As lace became a popular cloth used for the *aso-ebi* phenomenon, there came competition among the regular users and marketers of the material, as everyone display their wealth through the use of special lace to mark their occasion.

The situation became outrageous when a notorious “armed robber” sentenced to death, requested one of the most expensive laces to be made into something for him to wear for his execution at the stake. His request was granted, but this became a contentious issue and a debate ensued in the daily newspapers on the morality of the act. A popular *juju* musician, Ebenezer Fabiyi popularly called “obey”, later composed a song about what happened, and this more or less immortalised the incident. The memory of such scenario remains till date as when the song was performed, the memory of the event re-echoes in the mind of those who were alive at the time and followed the event.<sup>41</sup>

Also, as for popular music, Yoruba popular musicians such as Ebenezer Obey, Sunny Ade, the late Ayinla Omowura, and the late Adeolu Akinsanya have used their music both as a conduit for their own conservatism as well as a means of consolidating the attitudes of the young ones toward dressing aside other attitudes. Most of the musicians employ the services of young women as dancers for their musical videos, and clothes were adopted to be worn as uniforms. Television fashion shows helped popularised the high volume of bouffant and glamorous fashion, with foreign music artist such as Brooke, Kelly Emberg, Micheal Jackson among many others. How to dress in the modern way and yet stay an Africa was a theme of a fashion show which closed a month-long series of lectures and discussions held in Paris in which was attended by many people from Lagos, and those who could not attend sat in their different houses and watched on their television. It was organised by the Association of Black African Cinema (ACNA) and the Union of African and Malagasy Women in Europe. In the show was discussed how to adopt the traditional style of clothes into the modern styles. Adapting traditional African dress to modern requirements, most of the creations were adaptations of traditional garments like the “grand bubu”, the “buba”/blouse and the “lappa”/

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<sup>41</sup> PLANKENSTEINER – ADEDIRAN, [np].

wrap-around skirt. Like the ‘grand boubou’ for instance, which originally uses 12 yards of more material, was changed into another style in which was often cut back to resemble a “poncho” and was either square or triangular in shape. This was a European style given to an African fabric.<sup>42</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion here is that in the emerging state of the world, with the introduction of certain concept as industrialisation, globalisation, popular cultures, trend setters, these have greatly contributed to drastic changes in every aspect of human life. The human life mention does not exclude clothing/dressing. That in fact, dress no longer only serves its purpose of covering people’s nakedness, it has gone beyond that with the invention of new ideas in sowing and production of clothes into different styles. It now has another major purpose which is fashion or for display in order that other people might admire their look or get carried away by their appearance. Hardly will you see a young girl or boy wearing cloth without the intension to impress people or to get along with what is in vogue. What is in vogue is always known with the help of contents brought in by globalisation, like the mass media, etc. with the new culture, at each point in time different styles and materials of cloth keeps evolving, and also ideas keep emerging for tailors, who are no longer even called “tailor” again, but “fashion designer”, this in part was as a result of the changing trends in clothing, through their sowing they bring out the best in people through what they wear. The reaction here is that the display of cloth styles has gone beyond the one people do in their room, church, community, but it has become an international thing, in which the practice of “fashion parade” has been introduced, to create an avenue for tailors to showcase what they are capable of doing.

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<sup>42</sup> Anon., Its homage to African fashion wise woman, in: *Lagos Times Newspaper*, June 21, 1970, p. 5.