

EXCHANGE OF TRIBAL ATTIRE AMONG NIGERIANS: A TOOL FOR ETHNIC COHESION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Nigerian civil war threw Nigeria into further disunity than was the situation before the crisis that led to the war. It is therefore necessary to garner measures that will stimulate ethnic cohesion in Nigeria today. This study proposes the integration of the exchange of indigenous garments of Nigeria's ethnic groups amongst ethnic groups into Nigeria's "National Friday Wear" programme. This is a situation, whereby, on every Friday, every Nigerian will dress to work in a Nigerian outfit that is not of his own ethnicity. For instance, the Hausa-Fulani people will dress in Igbo attire to their offices and terminate the dressing of themselves in Hausa-Fulani fashions. Likewise, the Igbo will dress in Hausa-Fulani gear to their places of work and discontinue kitting themselves in Igbo indigenous garment designs. The same becomes of Yoruba, Bini, Ijaw and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. This effort will encourage friendship amongst diverse ethnic groups. It will generate development in Nigeria's indigenous textile and fashion design industries and boost in the sales of her indigenous textile and fashion design products. The post-civil war resolution, reunion, reconstruction and restoration of marginalised ethnic groups in Nigeria stand to be achieved if the proposals made here are given a trial. Data that informed this paper were gathered from books, book chapters, magazines, journal articles, newspapers, the internet, oral interviews and observations of the researcher. The method of data interpretation adopted in this study is descriptive as qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis were engaged.

Keywords: Ethnic Cohesion, Indigenous Garments, Economic Development, Nigeria.

Introduction

British amalgamation of northern and southern parts of Nigeria in 1914 did not take into consideration the tribal differences amongst the over three hundred ethnic groups of Nigeria. There were and still are clothing, political, religious, language and other cultural differences amongst the diverse

ethnic groups that do not propel ethnic cohesion and economic development among the people. These cultural differences exacerbated disunity amongst the ethnic groups of Nigeria. The British colonial government did not prepare measures that would unite a culturally heterogeneous

people before and after the amalgamation of northern and southern parts of Nigeria. It thus can be deduced that the British colonial government did not care about the unity, peace and progress of the Nigeria she created (Harold Smith, 2020).

This study therefore seeks to propose and discuss a measure capable of uniting such heterogeneous people and thus, proffers that Nigerian ethnic groups should for a change, try out the practice of exchanging their indigenous garments through the already established Nigeria's "National Friday Wear" programme. The "National Friday Wear" programme was enacted by the government of Nigeria for Nigerians in January 2011 (Edegbai, 2013, p. 107). This is a situation, whereby, on every Friday, all Nigerians are to dress to work and to their various destinations in native garments (Edegbai, 2013, p. 107). This paper hereby proposes a further profound step to be taken

by civil servants, workers in all parastatals in Nigeria and all other Nigerians every Friday. The ethnicities in Nigeria, should on Fridays dress in outfits that are not of their own ethnic group. For instance, members of all the different ethnic groups in Nigeria should choose to wear or dress in the indigenous dress of a tribe different from their own tribe's native dress on Fridays. This exercise will thereby engage Nigerians in exchange for their tribal outfits. By so doing, qualitative local production of Nigerian indigenous garment designs will be realised. In addition, there will be an economic boost in the marketing of Nigeria's indigenous textile and fashion designs.

This mission and effort have the chance to breed exciting and happy relationships between the different ethnicities as they begin to appreciate and wear one another's apparel. Psychologically it will create warmth and acceptance in the hearts

and minds of people. By doing so, a physical cloak would have been established as a unifying factor among people. For instance, the uniforms worn by students, those of the police and the army, the identifying clothing of medical doctors which is of white colour and the black sartorial identity of lawyers have helped to unify and project the different bodies and professions. The professionals' cloaks have helped them achieve their objectives.

In the turn of this 21st century, political parties all over Nigeria at their political rallies have resorted to dressing in the uniforms locally known as *Asoebi* in Nigeria (Iweka, 2020, p.22). *Asoebi* has helped Nigerian political campaigns and other social groups achieve their objectives. Thus, physical cloak has proven to be agent of unification of societies and groups in Nigeria. This study foresees that the exchange of physical cloak by the different

ethnic groups of Nigeria will to a good extent instil friendship and unity amongst the diverse ethnic groups, which will subsequently lead to progress in Nigeria.

The following components were engaged sequentially to examine the exchange of tribal attires among Nigerians as a tool for ethnic cohesion and economic development. They are **1** statement of the problem **2** aims of the study **3** methodology **4** areas of disunity amongst Nigerians **5** rehabilitation and reconstruction **6** samples of some Nigerian indigenous garment designs for ethnic cohesion amongst Nigerians **7** recommendations and **8** conclusions.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970 threw Nigeria into further divisions and disunity than was the situation before the war and the crisis that led to the war. It is therefore necessary to garner measures that will stimulate ethnic cohesion

in Nigeria today. This study foresees a situation whereby, the exchange of physical cloak by the different ethnic groups of Nigeria will to a good extent instil friendship, unity and progress amongst the diverse ethnic groups of Nigeria. It thus, proposes the exchange of indigenous garments of Nigeria's ethnic groups amongst the ethnic groups. In addition, the Nigerian textile industry today requires measures that will build it and elevate it for economic boost in the local production and marketing of Nigeria's indigenous textile designs and fashion designs. Thus arises the call for exchange of tribal garment fashions by Nigerians for ethnic cohesion and economic development of the textiles and fashion design sectors of Nigeria.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to stimulate the realisation of qualitative development in the local production of Nigeria's indigenous

textile and fashion designs. The study also intends to stimulate to fruition, economic boost in the marketing of Nigeria's indigenous textile and fashion designs.

It is the purpose of this study to establish that the exchange of Nigerian indigenous garment designs by the diverse ethnic groups of Nigeria will foster ethnic cohesion amongst the diverse ethnic groups of Nigerians. Nigerians will appreciate the dressing of other cultural groups. This will boost tourism.

This study wants to break the strength of acculturation on the eroding of Nigerian indigenous textile and fashion designs.

Methodology

Qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis were engaged in this study. The method of data interpretation adopted was more or less descriptive. Data that informed this paper were gathered from books, journal articles, newspapers, the

internet, oral interviews and observations by the researcher. The study engaged narrative, historical and formal approaches in data presentation and analysis.

AREAS OF DISUNITY AMONGST

NIGERIANS: The areas of disunity amongst Nigerians can be grouped into political differences and religious differences

A. Political Differences

The different political systems of the different ethnic groups of Nigeria have values and customs that generate contradictions between the different ethnic groups. For instance, the Indigenous political system of the Igbo allows opinions from men and women who constitute stakeholders in the leadership of the Igbo people. Igbo traditional leadership consists of men and women participatory in decision-making in the Igbo society while the case is the reverse amongst the Hausa-Fulani and some other cultural groups in the country. The Hausa

decisions are taken by their men folks and chiefs/Emirs. They submit implicitly to the decisions of their Emirs without asking questions. Though the level of submission of the Yoruba group to their indigenous rulers is not as severe as that of the Hausa-Fulani people, the Yoruba political system is however similar to that of the Hausa-Fulani ethnicity. These differences in the political systems and methods of the different ethnicities are critical issues that encourage the filling of political differences among the people.

B. Religious Differences

The western region of Nigeria inhabited largely by the Yoruba ethnic group was the first people in Nigeria to come in contact with the Christian religion which brought along with it Western education and other Western cultures. The Christian religion is more flexible than the Islamic religion. For instance, in the clothing culture,

the Muslim group forbid their women to be seen outside their homes without covering their faces, necks, legs and bodies. Whereas Christian women are free to move about without their faces necks and legs covered. The Islamic religion encompassed the northern parts of Nigeria which is largely of the Hausa-Fulani ethnicity. A sect in the Islamic group known as Boko Haram believes that Western education is a sin (Nwigwe 2018, p. 4). They therefore forbid Western or European education whereas the Christian religion is a proponent of Western education. The identified Islamic group view Western education as sacrilegious whereas practically, the whole of the Igbo, Yoruba and some other groups of Nigeria embraced Western education implicitly. They also embraced some other Western cultures as well. Another area of religious differences is the fact that the Christian religion forbids polygamy but the Islamic religion of the Hausa-Fulani groups encourages polygamy.

These differences and more are factors that could bond or dis-unite nations.

Rehabilitation and Reconstruction

Fifty-four years after the civil war, it still stands glaring that the ethnic groups of Nigeria do not trust one another and this lack of faith in one another has been hindering rehabilitation, reconstruction and progress in Nigeria after the civil war. This study thus proposes the integration of the exchange of indigenous garments of the ethnic groups by the ethnic groups into Nigeria's "National Friday Wear" Programme in the hunt for some level of faith, oneness and progress amongst the ethnic groups of Nigeria.

Since the end of the war, reconstruction of Nigeria has been aided by the money realised from the sale of crude oil but religious differences and other ethnic differences have strongly featured in the governance of Nigeria thereby hindering rehabilitation of war-torn people and

reconstruction of the nation. They have hampered the peace and progress of Nigeria.

War produces damage to cherished properties and the death of cherished people. Many people who escaped death during the Nigerian civil war were left damaged in their bodies and some in their minds. Families were torn apart. Many casualties of the war have not been recovered. This necessitates the call for reunion, rehabilitation, reconstruction and restoration of marginalised ethnic groups in Nigeria. This paper hopes that the exchange of tribal garment fashions by Nigerians will summon ethnic cohesion among the diverse ethnicities of Nigeria.

Indigenous wears worn every Friday of the week by indigenes of Anambra State was in the 1980s, introduced by Air Commodore Samson Emeka Omerua, the then governor of Anambra State. In 2011, “National Friday Wear Programme” was

established by the federal government of Nigeria. In the words of Edegbai (2013, pp. 108 and 110)

National Friday Wear Programme was launched by the government of Nigeria on Thursday 10th January 2011, in Abuja. Under the programme, Nigerians especially workers at every level; local, state, federal and private are to wear clothing made from locally produced fabrics on Fridays irrespective of their kind of job.....National Friday Wear goes a long way to promote unity and progress and revive and sustain African textiles and textile industries.

Therefore, since “National Friday Wear” goes a long way to promote unity and progress according to Edegbai (2013, pp. 108 and 110), it thus can be inferred that the exchange of tribal attires among Nigerians is a ready tool for ethnic cohesion and economic development

SAMPLES OF SOME NIGERIAN INDIGENOUS GARMENT DESIGNS FOR ETHNIC COHESION AMONG NIGERIANS

Some Nigerian indigenous garments are exhibited here in Figures 1 to 5. In addition to other Nigerian indigenous garment designs, the garments sampled here can be exchanged by the different ethnic groups of Nigeria in order to foster ethnic cohesion amongst the different ethnic groups. Figure 1 is an illustration of two indigenous attires of Igbo men. They are caftan shirts worn over Igbo designs of waist wrappers. The wrapper designs are of Nigerian prints. The images are illustrations of Lyndersay (2011). Currently, Igbo men are seen more in loosely fitted long skirts with caftan tops.

Figure 2 showcases an illustration of Yoruba men's traditional garments and hat. The cap is locally called *Ikori*. The garments are flared caftan made of *Aso-oke* Yoruba weaves and embroidery. They are locally called *Gbariye-Dangodo*. Figure 3 displays

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some Fulani men's traditional attires of Fulani designs of caftans and Fulani brief trousers.

Itsekiri men's indigenous attires include Itsekiri designs of caftan, waist wrappers, hats that are similar to straw hats and strings of Itsekiri designs of necklaces. They are exhibited in figure 4. Figure 5 displays Tiv men's traditional attire which comprises of Tiv woven fabric worn as a wrapper wrapped over a caftan top. The wrapper is designed in equally spaced lines woven in black/blue and white stripes. The design is locally known as *anger*. Tiv men also wear the headgear known as *idyer* and flat footwear *akou* of figure-eight shape (Lyndersay, 2011, p. 395).



Figure 1: Some Igbo men's traditional attires.
© Lyndersay. 2011, p. 410.



Figure 3: Some Fulani men's traditional attires.
© Eve de Negri. 1976, p. 97.

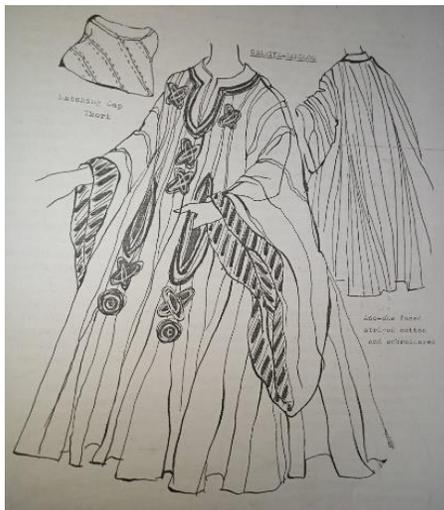


Figure 2: Some Yoruba men's traditional attires.
© Eve de Negri. 1976, p. 77.



Figure 4: Some Itsekiri men's traditional attires.
© Eve de Negri. 1976, p. 105.



Figure 5: Tiv men's traditional attire. © Lyndersay. 2011, p. 398.

Recommendations

Certainly, the massacre of the different politicians of the different ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria and the pogrom (which ultimately led to the civil war) embittered the different ethnic groups so much that “trust” was killed in Nigeria. For trust, Nigerians foster unity, peace and progress to commence in Nigeria, this study

recommends that the bitterness be buried and measures that will establish ethnic cohesion in Nigeria. Thus in the quest to bring unity and love amongst the ethnic groups of Nigeria, the paper recommends the exchange of indigenous garments of Nigeria's ethnic groups amongst the ethnic groups. This step will bring the different ethnic groups to reach out to one another to obtain one another's garment designs and in the process; harmony will be harnessed amongst the different ethnic groups of Nigeria. Boost in the marketing and sales of Nigerian indigenous attires will be realised.

This study acknowledged the fact that Nigeria is a country with many ethnicities, as such there is the tendency to place pre-eminence on one ethnic group over others. The paper thus recommends the creation of a Nigerian system that stimulates talent-imbued government open to every citizen of Nigeria devoid of ethnic biases.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the impact of the British amalgamation of northern and southern parts of Nigeria in 1914. It illuminated on the lack of British preparation of measures to unite a culturally heterogeneous people before and after the amalgamation. The study proposed and discussed a measure capable of uniting such heterogeneous people. It suggested that Nigerian ethnic groups should for a change engage in an exchange of their indigenous garment designs through the already established Nigeria's "National Friday Wear" programme. This is a situation whereby the diverse ethnic groups of Nigeria will engage in wearing garment designs of other ethnic groups in Nigeria instead of just

their ethnic group garment designs. The study discussed factors that foster disunity amongst Nigerians. These factors include political differences, religious differences and the filling of the primacy of one ethnic group over others. To avoid these, the paper calls for the exchange of their indigenous garment designs in the quest to achieve some level of oneness and progress in the country. This study illuminated some samples of Nigerian indigenous garments as a vehicle capable of fostering ethnic cohesion amongst Nigerians. It concluded that an economic boost in the marketing and sales of Nigerian Indigenous attires would be realised if the proposal this study proffers is welcomed and administered by policymakers.

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