

TRADITIONAL CLOTH WEAVING INDUSTRY, CATALYST FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE

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Abstract

One aspect of the material culture of the people of Ilorin and the Southwest which has survived centuries of foreign domination against all odds is the traditional hand woven cloth called Aso-oke (Ofi). This industry, which is a product of the twin gem of human ingenuity and imagination, is still very much regarded as a distinctive cultural heritage till today. Traditional cloth weaving has continued to increase considerably. In spite of all odds, which are but not limited to government insensitivities, cheap political money and sharp decline in the demand in preference for western dominance. Against this backdrop, this paper is concerned with x-raying the significant factors responsible for it collapsed and its sudden resurgence, the paper then intends to encourage government participation through technological driven measure for national growth. This study deployed case study on the collapsed of the traditional cloth weaving in Ilorin, data was collected through questionnaire administration, and significantly administered among the sizeable active numbers of 170 respondents. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through test-retest

Keywords: cloth weaving, Youth, Ilorin, collapse, Traditional

Introduction

Throughout the ages, cloth has always been used as protective material for the body. Cloth covers up our skin from direct effect of the sun. It also protects our body from the danger of bites. Incidental cuts, scratches and bruises which could result from contact with animate and inanimate objects. Besides the value of cloth as wearing apparel and soft-goods. Cloth also reflects the identity and status of men and women all over the world. Nweke (1987) remarks, for instance. That the way a Nigerian woman arranges her head-tie or ties her wrappers.

Summarily highlights the social chasm between a groundnut hawker and a lawyer. While clothes can indicate who you are. They also reveal what you think and believe in. It is possible, for instance to make distinctions between a Reverend Father and Ulama (a learned Muslim Scholar) through the way they dress. What is more, the various cults of traditional worship such as Sango (god of thunder), Ogwz (god of iron), Egungun (masquerade), etc. have different modes of dressing which distinguish their worshippers from one another.

Traditional cloth weaving is a superb textile material hand-woven on simple looms, woven in intricately beautiful patterns made from dyed strands of fabric that are woven into strips of cloth,

Aso-Oke are of different kinds namely Alaari, Sanyan and Etu, among others. It takes time to weave Aso-Oke fabric because of the delicate pattern it is often made. It can also be made with a silk fabric which enhances the colours and the material.

In those good old days, complete women attire consisted of Iro (wrapper), Buba (blouse), gele (head-tie), shawl (ipele), Iborun or buba which is usually hung on the shoulder of the user. Yoruba men, on the other hand, used to wear a complete dress consisting of sokoto (trousers), buba (top), agbada (large embroidered flowing gown) and fila abeti aja (dog ear's cap)

In spite of the influx of foreign fabrics like Ankara, lace and damasks into the country, Aso-oke still remains the most revered traditional cloth in Yorubaland and even beyond. It is an all seasons' attire for all occasions, which comes in different shades and colours. In the ancient time, it was the most preferred attire for wedding, burial ceremony, naming, chieftaincy and coronation, among others.

The weaving industry represents one of the most vibrant and important industries in pre-colonial Nigeria, considerable numbers of women folk were not left out. It is also obvious that one of the notable industrial engagements characteristic of pre-colonial Yoruba economy was weaving. It was an industry that engaged the services of the diverse population in such aspects as cotton picking, processing, spinning and ginning etc in pre-colonial Ilorin.

Weaving was a major occupation in Ilorin as was the case with most of the settlements throughout Yorubaland before British conquest. As Olaoye (1996) suggests, the weaving industry provided employment opportunities and means of livelihood for a large proportion of the population in different wards of Ilorin. It also stood as one of the most important and flourishing indigenous industries in pre-colonial Ilorin. The Ilorin weaving industry is also widely believed to be one of the most ancient indigenous industrial establishments in the region. The practice of weaving seemed to be as ancient as Ilorin settlement itself. As a region where cotton was produced in substantial quantity (Clarke, 1972), cloth weaving was an important economic venture or industry with readily available raw materials.

According to Clarke (1972), the good quality production standard which the industry commanded at that period made the products of Ilorin weavers to flood major markets in different parts of the Yoruba country. This help to explain that the import of the Ilorin weaving industry stems from the fact that the products of the industry had continued to be of relevance to the economy as the industry had always attracted patronage during and after colonial rule.

The craft industry was also an important industry which contributed to the process of economic growth in pre-colonial Ilorin. It was indeed an industry that engaged both youth and adult population in Yorubaland during the pre-colonial period. In the traditional Yoruba society, it was a source of pride for anyone to acquire the potential in one form of craft or the other (Biobaku, 1973). Although the men folk dominated the industry, the women were also quite relevant.

In this regard clothes are lifelong affairs and indeed command high demand, and equally a means of livelihood with increasing opportunities. Sequel to it collapsed; there were youth restiveness, redundancy and wide unemployment rate in Ilorin with an attendant social unrest. This research tends to focus on it significant to national planning its reemergence.

The Study Area

Ilorin is located on Latitude 8° – 10° North and Longitude 4° – 5° east. It is about 300 kilometer from Lagos, the former Nigerian Capital city and the economic hub of the country. (GCA Travel 1994). It is also the last emirate to the south of Northern Nigeria, where the success of the 19

Century Jihad, led by Shehu Uthman Danfodio, had evolved an emirate political system that covers major parts of the present day Northern Nigeria. Being a frontier that is dominated by the Southwestern Nigerian culture of the Yoruba, its sustenance of the emirate political structure keep alive, its historical relations with the northern Nigeria that is dominated by Hausa/Fulani groups. (Danmole, 1980) The climate of Ilorin is shared between two season, winter and summer. Seasons are defined as the wet season, from April to October, and the dry season, from November to March. The dry season witnesses the prevailing influences of the dry and dusty northeast winds.

The wet season is particularly noticeable on the south-eastern coast, where annual rainfall reaches about 130 inches. The population of Ilorin Community is mixed. It thus explains why it is earlier described as a melting pot for many Nigerian linguistic groups. In Ilorin, there are Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Kanuri, and the Gobawas. It is these and other cultural groups that make up the population of Ilorin now estimated at 949,866. (UN World Urbanization Prospect 2019).

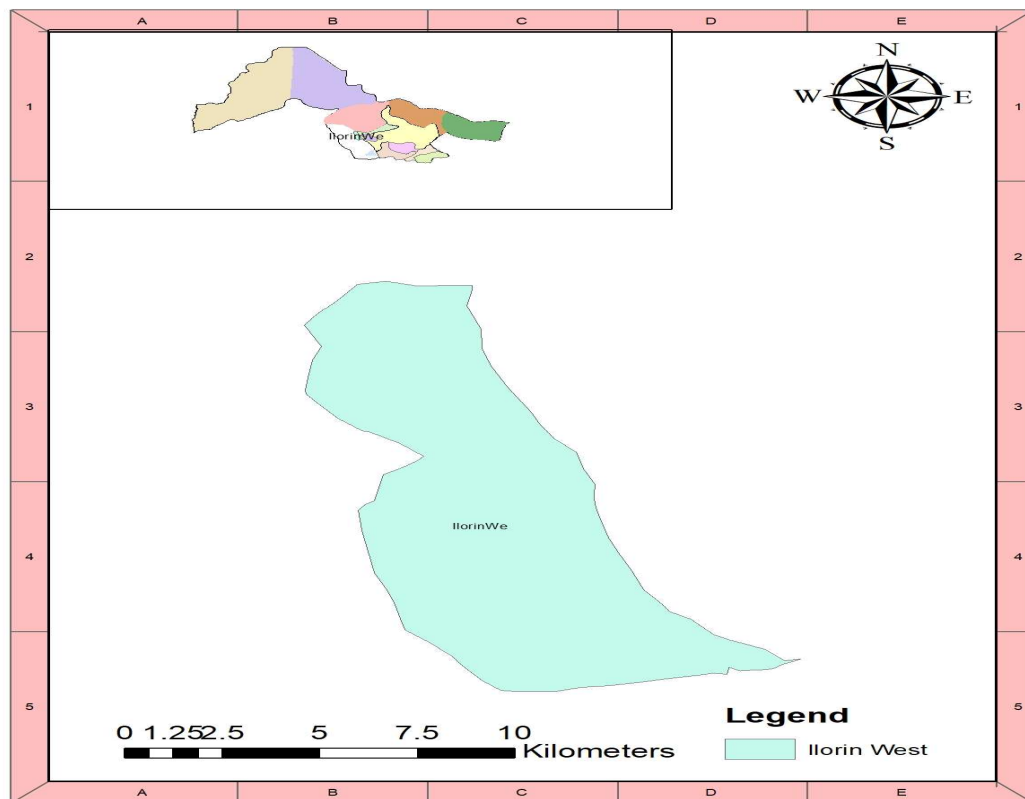


Figure 1: Study Area

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to address youth restiveness through value added to indigenous heritage and other specific objectives are: Periscope the sudden demise of the industries, establishing avenues open to the modernization through an innovative technology and to evaluate government effort.

The Evolution of Traditional Cloth Weaving

The origin of the Traditional Cloth Weaving in Ilorin and most importantly West Africa is unknown but it may have come from Asia through Arabia (Gilroy, 1987). This view corroborates the submission of Dodwell (1955) that although the origin of weaving among the people of southwestern Nigeria is obscure it is thought to have been brought down along the trans caravan routes from the north. The chief feature of the Yoruba weaving is the narrowness of the cloth made on the loom which is usually in strips (Lamb and Lamb, 1973; Ojo, 1966).

The traditional strip looms were constructed in a house manner (rectangular form) with an open end. It was built with mud and bamboo sticks (Fadipe, 1970). Apart from the loom, instruments used in (traditional) weaving industry includes; yarn pegs (*Odaada*), shuttle (*oko*), pattern divider (*Ooya*), thread sorting equipment (*Akata*), *Kokogun*, Heddle (*Omu*), *Agbonrin*, weighted sledge (*Okuku*) and *Sanrin* (long iron for warping process). Consensus exists among scholars that the instruments used in the (traditional) weaving and production process were made, mainly, from iron, wood, bamboo, raffia palm and calabash and these instruments were sourced from the local environment and were mostly fabricated by carpenters, blacksmith and forebears of the industry themselves -master weavers for instance-(Lamb and Lamb; Ojo, 1966; Dodwell, 1955; Wilkes, 1946).

The colonial policy made various attempts at the 'popularisation, perhaps 'modernising' the loom. In this connection, broad loom and the establishment of Textile Training Centres as part of the Textile Development Scheme (Renne, 1997) where training on broad loom was organized for the young ones and ex-service men but it was largely unsuccessful due to the lack of proper understanding of the associated sociocultural factors (Renne, 1997; Southern 1946). On the modifications that have come to the instruments of weaving, it was largely expressed by interviewees and participants at the FGD sessions that modifications mainly came to two implements; *Ofi* (loom) and the *asa* (reed). It was discovered in the course of investigation that the loom (weaving shed) as referred to by some respondents is now moveable unlike the fixed olden days built in form of a house. Also, it was found that in the old loom (traditional); the loom was made to accommodate an average of fifteen to thirty weavers while in the present horizontal loom (modern) weavers weave alone in the single movable loom.

Weaving of local fabric otherwise known as "Aso-Oke" is an occupation known with some cities across the country including Ilorin. Specifically, weaving of local textile is very popular among Yoruba- and Igbo-speaking people. With locally-made weaving tools, there was a rhythmic twisting of legs and movement of hands. They wove with rapidity, creating a delightful spectacle for the crowd.

Like any other community with a distinct culture and tradition, Ilorin, the state capital, is also a city with a difference. However, the uniqueness of the culture of Ilorin is seen in its economic hub. Ilorin is popular with some vocational skills, which in the olden days were used to measure economic advancement and development. The concept of naming houses in the city was derived from the type of occupation or vocation the people living in those houses did. For instance, compounds like Ile-Onimago, Onikijapa, Onidilali, Asileke and Alaro among others, historically got those names from what their progenitors preoccupied themselves with.

Challenges

Economic activities in the buying and selling of clothes were known for ages to be a good source of wealth. In Ilorin, for instance, the traditional weaving industry was observed to have boosted tremendously the nineteenth century economy of the city (Oiaoye. 1987). Thus it can be seen that

the thousands of years of culture and history, rich in the artistry and craftsmanship of clothes have influenced virtually all facets of human life.

Apart from declining patronage, high cost of materials and unhealthy competition with foreign textile, one other major challenge confronting the industry is lack of access to loan. The inability of the people in the industry to access either commercial bank loan or direct government's assistance is partly blamed on lack of credible association. Bank of Industry (BOI), is open to all, but collateral to guarantee repayment is often difficult

From the preceding views, it is clear that today the process of traditional weaving in Ilorin, as in fact in other communities in Nigeria, is still rather tedious requiring almost an incessant use of the legs to press the treadles and the hands to arrange the thread and give patterns to the piece. Despite the advantage of machine-spun yarns in saving time and labour particularly in ginning, fluting and spinning, the technology of production in all the facets of the industry is still very backward. Thus the general poor condition of the traditional weaving calls for the need to develop and modernize it

As the world races towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), even though global political economy suggests optimism (developments, 2008), poverty is still a reality in Nigeria and does not show any sign of abating as it stands above 70 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006; Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2007), unemployment is increasing (11.9 percent at present [National Bureau of Statistics, 2006]) while the aged, for example, who are the masters in traditional industry operations are being challenged by social change amongst other critical issues too numerous to mention.

As a result of Nigerians' insatiable appetite for foreign products including attires, the demand for Aso-Oke soon nose-dived. Those inherited the occupation abandoned the job for less profitable ones while a few of the educated ones looked for elusive white collar jobs. Despite its threat of extinction of the Aso-Oke fabric, recent revelations in both content and character signify the strength of traditional cloth weaving to address generational challenges in Ilorin and Nigeria at large for national development. (Daily Trust, 7 June, 2015).

Enhancement of the Traditional Clothes

The range of products in the industry and the modern innovative ideas observed are evident in the *aso-oke* industry bear witness to the potentials of satisfying local demands and export markets. One is bound to be amazed at the level of sophistication in terms of contemporary designs while still retaining its original postures.

This reflects the potentials of environmental conditioning and ecological dependence of the textile industry. Thus, with the necessary technology transfer, if well annexed the idea of sustainable development and the vision of Nigeria been among the top 20 economy by the year 2020 (vision 2020 of the Federal Government of Nigeria) may be truly achievable. But government on its part should look inward and come up with a policy that will build o textile industries. At present, government is not encouraging. There is a consensus among the stakeholders that government's nonchalant attitude is impacting negatively on the industry. (Punch, Nov. 24, 2018). There is, therefore, an urgent need for a change to save the industry from collapsing and worsening the mass unemployment scourge in Ilorin and the country at large.

Procedure for Data Collection

This study employed case study, based on the observation and trending issues. Five sizeable numbers of data were collected through cluster sampling techniques. Data on the benefit of cloth

weaving to the inhabitants causes of the collapse, the implication on the study area, data on government social responsibility and on the focuses for improvement.

This were collected through questionnaire administration, and significantly administered among the sizeable active numbers of 200 respondents, with a recovery rate of about 175. Inferential statistical analysis of Chi Square Test was used to analyze the data collected. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through comparison of two independent variable of whether or not there is significant difference between the hypotheses formulated, H_0 Null Hypothesis and H_a Alternative Hypothesis.

Hypotheses: The following hypotheses are formulated to guide the study.

- i. There is no significant difference in traditional cloth weaving and government support for greater outputs
- ii. There is no significant difference in the adequate production and local patronages for effective performance of the industry to avoid further decline
- iii. There is no significant difference in the supply of manpower and the industry for better performance in production of traditional cloth weaving

Table 1: Chi Square analysis showing there is no significant difference in the traditional cloth weaving and government support for greater outputs

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.000 ^a	36	.297
Likelihood Ratio	27.726	36	.837
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.884	1	.009
N of Valid Cases	8		

a. 49 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .13.

The result of the table 1 indicated that the calculated P values of (0.297) > 0.05), under asymp. Sig is greater than $\alpha=0.05$ i.e. level of significance; hence we cannot reject H_0 (null hypothesis, which implies no association between government support and output in production.

It signifies that the hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in traditional cloth weaving and government support for greater outputs is therefore accepted. This implies that when the traditional cloth weaving is highly supported by the government it will stimulate cloth weaver's output performances, but in essence, it is sufficient to conclude that the traditional cloth weaving are not gives the desired support it required to function optimally

Table 2: Chi Square analysis showing there is no significant difference in the adequate production and local patronages for effective performance of the industry to avoid further decline

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	54.000 ^a	49	.289
Likelihood Ratio	34.005	49	.949
N of Valid Cases	9		

a. 64 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.

The result of the table 2 indicated that the calculated P values ($0.289 > 0.05$) under asymp. Sig is greater than $\alpha=0.05$ i.e. level of significance; hence we cannot reject H_0 (null hypothesis, which implies no association between production and local patronages for effective performance of the industry to avoid further decline in weaving industry for better production is therefore accepted

This implies that the desire for foreign appetite is on the increase over local clothes patronage and this to a greater extent will result to decline in the youth participation in the indigenous textile industries and continuous rise in unemployment rate in the state and Nigeria by extension when the traditional cloth weaving is highly patronize by the government, corporate and individuals it will stimulate employment generation performances, but in essence , it is sufficient to conclude that the traditional cloth weaving are not given the desired patronage it required to function optimally.

Table 3: Chi Square analysis showing there is no significant difference in the supply of manpower and the industry for better performance in production of traditional cloth weaving

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	63.000 ^a	49	.086
Likelihood Ratio	36.777	49	.901
N of Valid Cases	9		

a. 64 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.

The table 3 above shows that the calculated P values of ($0.086 > 0.05$), under asymp. Sig is greater than $\alpha=0.05$ i.e. level of significance; hence we cannot reject H_0 (null hypothesis, which implies no association between manpower and the industry for better performance in production of traditional cloth weaving in Ilorin to facilitate better production.

It signifies that the hypothesis that stated that there is no significant between manpower and the industry for better performance in production of traditional cloth weaving in Ilorin to facilitate better production is therefore accepted.

Suffice to say youth still centered their mind on the already over saturated white cola jobs and there must be a concerted effort by the Kwara state government to modernize the industry, partner with technologically advanced nation to improve the techniques to be in conformity with global challenges and acceptability.

Result and Discursion

This research was carried out in Ilorin west, the Kwara state capital to examine the critical roles traditional cloth weaving can play for national growth, the result of the first analysis revealed that for any significant improvement in traditional cloth weaving among the youth it has to be significantly supported by government policy, this call for modernization of traditional crafts as a means of developing indigenous technology in Ilorin and Nigeria. There are avenues open to the modernization of the traditional cloth weaving in general. Onimode (1984) has noted that much of Nigeria's indigenous artisan technology has atrophied through disdain and lack of patronage and improvements. It is clear that the first step towards the modernization of the cloth weaving is to evolve a concrete policy of developing them.

The indices from table two shows that there is no significant difference in the adequate production and local patronages for effective performance of the industry to avoid further decline in the performance of cloth weaving industry in Ilorin among the youth in the industry. The higher the patronage the higher the production and vice-versa. Globalization can be both stimulating and challenging to a domestic industry (Porter, 1990). Industries can increase their market by exporting goods as well as boost efficiency by outsourcing parts of their operations to other countries (Porter, 1990). Conversely, imported products might cause industries to lose a substantial portion of the domestic market and/or downsize due to relocation of their production to other countries, and, in extreme cases, fail, because of competition (Krugman & Obstfeld, 1999; Porter, 1990). In essence domestic cloth weaving must be improved and open to greater competitiveness.

Table 3: revealed that there is no significant difference in the supply of manpower and the industry for better performance in production of traditional cloth weaving, in essence greater employment in the industry regardless of its expansion, labour is in abundance, hence possibility of reducing youth restiveness. Development according to Alvin (1991) is governed by many factors that influence the result of developmental efforts. He states further that there must be a strong driving motive and essential conditions for that change to occur. Development - capital, technology, and supporting infrastructure - to achieve targeted change. In response to the above; one needs to ask and provide answers to the following questions; does Nigeria have resources (human and material), capital, technology and supporting infrastructure? How has it been able to harness the resources, has Nigeria been able to develop her indigenous technology? Looking at the current social and economic situation in Nigeria, one will readily agree that Nigeria is endowed bountifully with materials (human and materials), and technology but failed to organize them for her development. Adam (1995) refers to development as a social condition within a nation, in which the authentic needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems. This utilization of natural resources is based on a technology, which respects the cultural features of the population of a given country.

Conclusion

In this twenty first century, most of these cultural heritages if developed into extensive industries can generate wide varieties of occupation and the scourge of social unrest arising from youth restiveness will be a matter of the past within the context of modernization and general conditions of its practitioners, and to keep pace with the technologically advanced and global competitiveness.

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