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GLOBAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN NIGERIA

STANISLAUS IYORZA (Ph.D)

Department of Theatre and Media Studies
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria
And

LAWRENCE EKWOK

Department of Theatre and Media Studies
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study examines measures employed by global media as they aid cultural hybridization in the 21st century Nigeria. This paper contends that cultural hybridization is an emerging trend which occurs as a result of the romance between two cultures through transnational media communication technologies. This paper also contends that cultural hybridization - the breeding of newer cultures – has occurred in Nigeria with the aid of transnational communications through the global mass media, including satellite and cable television. All these are viewed in this work as developments made possible in the era of postmodernism and globalization. The study also articulates the implications of cultural interaction between Nigerian cultures and foreign cultures and attempts a way forward for stability in the wake of cultural hybridization in the 21st century Nigeria.

Key words:

Transnational Media Technologies, Cultural Hybridization, Particularism and Universalism.

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1.0 Introduction

The 21st century (2000 till date) in Nigeria is a period that is already experiencing the unavoidable opportunities offered by postmodernism – a period of developments after modernism. The postmodern era has already ushered in constructive thinkings and applications in all fields of study including philosophy, Architecture, Information Technology, Religion and the Arts in general. Developmental efforts are worst hit in the 21st century Nigeria due to the implications of post modernism.

One of the strongest implications of post modernism is cultural hybridization. In this study, cultural hybridization is viewed as an off-shoot of enculturation and acculturation-situations where a people are imposed with a culture and where people adopt foreign cultures. A cultural hybrid is therefore a species of culture that comprises a mixture of foreign and original culture of a society. It is an embodiment of an emerging culture where a people do not completely abandon their main cultural practices in the wake of encroaching foreign cultures, but adopt the most valuable, cherished and unavoidable elements of their original and inherited cultural practices as they adopt other foreign cultural elements of their choice.

In Nigeria, cultural hybridization in the 21st century is evident in the practices of various Nigerian cultures alongside foreign cultures made possible by engines of globalization such as the computer/internet communication, satellite and cable television programmes and general global marketing. Global information transmission, through news and advertising programmes, as well as advertising, seems to be favourable to the developed nations whose activities in the industrial and economic sectors have experienced a progressive boost that is almost relegating the third world economies to a peripheral position on the world economic ladder. For example, the evolving concept of “cultural commodification” is a justification that foreign nations in Europe and America, including some in Asia, transmit their transnational adverts, dramas and other programmes like news and sports alongside cultural ingredients of the people from the originating countries. Thus, Nigeria as a nation, with other African countries, appears to exist without a definite culture in broadcasting because the formats for news programming in our local news on radio and television, including formats for plays or adverts are all adaptations from dominant cultures, specifically from Europe and America.

Consequently, Nigerians have no choice than to become copy cats in the 21st century. The fashion in terms of clothing, buildings in terms of style of houses, style of politics, dramatic ideologies, communication strategies and general behavioural standards including consumption patterns are in Nigeria today are tailored after the trends obtainable in the developed nations. However, Nigerians cannot let go their cultures. They still value their cultural practices and they display them in form of traditional dances like the “Monikim” in Cross River State, “Swange” in Benue State and the war dance in the Eastern part of Nigeria.

Today, cultural practices peculiar to Nigerian ethnic groups are organized and displayed in different parts of country and in diaspora. The “Ekpe” culture is displayed in Cross River State and other places in Cuba and Brazil. Away from dance, the cuisines of most ethnic groups in Nigeria are still cherished by them. “Garri”, “Afang”, “Ewedu”, “Abacha,” “Cybodi” “fufu” and “Amala” are examples of cultural values of Nigerians. The various

ethnic groups like the Ibos, the Yorubas, and the Hausas; the Biroms, the Igbiras, the Igalas, the Tivs and the Idomas among many others have traditional wears that are peculiar to their cultures. They cherish them and wear them during special occasions. Cultural festivals are organized by different ethnic groups at different periods as an honour to members of the cultural group.

The cultural dilemma experienced by Nigeria in the 21st century stems from the marriage of different cultures in the post modern era, which has gradually evolved a new set of cultures, a new set of behavioural patterns and a new set of consumption patterns among in Nigeria. The thrust of this paper is to assess the media technology operations that pave way for cultural hybridization in Nigeria and to suggest a way out of this saga for Nigeria.

2.0 Global Media Operations in Nigeria

Global media transmit news, market information or adverts and/or entertainment in forms of drama, music and sports to audience around the world. Global media are international radio and television stations and newspapers, including the internet, which transmit foreign information around the globe. They are mostly operational in Europe and America where they evolve programs and transmit them to countries that hardly have such sophisticated communication technology.

The global media with their capacity and ability to transmit information and general knowledge across territorial boundaries to other parts of the world have created a culture of consumerism in Nigeria. These international media have consequently exerted influence on the behavior of viewers from Nigeria and indeed Africa. Nigerians' modern ways of dressing, eating, playing, loving and general living standards have been arguably attributed to the influence of these global media. This implies that the global media are strong and instrumental forces that drive neo-colonialism in Nigeria. The global domination of media production by a small number of Western and transnational media conglomerates is known as media imperialism (Redmond, 2001). By implication, media imperialism involves the global imposition of Western media products on what is seen as the fragile and vulnerable, traditional cultures in Third World countries. This is evident on the 'core-periphery model' where information, news and entertainment are seen to flow from 'the west' to 'the rest' (poorer, developing countries) who are unable to resist or reply to this domination because of power and resource inequalities.

Global media have ushered in another phase of socio-cultural dependence on the Western nations through electronic and print global media such as the Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) with packages and bouquets, including channels emanating from foreign countries such as: news and information programs on BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera; entertainment programs (including sports, drama and music) on channels like Channel O, Supersports, Mnet series, E Entertainment and African Magic; adverts (commonly found in almost every program); international religious evangelism channels; and foreign educational channels including radio stations.

The global media are viewed as agents of globalization, and of neocolonialism. Globalization has received different shades of definitions. It is defined generally to mean 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.' (Giddens, 1990:64 - 68). The substance of globalization is captured thus:

Globalization emphasizes the multiplicity of linkages and interconnectedness that surpasses the nation states which together constitute the modern world system. It sets up a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the globe can and do have great consequences for individuals, communications, crime, culture, pollutants, drugs, fashions, entertainments, beliefs, among others, all immediately move across territorial boundaries (Offiong, 2001: 1).

Globalization has created an operational platform for neo-colonialism in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Global marketing is one of the processes of globalization 'where a company uses a common marketing plan for all countries in which it operates, thus selling the product in essentially the same way everywhere in the world' (Belch and Belch, 2001:683). Global marketing is further driven by global advertising which is 'the use of the same basic advertising message in all international markets' (Ike, 2005: 94).

The global media messages are known for positive programmes, but more for negative programmes which include violent movies and pornography. The positive include sports as well as cultural, economic and political lifestyles in forms of advertising, musicals or news and documentaries. What Nigerians select to adopt as lifestyle colonizes their mentality as it happened during the era of colonialism. The global media therefore have the ability to represent impersonal communication directed at a certain audience, to influence people's behavior through modeling and imitation, to create and influence or control perceptions of what is important in the society by selecting and stressing particular topics, views, interpretations, and themes and to secretly manipulate the audience through advertising.

The global media and their neo-colonial messages have influenced corruption and crime among Nigerians to a very significant extent thereby compounding the development challenges of the nation. First by getting exposed to some foreign adverts on fashion, cosmetics and many other products made available to the country, the global media create a consumerist culture among Nigerians. Second, Nigerians have come to appreciate and copy the lifestyles of actors, actresses and sportsmen that they watch on foreign media. They appreciate the foreign standards of living of Europeans and American and employ all corrupt and criminal means of adopting and sustaining such lifestyle.

The basic assertions of this discourse hold that global media are promoters of cultural imperialism through transmission of programs and information from developed nations. Secondly, cultural imperialism is unquestionably detrimental to the struggling economies of Third World countries because the people embrace foreign cultures by patronizing the material and non-material aspects of the dominant cultures of the 'West'. Thirdly, indigenous industries are discouraged from springing up and surviving because most of the people of the Third World nations including the poor strive to patronize of all kinds of products emanating from the countries of the developed nations.

In summary, the global media have significantly constituted a threat to national culture and development (Fukuda- Parr, Gosh and Pettinato, 2004). Many Nigerians who are exposed to global media are lured into patronizing foreign goods and lifestyles. The greatest impact on Nigeria is derailed development. Nigerians will not be interested in patronizing home made products for whatever reason while local industries will have no

need to operate or no markets to target. Development continues to suffer industrial setback in the light of preference for foreign products. Again lifestyles of Nigerians are patterned unconsciously after the demands of these foreign goods including clothes, shoes, foods and cars. For instance, Nigerians now wear foreign clothes at the expense of their traditional wears that are accompanied by the beautiful reflections of the Nigerian culture. The impact extends to the need for the Nigerians who newly adopted these lifestyles to sustain them with financial prowess and where it becomes tough; corruption and criminality are urgent escape routes to sustain the patronage of the foreign products and lifestyles.

3.0 Cultural Hybridization

Cultural hybridization is simply an off-shoot of the interaction between two cultural groups. Culture has enjoyed its unique definitions over the years. Culture has been viewed contentiously as a way of life of a people including their norms, beliefs and behavior. This consideration is inadequate because it lacks a premise or origin of a culture. Psychologists have denied the idea that culture is 'holistic'. Culture is "that mix of behavioural norms and inspirations that causes behavior, maintains present behavior, or encourages future behavior, independently of situational incentives and restraints" (Julian and Kornblum, 222). The definition of culture suggests that the elements of culture are subject to change and unless the entire culture is altered, behavior results from a combination of cultural and situational influences – a situation that is contemporarily considered as culture hybridization.

Thus, cultural hybridization occurs when people mix traditions arts, mass communication and popular culture in a new way, enabling people to express personal and cultural identities that are different from the existing ones which are known as cultural premises. Cultural premises are the pattern of behavior or beliefs that are almost articles of faith for audiences and that have passed on to them by their culture or society (Larson, 147). An example of cultural hybridization is what had occurred in the United States of America where a number of people from a variety of different cultures settle there – indigenous peoples, people from Europe, Africa and Asia. These people shared ideas, took what worked from other cultures, created a way to communicate with each other, and created a new cultural breed.

Under cultural hybridization, people from a particular culture take bits and pieces from alien cultures and create different dialects, customs, ways of behavior, ways of thinking and ways of honouring and practicing both material and non-material cultures. It means the combination of different cultures to create a new one. Cultural hybridization occurs when elements of a traditional culture mix with a more globalized mindset. Infact, modern scholars have attributed cultural hybridization to the activities of globalization. Globalization is the process of intensifying economic, political and cultural relations across international boundaries (Akindede, 2). It stems from McLuhan's initiative of global village – the idea that the new communication technology will permit people to become increasingly involved in one another's lives (Baran, 84).

Globalization breaks down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and several other fields of endeavor. It is a process that has been going on for 5000 years, but it has significantly accelerated since the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 and it is both narrowing and widening the income gaps among and within nations, intensifying and

diminishing political domination and homogenizing and pluralizing cultural identities (Riggs, 2).

On globalization and cultural hybridization, Stevenson writes:

...cultural hybridization stands for the process by which cultures around the world adopt a certain degree of homogenized global culture while clinging to aspects of their own traditional culture. The result is a mixture, or hybrid... The hybridization notion extends beyond external cultural aspects. Language itself can take on hybrid forms. These hybrids occur as new immigrant populations try to negotiate the competing demands of retaining a connection to their native culture and embracing their new environment (Stevenson, 18-19).

“Finglish”, for example, was a blending of Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and English that appeared in the United States at the end of the 19th century (Stevenson, 21). “Polingish” is a blend of Polish and English and “Chinglish” a blend of Chinese and English. In sum, the blend of two cultures gives rise to cultural hybridization. However, this is not without tension.

4.0Nigeria’s Cultural Hybrids in the 21st Century

The 21st century (2000 to 2099) is a period that Nigeria still finds herself. As the world began to experience new concepts like post modernism, globalization and transnational, Nigeria, a multi-ethnic nation situated within the western Region of Africa and famously considered as the most populous nation of Africa, was not an exception. It is quite challenging to itemize the dynamic tension that occurs or that has occurred in every culture in Nigeria. This is the utmost limitation of this study. However, it is pertinent to ascertain first that Nigerian cultures have experienced cultural hybridization as a result of the parley between particularism and universalism, and global machines like the mass media, internet/information technology and satellite/cable communication.

Apart from the variety in the forms of individual cultures in Nigeria, one can confidently state that almost all Nigerian cultures are experiencing universal impact. The impact is felt in material and non-material and aspect of the cultures of the people. There are particular and universal applications in the practices of cultural elements like food, dressing, shelter or architecture, ideology, music, dance, language and games. This presupposes that the various Nigerian cultures have their own particular ways of practicing these cultural elements before the mixture with foreign ways.

In the aspect of food or cuisines, Nigerians are in a dilemma as to how to prepare traditional meals. For instance, spices like Maggi, Royco and Knorr cubes are foreign types of local ingredients used in adding flavor to local meals like the “Afang” or “Edikanikong” soup. That is famous among the Efik in the southern part of Cross River State. Hitherto this period, the Obudus and few other cultures from the Northern part of Cross River State used a local ingredient called “dawadawa” which is a local supplement for the spices. Reasons for preference for usage of the local spices till date include the efficacy and ability of the local spice to bring out more taste from a meal, apart from the spice’s medicinal and nutritional value to the physical human body system. One major criticism of “dawadawa” is its offensive smell. For this reason, most Nigerians prefer to use spices with more inviting aroma irrespective of their lack of nutritional values.

Nigerian cultures like the Idomas and Tivs from Benue State and the Domas from Nasarawa state still prefer the use of “dawadawa” on their local cuisines, yet they use more modern spices in preparing other meals.

In the aspect of language, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo are the most popular in Nigeria besides many other dialects, yet the official language is English. The interaction between the native language of the people and English language is already creating a dynamic tension. The tension has heightened so much that linguists are advocating for the formalization of the “pidgin English” as a new breed of official language because most natives of different cultures cannot speak nor understand English language. It is believed that pidgin language is a result of cultural hybrid which arose as a result of interaction between the native language of the people and English. For instance, the expression in English “There is no water in this house” is translated syntactically to meet the linguistic needs of the natives in Nigeria as “water no dey dis house.” The syntactic rule followed in the pidgin expression stated above is derived from one of the local Nigerian languages. Furthermore, the inclusion of a native term like “gbedu” meaning party, in English is peculiar to the formation of “Pidgin English”.

Another cultural aspect worth mentioning is music. In Nigeria, traditional songs and dances are illustrative of meanings and symbols to the various tribes. The “Mmonikim” dance common among the Efiks is descriptive of the mermaid (water spirits movement because of the location of the river within which the tribe is situated. The war dance among the Ugeps in Cross River State is another example. The herdsman’s dance among the Fulani’s is depictive of the people’s profession. The songs from the different tribes are sung with accompaniment from traditional musical instruments like drums, gongs and beads. Today however, most traditional dances and songs from various cultural backgrounds are made and sang using foreign tones and modern instruments while the songs and dance steps remain indigenous. This is even more common in the churches. The blend of particular cultural songs and dances with modern and universal tones and instruments is the resultant production of a new breed of music. In Nigerian’s musical industry, D’banj’s music titled “Falling in love” has one of the lines thus: “Omo you don make me fall in love”. The expression is a blend of English, Pidgin and Yoruba hence the use of “Omo” (meaning boy). The songs of similar types are sung with such melody as though there could not have been anything better.

Ideologically, Nigerian cultures have received a dose of the foreign impact. In traditional Nigeria, traditional marriages were the only formalities that couples went through to settle down as husband and wives. Local drinks like palm wine and locally brewed gin (ogogoro) were enough to make occasions elaborate. Although, the infiltration of “church” or “white” wedding has been around since the modern period, the trend has continued and it still exists within the 21st century Nigeria. White wedding are conducted after the traditional marriage rites or vice versa, and sometimes court marriages are included. Although the traditional marriage rites among most Nigerian cultures permitted a man’s marriage to two or more wives, anyone who is preparing to marry in the church must be prepared to marry one wife (Universal Christian culture) even though such a person may have to go through traditional rites. The tension caused by this development results to dissatisfaction on the part of the man who marries one wife. Such a man may end up in promiscuity and may have children through other concubines without necessarily having

them go through the marriage rites. Universally, the Christian doctrine perceives this as a sin while it is no problem in typical Nigerian cultures.

The same thing applies to dress codes Nigerian fabrics are made locally and mostly traditionally. The “Asoke” or peculiar to Yoruba, the “buba” is their peculiar style of dress. The local wrapper in forms of wax, lace or thick wool are used to sow “Agbada” among the Hausa and “caftan” among people from almost all Nigerian cultural background. Although the English wears in forms of plain trousers, shirt and suit with tie have crept in most Nigerian including the country’s President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, are in a dilemma as to whether to appear in Universal attire (suit) in office or to retain the tradition attire that is depictive of their native cultures. The tension has heightened so much that most Nigerian have decided to sow suit or plain shirts using made in Nigeria fabrics. The dilemma is common even in Nigerian Architecture, buildings and games. There seems to be an urgent need for the dousing of this dynamic tension, because Nigerians find it tough to abandon their particular cultures because it identifies them yet they can’t stop embracing foreign cultures.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study therefore concludes that the global media are strong agents of cultural hybridization in Nigeria. Through the transmission of foreign programmes to Nigeria through global media stations like DSTV and other cable networks, Nigerian cultures have been able to interact with foreign cultures of the west and other Asian nations, which has led to the evolvement of new breeds of cultures evident in the foods we eat, the language we speak and our patterns of reasoning.

Nevertheless, the interaction between Nigerian cultures and foreign cultures made possible by the global media causes a dynamic and unstable tension in the minds of cultural Nigerians and leaders of other African countries. Native cultures suffer the dilemma of letting go their cultures completely. They move further out of the dilemma most times to embrace the foreign or universal culture because they cherish some of its attributes, yet they refuse to let go their very cultures that identify them, which have been the native cultures of their ancestors handed to them. This dilemma has lingered in Nigeria among different cultures till this 21st century. The result is the emergence of cultural hybridization.

Cultural hybridization, viewed as the emergent new culture which springs as an off-shoot of the interaction between two cultures, creates a unique breed of culture and becomes another way of life of the people – a new culture. There is a tendency that native cultures in Nigeria may abandon their traditional cultures and embrace foreign cultures perpetually if the cultural hybrid bears truthful and acceptable features that can be appreciated and imbibed by a people. If there is a strong cultural attachment to the native culture, the society may not abandon it at all.

This paper recommends that African leaders should not fold their hands and watch the gradual erosion of the cultures of respected countries on the continent. They should reduce attention to struggles for political powers and pay attention to strategies for sustaining indigenous cultures in the wake of global media activities. In Nigeria where more attention has been given to science education at the expense of arts education, the Nigerian government, through the ministries of Information and National Orientation and Tourism

and Culture, should encourage the use of indigenous artifacts and should organize cultural events more often to showcase some most interesting aspect of Nigerian cultures. The events should be broadcast intensively, more than what is transmitted on Nigeria Television International at present. Other global media channels should be patronized too.

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