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DEPARTMENT: SOCIOLOGY

COURSE: RURAL SOCIOLOGY (SOC 316)

**ASSIGNMENT**

IN NOT MORE THAN 3000 WORDS DISCUSS THE CULTURAL CHANGES IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY UPON THE ADVENT OF WESTERNIZATION.

Westernization can be said to be a process of social change where societies convert to the customs and practices of western civilization. It is the use of western education in non-western societies. It can also be said to be the adaptation or influence of western culture among societies across the globe in areas such as life-style priorities, education, values, economic, architecture, clothing, politics, entertainment etc. it has been a pervasive and accelerating influence across the world in the last few centuries, with some thinkers assuming westernization to be the equivalent of modernization. It has been a serious threat and is establishing a strong base in many people slowly wiping out their culture.

Westernization has greatly influenced or affected our traditions, customs, family and our love and respect for others. It has impacted on African traditional society in a very negative and positive dimension. The phenomenon of westernization does not follow anyone specific pattern across societies as the degree of adaptation and fusion with western customs will occur at varying magnitudes within different communities. Culture loss is an inevitable result of old cultural patterns being replaced by new ones.

Cultural change is a concept that denotes some internal and external factors leading to change in the cultural pattern of societies. Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. It is the totality of how people live and behave. Culture is always evolving. Moreover, new things are added to material culture every day, and they affect nonmaterial culture as well. Culture change when something new opens up new ways of living and when new ideas enter a culture. The cultural change affects the lives of people through his psychological and behavioural aspect. It leads to a chain reaction, whenever a change is incorporated into the culture and becomes defined as a “social necessity”, new needs emerge generating the desire for still further changes to complement or supplement the original change.

Change is an inherent aspect of culture. No culture remains static. The existence of culture is aimed at meeting the needs of the physical and social environment. Virtue and values are important and indispensable aspects of culture. The rate of cultural advancement in a given society depends on the level of that society’s moral value and or virtue of conciseness. Cultural change is a result of inventions, discovery, diffusion and environment.

A critical look at the western influence on African culture shows both good and bad influences. This has made much of African native culture give away to the Europeans culture. Either by design or accident, Africans have imbibed the western culture and have appropriated it so much that it now becomes almost part and parcel of their lives. Amongst the good effects of westernization are the abolition of some Nigerian cultures, like killing of twins, slave trade businesses, the cast system and burying of people alive in the evil forest. Though western influence and British colonial rule had put Nigerian some languages and cultures into extinction.

There have been different levels of western cultural domination and destruction of Nigerians local customs yet there were also resistance and modification of the native Nigerian cultures. However, some of Nigeria's traditional cultures have gone into extinction as a result of western influence and impacts. In the contemporary Nigerian society, western values have affected almost every part of the Nigerian cultures such as;

1. **MARRIAGE;**

Marriage is considered an important cultural heritage among the Yoruba people. The Nigerian traditional marriage culture constitutes the traditional marriage customs of the Nigerian traditional society. The contact of the western culture with the Nigerian traditional culture brought with it many changes which have brought significant changes to the traditional marriage system. Due to the changes in western culture, many Nigerians have adopted church and registry marriage over traditional marriage institutions. Traditional marriages are only recognized when church and registry marriages have culminated. The western culture has put a stop to some certain aspect of the marriage system such as marrying off a child (female child) at a tender age. It is believed that the many social vices of the society are the result of the influence of western culture such as divorce, single parenthood, child neglect due to working-class parent.

Marriage is usually centralized on women more than men. Under the Yoruba culture, there are important traditional rites that have been neglected such as “Itoro” (requesting the bride from her parents and family), “Alarina” (the function of a chosen intermediacy), “Ekun iyawa” (bride traditional crying) due to the western culture. People don’t find it important or considered to perform these marriage cultures. Civil and church marriages are more acknowledged than traditional weddings among Christians. Due to the western culture, parents are not aware of the relationships by their children until they are ready for introduction with their parents.

1. **LANGUAGE;**

Language is central to culture because it is the means through culture is learned and communicated. When a group begins to lose its language, its cultural tapestry starts to unravel. Language is a vehicle through which people interact, share mutual understanding about their environment and communicate experiences with one another. Each group in the society has an identity which distinguishes them from other groups. That is the people's way of life, set of beliefs and customs.

Many Nigerian languages have gone into extinction and are no longer in use. Western cultural influence the English language has been adopted as the official language and has been used in educating Nigerian citizens. The vast number of Nigerians today which speak English instead of their ancestral language has caused a barrier in communication between the young ones who migrated to the urban area, some people living in the rural areas, and old men and women. Many people in Nigeria are ashamed of speaking their native languages and as a result of the western influence. Due to this, the new generation of Nigerian youths could not speak their languages fluently. With the continuation of this most communities will be experiencing a correspondent loss of their traditional culture. There is need for Nigerians to learn their "mothers tongue" to keep the culture in the generation and also to communicate better with people from the rural area. We should not lose our culture entirely to the western language.

1. **DRESS CODES;**

Dress code varies with a different culture. Dress code does have a social significance with various rules and expectations that are valid depending on a situation and occasion. Ones dress code defines lifestyle or can be an indication of the person's gender, income, occupation and social class, religious affiliation, attitude towards comfort, fashion, traditions, gender expression, marital status and some many other factors.

Clothing styles change over time for a variety of reasons. In Yoruba, culture people bodies were ornamentally adorned with local materials. Dress like kembe, kuba, soro, agbada, gbariye, iro etc was worn to protect the Yoruba tradition. Western-style clothing such as shoes, pants, shirts, dresses, business suites etc became increasingly common in Africa in the twentieth century, especially in urban cities. With the change in dress code, most of the 'corruptible dresses' were imitated through various masses, and these are 'inappropriately and indecently used among the people to promote immorality'. Many ladies walk around half-naked, some boys 'sag' their pants and puts on earrings which are against the customs of the people. Many Africans wear whole western-style outfits, while others combine traditional African styles with western styles. Western fashions and styles have been adopted as a model although some people still wear Nigerian clothes. Today traditional African dress is most often worn for ceremonial purposes; they represent our culture and identity. It is necessary to hold on to them if we wish to preserve our traditions.

1. **TECHNOLOGY;**

The technology created to make life better often harms cultures even if it initially appears to provide benefits. Ultimately, advances in technology directly affect how cultures evolve; thus, when culture evolves, they tend to create new technology. Westernism accompanied by advanced technology stepped down the pace of African local technological development and oral tradition. In traditional African society today, children are losing the ability to play properly because of the influx of western technological devices like toys and computer games. African society is now grappling with many behavioural problems of dishonesty, drug, abuse, assault, insult, gangsterism, violent demonstrations, vandalism, examination malpractices, robbery and secret cult activities. In higher institutions across Africa, indecent dressing has become the emblem of modernity. Some of these western technologies have rather helped to reduce cultural values. The youths appeared to be the most venerable group affected by the influx of these western technologies.

Western culture transmitted through technological devices exposes young people to adult issues at impersonate age. In fairness, however, western technology has tremendously improved the lifestyle of Africans in various areas such as medicine, communication, transport, agriculture, sports, education, clothing and so on. Technology and culture are two forces that greatly influence one another. As new technology is introduced into a society, the culture reacts positively or negatively and is thus changed forever. Consequently, as cultures change so does the technology they develop. However, we should not keep basking in the euphoria of Western technological achievements and forget to improve on our local technology. We should appreciate the products of our local artworks of painting, sculptures, and moulding just for what they are and it will encourage.

1. **RELIGION;**

Religion and culture always exist in close relation. Religion is a central factor in shaping a culture. It is related to other factors such as politics, the economy, the family and it interacts with those factors in many ways.

It can affect more than a particular person's habits. These beliefs and practices can influence an entire community, nation or region.

It has become clear that western culture is gradually wiping out the traditional religion of the people. They introduced Christianity and it has been a weapon of traditional vandalism. Ever since the introduction of Christianity, festivals and other cultural related practices are now seen as idolatry, to the extent of classifying those that get involved in such practices as idol worshippers and evildoers. Many Nigerians have been converted to Christianity due to western cultures and some do not value their traditional values again as a result of their belief in Christianity. Christianity came and took the place of the images that they worshipped and made them believe that there was only God.

1. **FOOD;**

The term food is an aspect of cultural tradition. Food items themselves have meaning attached to them, they play a vital role in our daily lives because without it we cannot survive. One aspect of other cultural heritage or tradition is the type of food and plants they cultivate for their consumption. It is a source of pleasure, comfort and security. It is also a symbol of hospitality, social status, and religious significance. What we select to eat, how we prepare it, serve it, and even how we eat it are all factors that touch our cultural inheritance. Food plays an important role in the lives of families in most cultures. However, the degree of importance varies from culture to culture. In many cultures, food has a social or ceremonial role. People also connect to their culture or ethnic group through similar food patterns. Immigrants often use food as a means of retaining their cultural identity. People from different cultural backgrounds eat different foods. Different cultures have different names for their food which involves the use of language. These food preferences result in patterns of choices within a cultural or regional group. The ingredients, methods of preparation, preservation techniques, and types of food eaten at different meals vary among cultures.

The way the Yoruba people in Nigeria prepare their food is different from the way the other tribes prepare theirs. In the Yoruba culture, the preparation of “yam” could be through pounding, which is called “iyan”, and it will be eaten with the combination of soup. The area in which families live and where their ancestors originated influences food like and dislike. Regional food habits do exist, but they also change over time. Men eat differently from women. People of different age groups eat differently. The youth do not longer understand the significance of these Yoruba delicacies. They do not know how to prepare their traditional food because they prefer western culture (fast food and canned foods). In the Nigerian culture, is that food is traditionally eaten by hand, while in the western world or culture, they use fork, knives and spoons to eat their food.

1. **FESTIVALS;**

Festivals are an expressive way to celebrate glorious heritage, culture and traditions. All festivals are cultural in one way or another. They are meant to rejoice special moments and emotions in our lives with our loved ones. They play an important role to add structure to our social lives and connect us with our families and backgrounds. They give us a distraction from our day to day, the exhausting routine of life, and give us some inspiration to remember the important things and moments in life. Festivals were started to pass the legends, knowledge and traditions onto the next generation. Cultural festivals and events are increasingly becoming areas of discourse enabling people to express their views on wider cultural, social and political issues. There are many types of cultural festivals such as national, religious and seasonal. They all serve the purpose of bringing happiness's to our lives and strengthen our sense of community.

Modernization (western culture) seems to have helped in the promotion of cultural resources and the preservation of heritage. According to major informants during the fieldwork, it makes people appreciate and maintain cultural practices more, most especially in this natural resources serve as modern methods of managing these resources and heritages in various communities. The attraction of festivals in this modern age has given the honour to the culture of the people. People however now participate massively in cultural affairs without minding the religious differences. This helps to promote cultural tourism in the state. Due to the western culture, some cultural practices are either going or have gone into extinction while others are gradually abandoned, the valuable ancient cultural resources and practices and rendered them useless. The totality of the western culture is blatantly being embarrassed leading to complete acculturation of people. Modern developments in terms of road and building construction have been extended to theses cultural/archaeological sites and many have been bulldozed.

In conclusion, westernization brought through the colonization of Africa has led to the diminishing of their traditional beliefs and culture. Western culture is having a disastrous influence on Africans cultural values. There is an urgent need to develop our local indigenous knowledge that can solve Africans problems. African culture should act as a means of checking, adopting and transmitting such changes as technological development, political development and social development. To avoid cultural extinction, there is an urgent need for cultural restoration in Africa owing to an erroneous impression or western indoctrination. This is very necessary because people without a culture are people without an identity.