

Abstract

Ebira-Tao fabric weaving is the oldest traditional method of providing cloth for the social and economic needs among the Ebira people mostly found in Kogi state, North Central Nigeria. In the face of westernization and globalization, efforts are being made by traditional weavers and institutions to ensure propagation of its cherished clothing tradition. Using a survey research method and a quantitative approach, the researcher administered copies of questionnaire to three hundred (300) respondents in Adavi and Okene local government areas. The data were gathered and decided on 2.5 theoretical mean criterion. From the results of the analyses, the paper found that the Ebira Tao weaved cloth is essential to the socio-cultural growth and development of the Ebira people amongst other cultural nationalities in Nigeria through the significant use of the cloth for both personal, ceremonial and festivities. Thus, the paper submits that continual patronage of the cloth by the Ebira in diverse socio-cultural activities and festivities is one which aptly qualifies for not only cultural identification but renaissance.

Keywords: Ebira-Tao Clothes, Cultural Identity, Westernization, Cultural Industry, Renaissance.

Introduction

The nature of cloth worn by people in any society is central to the cultural identity, social relations, politics, history, and contemporary religion of the nationality to which such people belong (Dzramedo, Ahiabor, & Gbadegbe, 2013). The adorning of traditional clothing is respected and revered in a society that is cultural-centric. This is so because, the wearer of such clothes is not only seen to be very important personality but respected because he/she is the promoter and flag bearer of the indigenous aesthetics and beauty of his/her culture (Messick, 1987). The essence of the traditional clothe goes far beyond the functions of clothe which ranges from covering ones naked body frame to adding beauty to one's body. It plays the active role in identification of the person in social, religious, and cultural activities, and finally endears the wearer to the hearts of the people.

People's values are more in line with each other and fashion, like a cold, quickly spreads throughout the whole world (Omatseye&Emeriewen, 2012) However, there is also the opposite power in this trend. That is to say, it is due to the integration that people can recognize the cultural differences more clearly, and at the same time respect and cherish the differences (Yongyan, 2009). This is the consensus of mankind in a new era, and also a new starting point for re-studying the local culture. From an ethnic perspective, the performance on ethnic style of clothing has always been prevalent for a very long time, even before Nigeria's independence (Yaro and Ebuga, 2013).

People have explored new design methods and put them into practice. They create new design style, enlightened from the historical, ethnic and natural inspiration. This has fully demonstrated people's desire to return to nature, the spirit of getting back to basics and the necessary respect for history and attention to the awakening of consciousness of cultural heritage. Especially since the 1990's, with the increasing awareness of environmental and cultural ecological protection, the subject on ethnic style has been repeatedly performed by many designer

Today, traditional cloth weaving is one of the major occupations engaged in by Ebira women (Okene). Its cloth weaving serves as one of the major sources of revenue generation to about 80% of the women folk in the land (Ododo, 2001). Ebira-Tao people in particular are predominantly farmers and one of their major cash crops is cotton. Cotton serves as raw material for weaving. This enables a number of women to engage in weaving production. Another vital factor is that, there is a cultural importance attached to Okene weaving by the people. For instance, the cloth is used for burial and for masquerade which is acknowledged by the people (Okene & Suberu, 2013).

Most elderly persons use the cloth for body covering, worn by various classes of people and others use them to make easy chairs for relaxation after a day's work. Most importantly, the woven cloth is used as a prayer mat (Yaro and Ebuga, 2013). In recent time, a lot of designs towards modernization of the techniques have been introduced into the art of weaving of Ebira land. The Okene women in particular can now weave different sizes and designs and can inscribe into the woven fabrics various forms of writing and symbols.

Statement of the Problem

With over-flooding of our markets with ready-made and cheap clothing especially the ubiquitous nature of jeans, t-shirts, gowns from the west which invariably is the promotion of their egocentrism into our shores, the pertinent questions now is (i) Is our traditional clothing and attires relevant in today's globalized fashion world? (ii) What role does our traditional clothes and attire have to play in ensuring and creating cultural awareness, identity and renaissance? Answers to these questions formed the premises on which this research was undertaken.

The objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. determine the relevance of the Ebira-Tao weaved clothes in clothing and attires relevant in today's globalized fashion world.
2. assess the role Ebira Tao weaved cloths and attire play in ensuring and creating cultural awareness, identity and renaissance.

Review of Related Literatures

Cloth Weaving in Nigeria

The concept of weaving is said to be a technique of interlacing threads i.e. placing them into vertical and horizontal line direction (thread) which are also known as warp and weft manipulated to achieve a whole woven fabric design with the aid of a loom. Cloth weaving is widely practiced in Africa and Nigeria in particular. The arts have a long history and are practiced by both males and females, using either vertical or horizontal looms respectively. In Nasarawa state, North Central Nigeria, the Opa woven fabrics are used for social, religious, ritual, medicinal and domestic functions. These fabrics are woven in a variety of ways, both in terms of designs and colours. Notable among them include *Suala-Afo* (male wrapper), *Opa mai karan taba* (popular design of *Afo* male wrapper), *Umasha* weave with cotton yarn, *OkparYiwore*, *Sakakken Fulani*, *Otena Alago* (female wrapper), *Ashli Awhiim* (Eggon wrapper) (Manzuche, 2009).

In River State, South-South Nigeria, the traditional weavers began to weave hand woven fabrics in different varieties of designs and colours with names such as *Popo* cloth, *Ikaki*, *Pelete* and *Bile*. Traditionally, male adult in Rivers state will appear in a piece of hand woven fabric tied as loin cloth with a muffler hung on his neck, while female adult will use two pieces of the same fabric (Rivers state Council for Arts and Culture, 2009). *Aso-oke* is usually worn by Yoruba men and women throughout Southwestern Nigeria which basically include contemporary Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Lagos states. Yoruba stocks in parts of Kwara, Kogi and Edo States too wear this type of cloth. Common fashion styles often used *aso-oke* for are *buba* and *iro* (top and wrapper), *gele* (head gear), *agbada* (large gown) and *buba* and *Sokoto* (top and trousers) (National Museums, Liverpool, 2008).

The Fulani are known for the production of their woven cloth called *Kassa* while the Ibibio produce and wear their own cultural cloth called *Ukatt*. The Hausa are also known for their *Danshiki* fabric. Also the *Ange* fabric is produced and worn by the Tiv tribe in Benue State as well as the popular black and red stripes of the Idoma. The people of Asaba also produce and wear their white woven cloth. All other tribes in Nigeria both minor and major have different types of locally produced cloths by the indigenes. In Igboland, the *Akwete* cloth is the locally woven cotton fabric which is both noble and prestigious (Chukueggu & Ogu, 2013). The skills in making these various weaved clothes in Nigeria were believed to have always been transmitted from one generation to the other, by either the mother to daughter or father to son, as noted by Munkaila (2011), Weise (2013), Agu and Ali (2015).

Ebira Traditional Weaved Cloth and Cultural Values

Ebira weaving has been observed as one of the major crafts in Nigerian society since ages to date. Nigeria has many ethnic groups that are blessed with one form of traditional occupation or the other. However such traditional occupations are few and they can be easily identified with a particular community. Ebira-Tao people of Okene have such occupation in Cloth Weaving. Okene traditional cloth weavings are so special that their products have been observed as outstanding among others wherever one comes across them among other groups in Nigerian weaving. Today, Okene cloth as it is popularly called is being used by many ethnic groups in Nigeria like Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Idoma, Jukun and others for various purposes. Similarly Ada (2006), in a study of Idoma traditional weaving techniques and Ododo (2001) also conducted a study on Okene cloth as being positioned in the contemporary cloth weaving in Nigeria, while Lamb and Holmes, (1980) discussed about Yoruba *Aso-oke*, the Nupe, Ebira-Tao and *Akwete* traditional woven cloth in Nigeria.

During the last hundred years, African art has exercised the most profound influence on the evolution of modern art everywhere which attracted interest of international museums. African cloth weaving is one of such crafts. Lamb and Holmes (1980) opine that it has only been in the 1970s that the public in Europe and the United States have begun to appreciate the beauty of some African cloths and to undertake serious study. The influence of religion on the local weaving industry as Ododo (2001), noted influenced that of the Ebira-Tao clothing make up.

The mode and mood of occasion also influenced the clothes weaved in the area. In particular, outfits meant for different offerings which demanded different colours were wrapped in pieces of woven clothes. In essence combination of black and white clothes is used to dress up new born babies for their first few weeks on earth for those that lost their mothers at the course of delivery. Abdulkadir, (ibid) further observed that as the demands steadily grew because of modernization of styles, the need for more complex styles and designs became pertinent. This has led to the adoption of modern styles and designs into the weaving techniques of the Ebira-Tao clothes.

Methodology

The descriptive survey has been found suitable for this study. Descriptive survey is aimed at collecting data on, Ebira-Tao cloth weaving, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The study covered the entire Ebira Tao speaking communities which are located within Kogi Central in Kogi State. This area has five (5) local government councils namely Adavi (202,194), Ajaokuta (122,321), Ogori/Magongo (39,622), Okehi (199,999) and Okene (320,260) with a total population of 884, 260 (NPC, 2006) and projected to 1,123,010 persons by 2015 using the national growth rate of 3%.

The study was carried out in Ododo weaving center of Adavi Local Government Area and Okene Weaving Center in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State which were the major and existing weaving centers. The sample size for the study was reduced to 300 respondents. The instruments for the research were the questionnaire and in-depth interview. Systematic random sampling technique was used for administering the quantitative instrument, while purposive sampling was used to select interviewees from the women weaving association within the two selected weaving areas.

The descriptive and narrative method was employed in analyzing data and information in this study. In analyzing the data, SPSS version 20 was used. A theoretical mean of 2.5 according to Davies (2005) was taken as a criterion to judge the mean for the items in the structured questionnaire having four (4) Likert scale format.

Table 1 shows that some respondents (3.56>2.5) knowledge about their culture emanate from their wearing of the Ebira Tao woven cloths about the cultural way of life of the Ibira people. Furthermore, respondents (3.11>2.5) agreed that besides creating awareness and knowledge about their culture, the Ebira Tao cloth serves the function of ensuring the cultural identity of the Ebira people in Kogi state. Again, respondents (3.10>2.5) also believed that wearing of the traditionally made attires had spiritual affinity between the people and their ancestors especially at times of religious rites and burial ceremonies. Finally, respondents (3.17>2.5) agreed that the function of the Ebira Tao Clothes was that it enables the Ebira people to distinguished themselves from the numerous ethnic nationalities in the country. In the overall analyses of the data, it could be deduced that respondents all agreed that traditional cloth is very important to the people's socio-cultural existence.

Results and Analyses**Table 1: Respondent Views on the Relevance of The Ebira-Tao Weaved Clothes in Clothing and Attires Relevant in Todays Globalized Fashion World.**

Statement	Degree of Agreement				Total (%)	Mean	Remark
	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)			
Weaved clothes makes the people know about our culture and traditions.	180 (66.2)	79(29.0)	0 (0.0)	13 (4.8)	272 (100.0)	3.56	Agreed
It is a way of ensuring sustainable cultural development of our people.	128 (47.1)	74 (27.2)	43 (15.8)	27 (9.9)	272 (100.0)	3.11	Agreed
It also have spiritual significance among the people in our society	108 (39.7)	93 (34.2)	62 (22.8)	9 (3.3)	272 (100.0)	3.10	Agreed
It distinguishes us from among the numerous other cultures in Nigeria	151 (55.5)	50 (18.4)	37 (13.6)	34 (12.5)	272 (100.0)	3.17	Agreed

Source: Salawu (2015). The Study of Ebira-Tao Cloth Weaving Techniques in Okene and Adavi Local Government of Kogi State Nigeria.

Table 2: Views on the Role Ebira Tao Weaved Cloths and Attire Play

Statement	Degree of Agreement				Total (%)	Mean	Remark
	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)			
Even in the face of westernization, the Ebira Tao weave clothes is very important among the Ebira people.	218 (80.1)	30 (10.3)	19 (7.0)	5 (1.8)	272 (100.0)	3.7	Agreed
The traditional clothes is always used by rulers as a mark of our cultural uniqueness.	167 (61.4)	28 (10.3)	39 (14.3)	38 (14.0)	272 (100.0)	3.2	Agreed
It is always worn during traditional rites and festivals as a way cultural rebirth.	112 (41.2)	63 (23.2)	82 (30.1)	15 (5.5)	272 (100.0)	3.0	Agreed
It is also worn during marriages as a way of promoting the essence of our culture.	139 (51.1)	68 (25.0)	46 (16.9)	19 (7.0)	272 (100.0)	3.2	Agreed

Source: Salawu (2015). The Study of Ebira-Tao Cloth Weaving Techniques in Okene and Adavi Local Government of Kogi State Nigeria.

In Table 2 respondents agreed that westernization hasn't reduced the essence of their own form of dressing. Respondents (3.2>2.5) agreed that the wearing of the traditional costumes and attires by their traditional rulers during traditional rites and festivals is significant to the promotion of cultural identity and rebirth. Table 2 also shows that the perpetuation in this use of the weaved dress is done during marriages and weddings ceremonies where the man and woman, their friends and families adorn themselves in traditional attires of varying makes and shapes. It could be summarised therefore

that Ebira Tao weaved cloths and attire which play very important role in not only creating cultural awareness but also ensuring the cultural identity and rebirth of the people it reflected in their day-to-day activities and festivities.



Plate 1: Pictures of Ebira Tao Weaving Techniques used in Modern TimesSource: Maimunat (2004)

Ohigiosiya is a cloth woven designed by Upogoro people of Okene local Government Area, Kogi state. The cloth which is woven with white, milk, green and silk is used for the patterned. Ohigiosiya (2004) (mean it is time for marriage).



Plate 2: Ita OhigSource: (Mama Kabiru, 2015)

Ita Ohig cloth woven with red silk, cream silk and lemon green for the pattern is another designed for occasional wear such as marriage, naming, birthday ceremonies etc. (Cloth woven by Mama Kabiru in Ododo in Adavi Local Government Area, Kogi State.

Discussion of Findings

The need to preserve the people's traditional dress mode is still very apt in today's Ebira society thereby significantly insulating them from encroachment suffered in the face of the globalized economy where there has been the flooding of the markets with textiles in the face of little or no regulation from agent and agencies of government. Thus, the onus of this study lies not only in cultural identification and appreciation of the aesthetic beauty of the Ebira Tao weaved cloth but also in its relevance to cultural rebirth.

The significant level of usage of the Ebira Tao weave by the Ebira sons and daughters both at home and in the diaspora most especially during ceremonies and festivities, is in fact, a consolation to indigent members of the society who have become weary of inundation of the westernized clothing and fashion adoptions by the younger generation. The presentation of beautifully and of traditionally weaved costumes is one of the ways in which the cherished tradition and cultural values of any society is promoted. This also becomes a very important factor that has been contributing to the development and growth of the Ebira Tao cloth weaving culture of the people in recent time. Firstly, hand woven textiles have always been a rich source of one's tradition. The woven cloth has a very serious spiritual beliefs of the natives of Okene since time immemorial.

Secondly, social change incorporated with modern technology, the traditional hand woven textiles of Ebira Tao is said to have remained relevant to the people despite the far reaching influence of western cloth culture. The people still cherish their local apparel as revealed by over 80% respondents (data in Table 2). Thirdly, local patronage among the people is drawn from their level of appreciation of the clothing, aesthetic and beautiful culture as well as the continuing traditional disposition of the people towards the usage and wearing of the weaved clothes as a mark of uniquely differentiating and distinguishing her people from other ethnic nationalities as shown by over 55% (in Table 1). Consequently, the Ebira Tao weaved cloth was seen as a contributing factor to the development and growth of Ebira Tao' cloth weaving culture as revealed by over 47%. All these findings were

supported by the findings of Adeniran (2010:23); Cyril-Egware, and Peters, (2016:146) on the same cloth weaving culture.

Conclusion

The research has been able to advance the relevance of the Ebira Tao weaved cloth and how essential it is to socio-cultural growth and development amongst other cultural nationalities in Nigeria in particular and the world in general. The continual patronage of the cloth by the Ebira in diverse socio-cultural activities and festivities especially its usage for daily dressing, marriages and weeding, birthdays, traditional ceremonies and so on enhance the cultural value of Ebira traditional weaved cloth. The prevalence of the Ebira Tao traditional weaving industry helps in keeping the production and supply of the cloth product with aesthetic designs and pattern to the people's demand and adornment. Thus, the socio-cultural imports of the Ebira Tao is that appreciable usage and patronage of the cloth among the people is one that sustains the nexus between tradition, their identity as a people and the intrinsic value extracted from one of the aspects which fulfils the function of the culture as a way of life of a people.

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