

## **Cultural Industries and Wealth Creation: The Case of Traditional Textile Industry in Nigeria**

**Salihu Maiwada, PhD**

**S.A. Dutsenwai, PhD**

**M.Y. Waziri**

Department of Industrial Design  
Ahmadu Bello University  
Zaria-Nigeria.

### ***Introduction***

Nigeria is so much blessed with both natural and human resources, which if properly harnessed will consequently yield a strong economy. Nigerians are naturally creative and well talented, that is why many of them are engaged in various creative trades. Skills and talents are creatively used in the production of traditional craft items and this gave birth to 'Creative Industries'. Parrish (2005) reported that, the 'creative industries; have been defined by the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as: 'Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.' Creative industries like blacksmithing industry, goldsmithing, pottery, tanning and leather works, wood carving and calabash engraving, are typical examples that are commonly found in any local setting in the country.

### **Cultural Industries**

Aageson (2009) reported that UNESCO defined Cultural Industries as those industries which produce tangible or intangible artistic and creative outputs, and which have a potential for wealth creation and income generation through the exploitation of cultural assets and production of knowledge-based goods and services (both traditional and contemporary). What cultural industries have in common is that they all use creativity, cultural knowledge, and intellectual property to produce products and services with social and cultural meaning. The cultural industries include: advertising; architecture; crafts; designer furniture; fashion clothing; film, video and other audiovisual production; graphic design; educational and leisure software; live and recorded music; performing arts and entertainment; television, radio and internet broadcasting; visual arts and antiques; and writing and publishing.

The term "cultural industries" is almost interchangeable with the concept of "creative industries." Whereas the notion of "cultural industries" emphasizes those industries whose inspiration derives from heritage, traditional knowledge, and the artistic elements of creativity, the notion of "creative industries" places emphasis on the individual and his or her creativity, innovation, skill and talent in the exploitation of intellectual property. The notion of 'cultural industries' is also closely linked to but, again, slightly different from a categorization based strictly on the notion of "intellectual property," which is closely linked to the concept of information-driven economies, and which includes such activities as scientific and technological innovation, software and database development, telecommunication services, and the production of hardware and electronic equipment.

This paper focuses on traditional textile industry. The industry is so diverse and therefore has so many branches. These include spinning, weaving, knitting, sewing, dyeing, embroidery, printing and a host of others. Being one of the most dynamic in the world, the large scale textile industry has in recent years suffered a great set back in Nigeria. But the cultural or traditional textile industry is still flourishing. The paper will attempt to discuss this topic by reviewing the situations in some selected states of Nigeria. Clothing in Nigeria like in any part of the world is considered to be part and parcel of every person's life. Perhaps, this is why Marjory (1980) states that "textile products are an integral part of every person's daily life". Marjory (ibid) also said that "the textile industry is one of the largest in the world and if all facets of this vast economic and industrial giant are considered, it probably involves more people and more money than any other industry"

## The Traditional Textile Industry in Nigeria:

There are several states in Nigeria where many aspects of textile works are carried out. Traditional textile works like hand spinning, weaving, tie-dye, batik, cassava paste resist which the Yoruba people call 'adire-eleko', garment embroidery (both hand and machine), screen printing, hand block printing, traditional calendaring which the Hausa people call 'bugu', tailoring and fashion design are being carried out in most states of Nigeria. A lot of people are gainfully engaged in all of these works and are therefore earning their decent living without necessarily depending on anybody.

### Ogun State

This state is well known all over the country for its various aspects of textiles works such as hand weaving by both men and women using horizontal and vertical looms respectively. According to Ogun State Council for Arts and Culture, (2009) the predominant ethnic groups are the Egbas, Egbados, Aworis, Eguns, Ijebus and Remos. Although the state has many ethnic groups, there are no major distinctions in the textiles of the people; this is because they are produced throughout the state.

Historically, the people of Ogun state like all other tribes in Nigeria and of course globally, were producing textiles for the sociological need to protect the body. The ardent need to use long lasting materials led to the emergence of hand woven fabric. All hand woven fabrics the catalogue (ibid) continued are called Ofi named after the loom used in the production. Later, the economic importance of textiles in the state came into focus and this led to the diverse artistic embellishments and ornamentation. The textiles are no more produced just for body protection only, but for adornment as well. This is why Maiwada, (2009) stated that Scholars of modern time believe that dress provides a mark of identity and through which non verbal messages are communicated. It is also believed that in traditional societies, dress functions almost as a language that can indicate a person's age, gender, and marital status, place of origin, religion, and social status. Bayfield, (2004) in Maiwada, (ibid) remarked that, clothing and its accessories constitute the most important form of aesthetic expression. Dress did not merely cover the body; it indicated one's gender, character, wealth and status.

### Weaving

There are different types of hand woven fabrics produced in Ogun State, their names are determined by the type and colour of thread used for the weaving. The most common names of these fabrics are 'Etu', 'Alari', 'Sanyan', 'Fuu' and 'Waka'. 'Etu' for instance, is indigo-dyed while 'Alari' is wine-coloured, (Fig.1). 'Sanyan' is naturally cream or light brownish coloured. This is because 'Sanyan' is a wild silk produced by Anaphe wild silk worms locally available in Nigeria. When processed, 'Sanyan' comes with its natural colours. 'Fuu' fabric is normally white which is usually used by traditional worshipers, while 'Waka' is multi-coloured. These fabrics are massively produced and widely used both in the state and beyond. They are used for different purposes ranging from day to day, ceremonial as well as religious.



**Fig. 1 Agbada (Alari)**

### Indigo Dyeing

Abeokuta, the capital city of the state is famous for its indigo dyeing popularly known as 'adire'. Although the Egbas are exclusively known to have specialized in 'adire' production, the trade has since spread to all the local government areas of the state. Two prominent techniques 'adire eleso' (tie-dye) and 'adire eleko (cassava paste resist) are used in the production, (Fig.2).



**Fig.2 'Adire-eleso'**

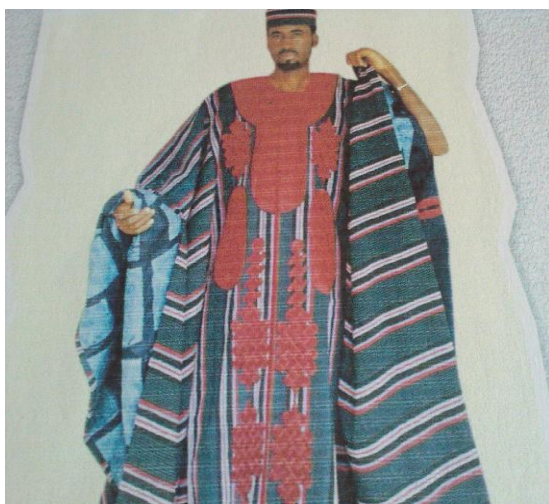
Printing, which is another art of fabric decoration, is practiced along side with dyeing activities. Patterns of various sizes and shapes are beautifully created and printed on fabrics using silk screen process as well as stenciling technique. Varieties of colours are used for fabric embellishment and the printed fabrics are used both as clothing or furnishing materials.

### **Tailoring and Fashion Design**

Tailoring and Fashion Design are two important segments of textiles crafts carried out in the state. Professional tailors and fashion designers are so much engaged in garment construction using both traditionally hand woven fabrics as well as indigo dyed fabrics. Garments for men, women, youths and children are beautifully constructed in different fashion both traditional and adopted western styles. Innovations and creativity are apparently displayed by both the tailors and the fashion designers, where traditional hand woven fabrics (Aso Oke) are combined with industrially woven, indigo dyed fabrics to construct modern or adopted western garments. 3-piece suits as well as ladies' suits are also constructed in addition to the usual traditional ones. As part of their innovations, the fashion designers combine 'Ankara' (industrially printed fabrics) with 'Adire' to construct beautifully patterned ladies' dresses and wrappers for both casual and ceremonial wears.

### **Embroidery**

Embroidery work both by hand and machine is done on men's 'agbada' (long flowing garment). Very elaborate and sometimes simple designs are painfully embroidered on men's garments. In most cases, 'agbada' meant for the chiefs and the wealthy individuals in the society and in recent time for the politicians, is heavily decorated. These are normally very expensive, (Fig.3).



**Fig.3 Embroidered Agbada (Aso-oke)**

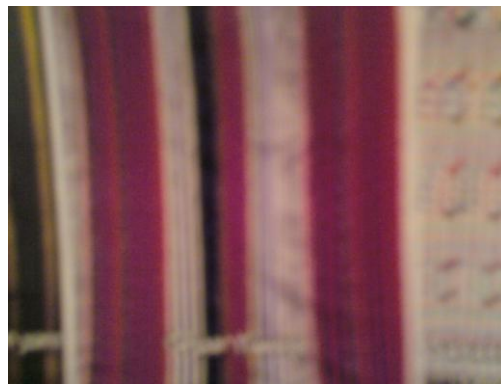
One interesting thing about this agbada is that both sides can be worn as the wearer wishes. The outer side is aso-oke while the inner side is adire-eleso.

### **Nasarawa State**

The state has several ethnic groups and a few of them include the Afo, Agatu, Akye, Alago, Mada, Eggon, Rinde and many others.

All these ethnic groups are united and wrapped together culturally by their traditional hand woven fabric which is a product of the cultural textile industry in the state. Nasarawa State Council for Arts and Culture, (2009) states that “clothing in Nasarawa State, as in most other parts of Nigeria, has long been satisfying the people’s needs for body covering and adornment”. It further states that beside these basic functions, indigenous weavers, dyers, tailors and designers also utilize textiles and clothing as media for artistic expression. Manzuche, (2009) explained that hunting, being the earliest occupation of most of the ethnic groups in the state, early clothing among the people was made from treated animal hides, furs and feathers. Later the people experimented with cloth made from tree bark. The two sources of clothing predate the development of woven textiles which is today the traditional source of clothing in the state, Manzuche, (ibid) added.

The state is so blessed with traditional weavers. This is why in most traditional communities; 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, ‘Okpar Yiwore’,( Fig.4) ‘Sakakken Fulani’, ‘Otena Alago’ ( female wrapper ), ‘Ashli Awhiim’ ( Eggon wrapper ) and a host of others.



**Fig.4 Okpar Yiwore Fabric**

In addition, the fabric is being used in traditional wooden chair. This provides comfortable seats for the elderly people. The locally dyed fabrics are complimenting the woven fabrics in the state. Imported brocade (shadda) as well as industrially manufactured fabrics are dyed in a variety of ways carrying beautiful designs and colours. Tailors and fashion designers are coping up with increasing challenges of their clients. These professionals are always kept on their toes by the fast moving fashion trend in the state. This naturally means substantial sum of money coming into their pockets. The products of this industry are not only consumed in the state, but orders of purchase are received from outside the state. This development reduces joblessness and increases wealth creation in Nasarawa state.

### **Edo State**

Cultural textile industry in Edo state is flourishing like in most states of the country. Areas of production of this industry include traditional hand weaving, off-loom weaving of rugs, foot mats, tapestry, knitting with knitting machines and crocheting. In the area of fabric embellishment, a variety of works are carried out like tie-dye, batik, cassava paste resist technique and silk screen printing process. Young men and women of this state are fully engaged in various aspects of this work. Traditional motifs symbolizing diverse cultural heritage of the state are used to create beautiful designs that are appealing to the society. The finished fabrics are used to construct garments for men, women, youths and children. The type of garments is both traditional and western in nature. Creativity and innovations are vividly seen in the products. The fashion designers adapt the use of western designs using the locally produced fabrics. Men’s suits as well as traditional jumper are sewn. Well designed wedding dresses for both bride and bridegroom are constructed to suit the local needs of the people in the state.

### **Rivers State**

Historically, raffia plant grows abundantly in this state being it a river rind area. The plant is fibrous in nature, it is not surprising therefore, for the people of this state to process its fibres and use as clothing materials. According to Rivers state Council for Arts and Culture, (2009) the inhabitants of this state used woven raffia sheets in pre colonial era for different purposes among which is body covering.

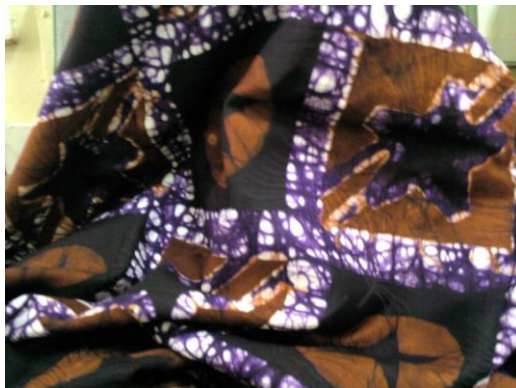
With the introduction of industrially spun cotton threads in the area due to the people's interactions with the Europeans, the use of raffia fibres as clothing materials was phased out. The traditional weavers began to weave hand woven fabrics in different varieties of designs and colours with names 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. One piece tied on her waist and the other on the bust line. But a girl at puberty age will tie a short waist cloth with a breast band and beads on her waist. 'Popo' fabrics are used in new ways now because of several changes in fashion that have taken place. Tailors and the fashion designers in the state are now creating garments befitting different categories of people in the society. There are garments specially designed for Kings and Queens as well as Chiefs and their wives. Other citizens have their own categories based on their social status as well as their financial standing.

Emerging new designs are available as casual evening wears. Wedding dresses are being designed and sewn with the 'popo' fabric. Because the state is river rind, there are so many beaches around and the fashion designers are taking good advantage of it. Beach wears in different designs and colours are being created by well talented fashion designers. Combination of 'popo' fabrics and raffia woven fabrics are used to sew beach wears and beach bags for both males and females. Dyed fabrics produced using both batik and tie-dye techniques are also combined with 'popo' fabric to construct beach wears. Professional textiles designers, fashion designers and tailors are working tirelessly and creatively too in order to keep the fashion trend moving. By so doing, these professionals are contributing their own quota for sustainability of the profession, job creation and above all wealth generation.

### **Kaduna State**

Cultural textile industry in Kaduna state is as old as the history of the people in the state. The state has quite a number of ethnic groups but the major ones include Hausa, Fulani, Kagoro, Kurama, Ham, Gbagyi and many more. This state, like most other states in Nigeria also has a long history of traditional hand weaving. Hand spinning by women and weaving by both men and women using horizontal and vertical looms respectively, are age-long crafts in most parts of the state. The fabric, called 'saki' in Hausa is usually woven white and later dyed with indigo. But when garments are to be constructed, the fabric is used in its white state. Traditional pit dyeing of fabrics and constructed garments used to be an important trade and Zaria city was famous for it. With the introduction of synthetic dyes in assorted colours, coupled with the fact that synthetic dyes have wash fastness quality and are easier to use, they were readily accepted. Pit dyeing has disappeared and most of the practitioners are now dead. Their children as well as their grand children are not ready to practice it. But because traditional dyeing used to be a family craft sort of, there are some members of such families who have taken over the craft now but using synthetic dyes. Dyeing with synthetic dyes has become a lucrative business in most parts of the state.

Zaria city has been and is still a big centre of cultural textile industry. The youths have so much delved into this craft and have taken it as a full occupation. Imported fabrics such as white guinea brocade are purchased in large quantity and dyed in assorted colours, starched, calendared, then cut into five-meter length pieces. The fabrics are then well packaged and are ready for market. Apart from whole dyeing, guinea brocade fabrics are also used for tie-dye, batik, starch resist and printing. Professional textiles designers produce beautiful designs on them that are esthetically appealing then sell.



**Fig.5 Batik Fabric**

Embroidery is another age-long craft in Kaduna state. Maiwada, (2008) states that, “embroidery is an ornamental needlework that consists of designs worked on either fabric or garment. It is a fabric embellishment done with either silk, cotton, metalized or any other threads by hand stitches or embroidery machine”. Maiwada, (ibid) further reported that “Zaria City is a famous historical centre for production of heavily embroidered ‘babban riga’ (men’s garment) in Northern Nigeria, which continues to the present day.



**Fig.6 Embroidered ‘Babban riga’**

### **Ekiti State**

Ekiti state is another state with huge wealth of cultural textile industry. Ekiti state Council for Arts and Culture, (2009) reported that “the high quality indigenous fabric popularly known as ‘Afon’ (Aso Oke) is a product of the land. It also states that “this fabric had existed many years in the past and is still very relevant in this contemporary age”. The traditional hand woven fabrics produced in the state are of four different types, they are ‘Sanyan’ ‘Etu’ ‘Waji’ and ‘Alaari’. ‘Sanyan’, for instance, is regarded as the richest of all the traditional fabrics in the state. It is produced from wild silk fibre available in the state. ‘Etu’ fabric is the type dyed severally into indigo to achieve the desired colour. ‘Waji’ is the indigo dyed woven fabric which is used to brighten up other ‘Ofi’ fabrics that are not bright enough for outing. ‘Alaari’, this type of ‘Ofi’ is produced from ‘Sanyan’ but usually dyed with red cam wood solution. This fabric is highly prestigious and is used by people of high social status.

The traditional men’s dresses constructed from any of these fabrics include ‘agbada’, ‘dansiki’, ‘sokoto’, ‘gbariye’, ‘dandogo’ and a cap. The cap is either round or the ear-flaps type. The women’s dress consists of ‘buba’, wrapper, head gear and ‘gele’ (head covering). There are traditional tailors who are really experts in construction of these traditional garments for all occasions. ‘Adire’ (tie-dye and batik) craft is practiced side by side with traditional weaving in the state. The two age-long crafts have been and are still sustaining the cultural textiles industry in the state.

### **Ondo State**

Ondo state, like any other state in Yoruba land, has a long cultural history of traditional fabric production. According to Ondo state Council for Arts and Culture, (2009) historically, the mass movements of the Yoruba people from Upper Egypt through southern Arabia and through the northern part of Nigeria had some influence on the way the Yoruba people generally design their dresses. It further states that despite the assorted fabric design ideas common to the Yoruba people; Ondo state indigenes have some unique designs peculiar to them. Fabrics such as ‘Aso Owo’ and ‘Ondo’ are specially made in Ondo state.

The fashion designers and tailors in the state construct garments like ‘Agbada’, ‘Buba’, and ‘Sokoto’ with cap to match. Others include ‘Iro’, ‘Buba’ and ‘Gele’, ‘Kembe’ and ‘Dandogo’ all from the specialized fabrics produced. The garments produced are for different purposes such as ceremonial, occasional, casual or vocational. The old traditional fabrics produced with either horizontal or vertical looms were heavy but because of technological advancement the contemporary looms now in use, weave fabrics of lighter weight to suit varying needs of the people in Ondo state.

The people of this state have different garments to suit different cultural and social life in the society. For instance, there is a beaded garment called 'Ewu Akun' as reported by Ondo state Council for Arts and Culture, (ibid). The garment is exclusively for the royal family because it is only worn by the Oba. It is used for ritual purposes being that it is worn mainly during 'Igogo Traditional Festival'. This garment is also worn to celebrate new yam and new kola nut festivals. The garment is made of beads in form of blouse but with a thin layer of woven fabric underneath. It is usually worn on top of white skirt. This type of attire is peculiar to the Owo people in the state.

Another beautiful female dress for Owo women is called 'Kowojo'. This is a set of three pieces of woven fabrics consisting of large wrapper ('Iro'), a top layer ('Irole'), or ('Iborun') and a head covering ('gele'). Others include 'Gege' and 'Aso Etu'. All these are dresses of prestige, signifying the wearer's financial, cultural and social status in the society. Most of these woven fabrics are used by both males and females, but the fashion designers professionally design and construct garments to suit different sexes.

### **Conclusion**

The Nigerian traditional textile industry conclusively meets all the requirements of both "cultural industries" as well as "creative industries". The notion of "cultural industries" emphasizes those industries whose inspiration derives from heritage, traditional knowledge, and artistic elements of creativity. Also, the notion of "creative industries" places emphasis on the individual and his or her creativity, innovation, skill and talent in the exploitation of intellectual property. This industry equally meets the fundamental goals of wealth creation and income generation. This is because various jobs are created which continue to generate income for the teaming Nigerians engaged in the practice. The practitioners have the ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout activities or job functions involving their creative and constructive ideas. Finally, these practitioners are financially empowered and thereby enhancing the capacity of each of them which consequently transforms their social lives in the society.

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