

WESTERN INFLUENCE ON CHINESE AND NIGERIAN CULTURES

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Abstract

The world has been changing due to the growing influence of western cultures and globalization; and as a result of these, many people from different nations come in contact with new ways of life that are totally unfamiliar to them. Western culture and civilization have exerted a lot of influence on the Nigerian and Chinese societies which are reflected in their contemporary cultures. This paper examines the western influence and impacts in China and Nigeria.

Introduction

Western influence and westernization have led to the extinction of indigenous languages and cultures of many societies in the world. Nigerian cultures and native languages have suffered base on the adoption of western language (English) and values. The Chinese people have been a culturally sensitive people and they have done wonderfully well in preserving their language and cultures from going into extinction more than any country in the world. They never assimilate western language in their every day communication and education; unlike the Nigerian society where English language has been adopted as the official language for education and day to day communication.

Western influence on the developing countries of the world has been an interesting area of study. Western culture must always have influence on the Chinese and Nigerian cultures since many societies adopt and accept it as the

“modern (best)” culture in the world. Many countries especially some of the developing countries have lost their cultural uniqueness and identities due to western –inspired model ways of doing things. Many countries desire to be progressive and successful in order to meet up with the fast changes of modern times; therefore, the desire and fascination for change and transformation are very inevitable.

Western Influence and Impacts on Contemporary Chinese Culture

Westernization could also be referred to as part of globalization; many countries believe that globalization depicts western culture because globalization naturally originates from them. Many western technologies, cultures and customs like dress codes, hair styles, vehicles, buildings, music, language, fashion and materialism are introduced to different parts of the world.

In the 21st century, there had been so many changes in the different areas of the Chinese traditional culture and one good thing about these changes is that the Chinese people allow their cultures to exist along side with western cultures. China re-opened its door to the west in 1979; after closing it for 30 years. It is not so surprising that western style of materialism and capitalism entered China again in the 21st century. The new generation of Chinese youths sees traditional Chinese culture as being old fashioned or obsolete while western culture is accepted as the modern fashion. The American modes of doing things becomes a model to the young generation of the Chinese society, and this bring a lot of transformation in the Chinese economy and life style because they adopt the western values with Chinese modification. Though China has emerged as one of the strongest economies of the world and has been developing fast, it has never adopted western language to replace the mandarin. China has been very

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conservative about their cultural traditions and has maintained the fact that culture could be preserved using language. This leads to the fact that Chinese language would not go into extinction due to its regular usage. However, there are some areas where western influence affects China.

Areas of Western Influence on China

- a) **Chinese Buildings:** The Chinese people adopt the American style skyscrapers with western modern architecture which signifies that they have followed the trend of modernity. Today, many cities in China could boast of city skyline with modern designs for comfort.
- b) **Chinese Weddings:** Many Chinese have adopted the western form of white wedding ceremony. They see the western wedding as the modern form of wedding; while the traditional Chinese wedding is seen as the old fashion. This explains the reason why the bride uses two wedding dresses, white (formal/western dress) and red (Chinese traditional dress) on her wedding day.
- c) **Language:** English Language has been a major concern to the Chinese citizens; everyone desperately wants to learn and speak English language in order to be associated with western modernity.
- d) **Western Hair Style:** Instead of the Chinese Manchu queue (pigtails) they have adopted western hair styles and also dye hair colours.
- e) **Western Dress Code:** Most of the dress codes in China have been adopted from the western styles with Chinese designs.
- d) **Technology:** Western techniques have been adopted with Chinese characteristics.

Western Influence on Nigerian Contemporary Cultures

In Nigeria, westernization is seen as the effects of western invasion and colonization on some native societies of the world which had both positive and negative impacts. Nigerians have been westernized due to their past British colonial influence and leadership which relegated the Nigerian cultures to the background. There have been different levels of western cultural domination and destruction of Nigeria's local customs yet there were also resistance and modification of the native Nigerian cultures. However, some of the Nigeria's traditional cultures have gone into extinction as a result of western influence and impacts.

There are some good and bad effects of western influence; and their influence could be traced from Nigerian colonial past. During the colonial era, the British used western education as a tool in cultivating their western religion and cultural hegemony in Nigerians. They oppressed the indigenous natives by subjecting them to western values, so Nigerian natives were forced to accept the superiority of western cultures over their own unique Nigerian culture.

Amongst the good effects of westernization are the abolition of some Nigerian cultures, like the 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; yet they have saved the lives of many people who belonged to the above mentioned categories. In the contemporary Nigerian society, western values and influences have affected almost every part of the Nigerian cultures such as:

a) **Language:** Many Nigerian languages have gone into extinction and are no longer in use. English language has been adopted as the official language and has been used in educating Nigerian citizens. Many people in Nigeria are ashamed of speaking their native languages and as result of

this; the new generation of Nigerian youths could not speak their languages fluently.

b) **Weddings and Traditions:** Many Nigerians have been converted to Christianity and some do not value their traditional values again as a result of their belief in Christianity. The western wedding has been fashioned by many people in Nigeria as the modern type of wedding and they believe that marriage is not complete without the western type of wedding. So they combine the western and the traditional wedding together.

c) **Dress Codes:** Western fashions and styles have been adopted as a model although some people still wear Nigerian clothes. Western wedding dresses and men's suits have been adopted for church weddings.

d) **Buildings:** western designs and skylines had been adopted and seen as a model for modernity.

e) **Music:** pop music, acrobatic movements, fashion style, dyed hair etc have been emulated from the western culture and at the same time seen as the real trend of modernity in Nigeria; anybody that is not associated with all these does not belong to the modern generation.

Conclusion

Westernization or western influence has been a persuasive and accelerating force across the globe today. The British and Americans want non-developed societies to adopt western values, industries, technologies, law, politics, lifestyles, languages, diet, alphabets, religion and philosophy to the detriment of their traditional cultures. They simply want these societies to change toward a more westernized society, in the hope of attaining western values. Though they introduced modern facilities, industries, education and technologies, many countries of the world have lost their cultural uniqueness and

identities due to western trend of modernity .As a result of this, many indigenous languages and cultures are now on the verge of extinction because of globalization and western influence.

However, China has exerted its strength and love for Chinese Confucian cultural values by resisting western languages from replacing the Mandarin. Till today, Mandarin is used in every day conversation as well as the written form of the Chinese language and is spreading over the world. The Chinese government has also given many scholarships to foreigners in ensuring that mandarin spreads to all countries of the world and this is a great challenge to the western language (English). Though China is emerging as one of the strongest economies and economic powers of the world, the leaders have shown great love for their language and culture by educating its citizens using mandarin language; thereby expressing the idea that cultures are preserved through language. If one's language dies, automatically the culture will go into extinction.

In Nigeria, the case is different because of her colonial background; the citizens have been forced to adopt and be educated using the English language. Also, English language is the official language for learning and every day communication which made some of the Nigerian languages to die off. As a result of this, many traditions and customs are lost to modernization and western influence.

Many countries have a lot to learn from the Chinese society in order to project their cultural uniqueness and richness. Nigeria should learn from China and try to revive her rich indigenous languages for the education of her citizens since cultures and traditions are preserved through a country's language.

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