

Cultural Disruption and Technological Loss: Western Influence of Indigenous Technologies

John Ilemona(Ph.D)

History and International Relations Department
Veritas University Abuja
ilemonaj@veritas.edu.ng

Abstract: *Westernization has fundamentally altered the landscape of traditional technology in Nigeria, producing consequences that range from partial displacement and cultural depreciation to selective hybridization and market marginalisation. This article examines how prolonged exposure to Western educational systems, consumer culture, colonial administrative legacies, and global market integration has reshaped the conditions under which traditional technologies are produced, transmitted, and valued in contemporary Nigeria. Drawing on recent empirical literature across multiple sectors including textile production, agriculture, metallurgy, architecture, food processing, and medicinal knowledge the article argues that westernization has operated not as a uniform force of erasure but as an uneven and contested process that has differentially affected traditional technology systems depending on their sector, geographic location, gender dynamics, and degree of market integration. The analysis reveals three dominant patterns: outright displacement, hybridization and resilient persistence. The article situates these patterns within the broader theoretical framework of coloniality of knowledge, cultural imperialism, and endogenous development, drawing particular attention to the role of Nigerian educational institutions in reproducing Western technological hierarchies. Policy recommendations center on decolonizing Nigeria's innovation framework, strengthening intellectual property protections for traditional knowledge, and building institutional support for endangered technology traditions. The article contributes to scholarship on postcolonial development, African knowledge systems, and the political economy of technology transfer.*

Keywords: westernization, traditional technology, Nigeria, indigenous knowledge, technology displacement

Introduction

When the British colonial administration extended its reach across the territory that would become Nigeria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it brought with it more than guns, missionaries, and bureaucratic systems. It carried a particular understanding of what counted as knowledge, what constituted technology, and which forms of productive capacity deserved institutional recognition, investment, and reproduction. That understanding was, in important respects, self-serving: it positioned Western origin science and technology as universal, progressive, and superior, while classifying indigenous Nigerian knowledge systems as primitive, static, and culturally specific in the pejorative sense meaning local, limited, and destined for obsolescence.

This intellectual framework did not dissolve with formal independence in 1960. It was absorbed into Nigerian educational institutions, reproduced in policy documents, internalized by urban professional classes, and reinforced through patterns of foreign aid and investment that consistently privileged Western technological solutions over indigenous alternatives. The result, across more than a century of intensifying Western cultural and economic influence, has been a profound restructuring of the conditions under which traditional technologies are produced, transmitted, valued, and sustained.

This article examines that restructuring. It takes westernization not as a single event but as an ongoing, multi-dimensional process encompassing colonial administrative legacies, formal education, consumer culture, global market integration, media influence, and the internalization of Western aesthetic and technological norms by Nigerian actors themselves. Against this process, it assesses what has happened to Nigerian traditional technologies across multiple sectors, using recent empirical literature to trace patterns of displacement, hybridization, and resilient persistence.

The argument is not that westernization has been uniformly destructive that would be as reductive as the assumption that it has been uniformly progressive. The reality is more complicated and more interesting. Westernization has created some market opportunities for traditional technology producers even as it has undermined others. It has introduced materials and tools that traditional artisans have incorporated into their practice. It has generated a global consumer appetite for artisanal, handmade goods that some Nigerian traditional technology sectors are beginning to access. But it has also eroded knowledge transmission systems, stigmatized traditional practice, concentrated economic value in Western origin alternatives, and created legal and institutional frameworks that systematically disadvantage indigenous knowledge communities.

Understanding these dynamics is both intellectually important and practically urgent. Nigeria faces a knowledge crisis in its traditional technology sectors not because the technologies are inherently unviable, but because the conditions for their reproduction have been systematically undermined by processes that this article traces and analyzes.

Theoretical Framework

Coloniality of Knowledge

The foundational theoretical resource for this analysis is the concept of coloniality of knowledge, developed most influentially by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2000) and extended by Mignolo (2007) and others in the decolonial studies tradition. Quijano's central argument is that colonialism did not merely impose political and economic domination it produced a global hierarchy of knowledge in which European ways of knowing were constituted as universal, rational, and scientific, while non-European knowledge systems were classified as local, traditional, and epistemologically inferior. This hierarchy did not end with formal decolonization; it was reproduced through educational systems, international institutions, development discourse, and the self-understanding of postcolonial elites trained in Western universities.

In the Nigerian perspective, the coloniality of knowledge is visible in the persistent institutional subordination of indigenous knowledge systems to Western origin scientific frameworks. University curricula in engineering, agriculture, medicine, and architecture have been modeled almost entirely on British and American templates, with minimal integration of indigenous Nigerian knowledge (Dei, 2023). The result is that generations of Nigerian professionals have been trained to view Western technology as the default standard against which indigenous alternatives are measured and typically found wanting rather than as one tradition among several from which synthesis and innovation might draw.

Cultural Imperialism and Technology Transfer

Herbert Schiller's (1976) concept of cultural imperialism the process through which dominant cultures, through media, education, and commerce, displace or subordinate local cultural forms offers a complementary framework for understanding westernization's effects on traditional technology. In Schiller's account, cultural imperialism is not primarily a matter of explicit coercion but of the structural advantages that dominant cultural producers enjoy in global markets: the capacity to produce at scale, to distribute widely, to set aesthetic standards, and to shape consumption preferences in ways that create demand for their own products and depreciate demand for local alternatives.

Applied to technology, this framework draws attention to how westernization creates demand conditions that disadvantage traditional technology producers. When Nigerian consumers, shaped by advertising, media, and educational socialization, come to prefer imported products over locally produced traditional alternatives not necessarily because the imported products are objectively superior but because they carry cultural cachet associated with modernity and Western lifestyle traditional technology producers face a demand contraction that is partly manufactured rather than natural. Ekwueme (2021) documents this dynamic clearly in the context of traditional Nigerian textile consumption, showing that among urban middle class consumers in Lagos and Abuja, preference for imported synthetic fabrics over locally woven traditional cloth is strongly correlated with educational level and media consumption, suggesting that aesthetic preference is shaped by exposure to Western cultural norms rather than by evaluation of material quality.

Endogenous Development and Technological Sovereignty

Against the displacement narrative, the framework of endogenous development associated in the African context with scholars including Mkandawire (2011) and Zeleza (2006) offers a vision of what development would look like if it built on African knowledge systems rather than substituting for them. Endogenous development theory argues that sustainable economic growth must draw on the motivational, material, and intellectual resources of the societies it is meant to benefit, rather than importing templates developed in and for different social contexts. In relation to technology, this suggests that Nigerian economic development would be better served by investing in the improvement and scaling of indigenous technological traditions than by the continuous importation of Western origin alternatives not out of cultural chauvinism but because endogenous technologies are adapted to local ecological conditions, buildable from local materials, maintainable by local knowledge, and economically organized in ways that distribute benefits across communities rather than concentrating them in import supply chains.

Colonial Foundations of Western Technological Dominance

Administrative Displacement of Indigenous Technology Systems

The colonial encounter in Nigeria produced a series of specific policy interventions that directly undermined traditional technology systems. The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade had already disrupted some of the trade networks through which traditional technology products circulated, but it was direct colonial administration that most systematically attacked the conditions for traditional technology production.

The imposition of British commercial law and property rights systems disrupted communal resource management practices on which many traditional technologies depended communal forest management for craft materials, seasonal water rights for traditional agriculture, collective land use systems for pastoral communities (Eze & Anyanwu, 2021). Colonial taxation systems, requiring cash payment, pushed rural producers into cash crop monocultures and wage labor at the expense of the diversified production systems within which many traditional technologies were embedded.

Colonial trade policy was particularly consequential. The deliberate opening of Nigerian markets to British manufactured goods particularly textiles, metalware, and ceramics through preferential tariff arrangements created import competition that traditional artisanal producers could not meet on price. Shenton (1986) documents how Lancashire cotton textiles, produced at industrial scale and dumped in West African markets at prices below domestic production costs, devastated traditional weaving industries across Yorubaland and Hausaland within a few decades of colonial trade liberalization. The Kano textile industry, once one of the most productive in West Africa, lost a substantial share of its market within a generation of British commercial penetration.

The colonial education system compounded these market effects. Mission schools and government schools taught a curriculum that treated African traditional knowledge as irrelevant to productive economic life, providing instead a colonial vocational training that oriented students toward participation in the colonial economy as clerks, artisans trained in Western crafts, and agricultural extension workers promoting colonial cash crops (Dei, 2023). The cultural message embedded in this educational framework that traditional knowledge was backward and Western knowledge was progressive was absorbed by generations of Nigerians who then reproduced it through their own consumption choices, professional practices, and parenting decisions.

The Stigmatization of Traditional Practice

One of westernization's most consequential effects on traditional technology has been the production of what Dei (2023) calls epistemic stigma the internalization, by members of traditional knowledge communities themselves, of negative valuations of their own knowledge systems. This stigma operates at multiple levels: parents who discourage their children from entering traditional craft apprenticeships because they associate such careers with poverty and low status; communities that abandon traditional building techniques in favor of cement block construction that carries modernist cultural associations despite being less thermally appropriate; farmers who substitute imported chemical inputs for traditional soil management practices whose effectiveness they have come to distrust through exposure to agricultural extension messaging that consistently privileges modern input packages.

Ekwueme (2021) documents epistemic stigma vividly in the context of traditional textile production in Lagos. He interviewed young women who had grown up in households where traditional adire cloth dyeing was practiced and who had made deliberate decisions not to learn the craft not because they lacked opportunity or aptitude, but because they associated traditional craft work with poverty, femininity in its devalued sense, and backwardness. These women often expressed admiration for the aesthetic quality of adire cloth while refusing to produce it, a contradiction that Ekwueme attributes to the cultural work of westernization in separating aesthetic appreciation from productive knowledge.

Westernization and Agricultural Technology

The Green Revolution and the Marginalisation of Indigenous Agricultural Knowledge

The introduction of Green Revolution agricultural packages into Nigeria from the 1960s onwards represents one of the most consequential and well documented cases of Western technology displacing indigenous agricultural knowledge. Green Revolution technology high yielding seed varieties, synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, mechanized tillage was developed largely in international agricultural research centers based on research conducted in Mexico and the Philippines and subsequently extended to sub-Saharan Africa through donor funded programs.

The economic record of Green Revolution adoption in Nigeria is mixed at best. Obi et al. (2021) review forty years of evidence on improved variety adoption in Nigerian smallholder agriculture and find that high yielding varieties have increased yields in favorable agroecological zones and for farmers with reliable access to irrigation and purchased inputs, but have delivered disappointing results in the rain fed smallholder systems that account for the majority of Nigerian agricultural production. The dependence on external input supply chains particularly for seeds and fertilizers has introduced new economic vulnerabilities, with yield performance directly tied to exchange rate fluctuations and import supply disruptions that traditional agricultural systems, which relied on locally produced inputs, were not subject to.

More significantly, Green Revolution promotion has systematically eroded the traditional agricultural knowledge systems with which it competed. Agricultural extension services, from the colonial period through to present-day programs funded by international donors including the World Bank and USAID, have consistently promoted modern input packages while providing no institutional support for indigenous agricultural knowledge documentation or preservation (Adekunle et al., 2022). The result is that knowledge

of traditional crop varieties, soil management techniques, and mixed farming systems has declined across generations without being formally documented, creating the conditions for irreversible knowledge loss.

Adekunle et al. (2022) document a particularly striking case in Kogi State, where traditional sorghum farming systems practiced by Igala communities had incorporated a sophisticated rotation system involving over twenty locally adapted sorghum varieties, managed according to soil type, slope, and micro-climate. Agricultural extension promotion of improved sorghum varieties, backed by subsidized seed distribution, had by 2018 reduced active cultivation of local varieties to fewer than six in most communities, with older farmers expressing inability to locate seed of varieties that had been standard production just twenty years earlier.

Hybridization in Contemporary Farming Systems

The displacement narrative is, however, incomplete. Research on actual farming practice in Nigeria consistently finds that farmers have not simply adopted modern packages wholesale but have developed hybrid systems that combine modern inputs with traditional knowledge in ways that reflect rational responses to economic and ecological constraints (Obi et al., 2021). Many Nigerian smallholder farmers use improved seed varieties for market oriented production while maintaining traditional varieties for household consumption and risk management. They apply chemical fertilizers to cash crop plots while using traditional organic amendments on food crop areas. They consult agricultural extension workers and traditional farming knowledge within the same production season.

These hybrid systems are not always efficient by any single metric, but they represent genuine technological innovation in response to a changed but still uncertain environment. Recognizing them as innovations rather than as incomplete adoption of modern packages would require a reframing of agricultural development policy that most Nigerian institutions have not yet accomplished.

Westernization and Craft Technology

Textile Production

The effects of westernization on Nigerian textile production span nearly two centuries, from the initial impact of colonial trade liberalization through to contemporary competition from cheap Chinese imports and the cultural influence of Western fashion media. The overall pattern is one of long term displacement punctuated by episodes of resilience and, more recently, a partial revival driven by cultural nationalism and global artisanal market trends.

Traditional weaving *aso-oke* in Yorubaland, *akwete* among the Igbo, and cotton strip weaving among northern communities has survived the competition of industrial textiles, but in a significantly changed market position. Production has contracted substantially from peak colonial era levels, and the communities that remain active producers are concentrated in fewer locations, with smaller practitioner populations and weaker apprenticeship systems (Adeyemi, 2020). The economic terms have also shifted: traditional weavers now produce primarily for ceremonial and prestige markets rather than everyday consumption, which means that their income is more volatile and dependent on cultural events weddings, chieftaincy celebrations, religious festivals whose scheduling they cannot control.

The synthetic fiber penetration of traditional weaving is an important case of technological hybridization with mixed consequences. Traditional *aso-oke* weavers in Iseyin and other Oyo State weaving centers have widely adopted rayon, lurex, and other synthetic yarns that are not locally produced and must be imported. These materials extend the aesthetic range of *aso-oke* and have allowed producers to meet changing consumer preferences for glossy, colorful fabrics. They have also, however, introduced a dependence on import supply chains and created a price volatility linked to exchange rate fluctuations that traditional cotton-based production did not involve. Adeyemi (2020) notes that the 2016 naira devaluation caused severe disruption to *aso-oke* production in Iseyin, as yarn import costs doubled within months, pricing smaller producers out of production.

Metallurgy and Blacksmithing

The case of traditional Nigerian blacksmithing illustrates westernization's displacement effects with particular clarity. Traditional ironworking communities the Awka smiths, the Nkwere metalworkers, the Yoruba gunsmiths, the Nupe bronzecasters developed their skills over centuries within economic systems where demand for hand forged tools, weapons, agricultural implements, and ceremonial objects was stable and geographically extensive.

Colonial trade policy directly attacked this demand base. The importation of British-manufactured tools and hardware at prices below local production costs facilitated initially by colonial trade preference and later by industrial scale advantage progressively displaced demand for traditionally produced equivalents (Ogundele, 2019). The process was gradual but cumulatively decisive: by the time of independence, the market for hand-forged agricultural tools had shrunk dramatically; by the 1990s, it had become marginal in most of the areas where traditional smithing had previously flourished.

The post-independence period intensified these pressures. Chinese manufactured goods, entering Nigerian markets at extremely low prices from the 1990s onwards, completed the displacement of local metalware in most market segments. Afolabi (2022) estimates that the number of practicing traditional smiths in Awka historically one of West Africa's most productive ironworking centers fell from approximately 800 in 1970 to fewer than 120 by 2020, with the remaining practitioners concentrated in decorative and ceremonial work that commands insufficient volume to sustain the knowledge community.

What has been lost in this process is not only income and employment but accumulated knowledge about iron smelting, alloy properties, tool design, and tempering techniques that took centuries to develop and that cannot be easily reconstructed once the practitioner community falls below a critical mass. Ogundele (2019) argues that Nigeria's traditional metallurgical knowledge represents a technological heritage of continental significance, comparable in importance to the iron smelting traditions of the Haya in Tanzania or the Basque Country in Spain, both of which have received serious ethnometallurgical study and some degree of institutional protection.

Pottery and Ceramics

Traditional pottery has followed a trajectory similar to blacksmithing but with some important differences. The penetration of plastic and aluminum containers into rural Nigerian markets products of Western industrial processes imported or locally manufactured under license has severely reduced demand for traditional functional pottery, particularly the water storage vessels and cooking pots that were once produced in virtually every rural community (Lawal, 2021).

The one area of genuine growth for traditional pottery has been in decorative and art market segments, where Nigerian and international collectors have created demand for high quality traditionally produced ceramics. The legacy of Ladi Kwali the Gwari potter whose work was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and who became Nigeria's most internationally recognized traditional craft artist has given Abuja region traditional pottery a cultural profile that has translated into a viable, if small, art market niche. Lawal (2021) documents growing interest from Lagos interior design markets in high-end traditional ceramics, with some producers achieving prices that provide incomes comparable to urban formal employment.

This art market resilience is real but limited. It supports a small number of producers in aesthetically distinguished work, but it does not address the broader structural decline of traditional pottery as a community scale productive activity. The majority of traditional pottery communities have lost significant productive capacity without developing access to art market alternatives.

Westernization and Traditional Medicine Technology

Pharmaceutical Displacement and Biomedical Dominance

Traditional Nigerian medical knowledge encompassing herbalism, bone-setting, spiritual healing practices, and midwifery represents a technological system of enormous scope and, in several areas, demonstrated efficacy. The displacement of this system by Western biomedical frameworks has been one of the most consequential effects of westernization on Nigerian knowledge systems, with implications for both public health and the economic survival of traditional medical knowledge communities.

Colonial medical policy systematically delegitimized traditional medicine, prohibiting certain practices, requiring registration systems that traditional practitioners could not access, and building biomedical infrastructure hospitals, dispensaries, medical schools exclusively on Western models. The postcolonial Nigerian state largely inherited and extended this framework, creating a medical regulatory environment in which traditional medicine practitioners operate without legal recognition, professional organization, or institutional support for knowledge documentation and improvement (Elujoba et al., 2020).

The economic consequences are significant on multiple dimensions. The approximately 80% of Nigerians who use traditional medicine at some point in their healthcare a figure cited by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) access it through an informal system that provides no economic data, no quality assurance, and no intellectual property protection for innovating practitioners. At the same time, biopiracy the appropriation of traditional Nigerian medical knowledge by international pharmaceutical companies without benefit sharing represents a transfer of economic value out of Nigeria that occurs precisely because the country lacks both the documentation systems and the legal frameworks necessary to protect traditional knowledge (Okafor, 2021).

Elujoba et al. (2020) document several Nigerian plant based medicines including *Phyllanthus amarus* for hepatitis B and *Hunteria umbellata* for diabetes management that have been the subject of international pharmaceutical research, with patent applications filed by external researchers on the basis of leads obtained from Nigerian traditional medicine knowledge. In each case, the communities that developed and maintained this knowledge over generations have received no compensation. This is not a marginal or anecdotal phenomenon; it reflects a structural relationship between Western pharmaceutical systems and African traditional knowledge in which the latter systematically generates value that the former captures.

Integration Attempts and Their Limitations

Nigeria has made several formal attempts to integrate traditional medicine into its national health system. The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) established a Traditional Medicine Unit, and the Federal Ministry of Health has produced policy documents acknowledging the role of traditional medicine in primary healthcare. The Traditional Medicine Policy of 2007, revised in alignment with the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023, commits Nigeria to documentation, standardization, and eventual clinical integration of traditional medicine (Federal Ministry of Health, 2007).

In practice, implementation has been slow and inadequately funded. Elujoba et al. (2020) find that the documentation of Nigerian traditional medicinal plants remains fragmentary, with significant regional gaps and a heavy reliance on international ethnobotanical research rather than domestically funded programs. The standardization and clinical testing framework required to bring traditional medicines into formal healthcare has been established in principle but has processed very few products in practice. The result is that traditional medicine occupies a liminal position: too large and too important to ignore, but too institutionally neglected to integrate.

Westernization and Architectural Technology

The Cement Block Paradigm

Perhaps no domain better illustrates westernization's effects on traditional technology than housing construction. The shift from traditional building technologies earthen construction in the north, timber and thatch in forested zones, coral and limestone in coastal Lagos to the ubiquitous cement block and corrugated iron sheet construction that now dominates across Nigeria represents a cultural and technological transformation of enormous scale, driven by a combination of colonial policy, postcolonial modernization ideology, and consumer culture.

Traditional building technologies in Nigeria were ecologically adapted in ways that their cement block replacements often are not. The thick earthen walls of northern Nigerian compound architecture provide passive thermal regulation maintaining interior temperatures significantly below ambient during peak heat that cement block walls cannot match without air conditioning. Traditional materials were locally available, maintenance involved locally held skills, and construction costs were largely absorbed within community labor exchange systems rather than requiring cash expenditure on imported materials (Eziyi & Aderonmu, 2020).

The shift to cement block construction was partly coerced by colonial building codes and policy that stigmatized earthen construction as unhygienic and structurally inadequate. Mabogunje et al. (as cited in Eziyi & Aderonmu, 2020) document how colonial urban planning regulations in cities including Lagos, Kano, and Enugu mandated modern construction materials and prohibited earthen construction in designated areas, effectively banning traditional building technology from the urban economic sphere. This regulatory exclusion became self-reinforcing: as demand for traditional construction contracted, skills declined, material supply chains atrophied, and the cost of traditional construction relative to modern alternatives increased.

Contemporary Nigeria bears the costs of this transition in multiple ways. Housing is dramatically more expensive than it would be if traditional construction methods were in use a critical problem in a country where the housing deficit is estimated at over 17 million units (Akeju, 2020). Urban thermal comfort is significantly worse than it would be in traditionally designed buildings, generating demand for air conditioning that Nigeria's electricity infrastructure cannot reliably supply. Construction material import costs for cement, steel reinforcing bar, and roofing sheets represent a significant drain on foreign exchange. And the knowledge of traditional building technology, once held by communities across the country, is now concentrated in a small number of elderly practitioners and academic researchers.

Sustainable Architecture and the Re-emergence of Traditional Building Knowledge

There is, however, a countermovement. The global sustainable architecture movement, driven by climate change concerns and energy efficiency imperatives, has generated growing professional interest in traditional building technologies across Africa. Nigerian architects trained in sustainable design have increasingly looked to indigenous construction techniques particularly compressed earth block technology, which modernizes traditional earthen construction with improved quality standards as a response to both the housing affordability crisis and the thermal comfort problem (Eziyi & Aderonmu, 2020).

This re-engagement with traditional building knowledge represents a genuine opportunity, but it also carries the risk of a different form of westernization one in which traditional knowledge is appropriated by credentialed professionals and reconstituted as "sustainable architecture" for middle-class clients, without economic benefit to the communities that developed and maintained the original knowledge. Managing this risk requires deliberate policy choices about intellectual property, community benefit sharing, and the inclusion of traditional knowledge holders in architectural education and practice.

Education, Media, and the Cultural Production of Technological Hierarchy

Curriculum and the Devaluation of Indigenous Knowledge

Nigeria's formal education system, from primary school through to postgraduate research, has played a central role in reproducing Western technological hierarchies. Science curricula are built almost entirely on Western canonical knowledge, with no systematic incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems in chemistry, biology, physics, or engineering. Agricultural education promotes modern input-based farming systems without reference to traditional agricultural knowledge. Medical education trains students in Western biomedical frameworks without exposure to the pharmacological knowledge embedded in traditional medicine (Dei, 2023).

The cultural message transmitted through this curriculum is consistent: knowledge that counts is Western in origin, universal in application, and institutionally validated through peer review and professional credentialing. Indigenous knowledge, by contrast, is classified when it appears at all in social studies and cultural education, framed as heritage rather than productive knowledge, interesting as anthropological object but not relevant to serious economic or technological life.

Dei (2023) argues forcefully that this curriculum structure is not politically neutral it serves the interests of educational institutions, publishing industries, and technology sectors based primarily in the Global North that benefit from maintaining developing country dependence on knowledge imports. The decolonization of African university curricula is therefore not merely a cultural project but an economic one, with direct implications for the viability of indigenous technology sectors.

Media and Consumer Culture

The influence of Western media on Nigerian consumption preferences has accelerated dramatically with the expansion of cable television, internet access, and social media. Nigerian consumers, particularly urban youth, are now exposed daily to Western lifestyle imagery that consistently associates modernity, success, and desirability with Western-origin products, aesthetics, and technologies. This cultural influence shapes demand in ways that disadvantage traditional technology producers.

Ekwueme (2021) shows that among urban Nigerians aged 18–35, preference for Western-style ready-to-wear clothing over traditional textiles has increased sharply over the past decade, despite the simultaneous growth of cultural nationalism movements like the #WearNaija campaign that promote traditional textiles. The coexistence of cultural nationalism and persistent Western consumption preference illustrates the complexity of westernization's effects: it does not produce a uniform subordination of traditional values but a contested terrain in which traditional and Western cultural orientations compete in ways that vary by social context, consumer segment, and product category.

Patterns of Response: Displacement, Hybridization, and Resilience

Displacement

The cases reviewed in this article reveal clear instances of displacement situations where westernization has effectively ended the economic viability of traditional technology systems without creating compensating opportunities for displaced knowledge communities. Traditional iron-smithing across most of Nigeria represents displacement in this sense: the market has contracted to a point where the knowledge community can no longer sustain itself economically, and the knowledge itself is at risk of being lost within a generation. Traditional functional pottery in most communities represents a similar pattern, as does traditional cotton spinning, which has essentially ceased as an economic activity.

In these cases, the economic loss is not merely the income of individual practitioners but the accumulated knowledge capital that disappears with them, knowledge that as argued throughout this article, cannot be easily reconstructed and that has potential future value in areas ranging from materials science to sustainable design.

Hybridization

Hybridization the integration of Western origin materials, tools, or market linkages into fundamentally traditional production systems is perhaps the most common pattern in the contemporary Nigerian traditional technology landscape. Adire cloth produced with synthetic dyes, aso-oke woven with imported synthetic yarn, traditional farmers using both chemical fertilizers and traditional soil amendments, traditional potters selling through Instagram and at urban design fairs these are all instances of hybridization that complicate any simple narrative of either displacement or preservation.

Hybrid forms are not inherently problematic. Many of them represent genuine innovation traditional knowledge communities responding adaptively to changed material and market conditions in ways that preserve core technical knowledge while extending its economic viability. But hybridization also carries risks, the progressive replacement of traditional elements may eventually hollow out the traditional knowledge base, producing forms that are labeled traditional but lack the embedded knowledge that gave the originals their character.

Resilient Persistence

Some traditional technologies have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of westernization pressures, maintaining both practice and knowledge transmission without substantial compromise of their core characteristics. Traditional Yoruba babalawo divination, traditional Igbo medicine, community held seed systems in various agricultural zones, and some traditional water management systems represent cases of resilient persistence technologies maintained because they serve needs that Western alternatives cannot adequately or affordably meet in the communities that use them.

Resilient persistence is not the same as stasis. Resilient traditional technologies are typically those that have proven adaptive to changing conditions incorporating new materials or techniques selectively while maintaining core knowledge and that are embedded in social structures, cultural meanings, and community relationships that give their practitioners reasons beyond economic rationality to maintain them.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The most fundamental policy change required is a genuine reorientation of Nigeria's national science, technology, and innovation framework toward endogenous knowledge. This means more than adding rhetoric about indigenous knowledge to policy documents that continue to allocate resources primarily toward Western technology adoption and transfer. It means restructuring the National Research and Innovation Council and the budget allocations related agencies to include substantial, ring fenced funding for indigenous technology documentation, improvement, and commercialization.

Nigeria must enact legislation protecting traditional knowledge from commercial appropriation, this legislation should establish community rights over traditional knowledge, create benefit sharing requirements for commercial use, and fund a national traditional knowledge documentation initiative modelled on India's TKDL that creates a prior art record preventing foreign patent claims on traditional Nigerian knowledge.

Policy should also address the market access challenges that prevent traditional technology producers from capturing the economic returns that global artisanal and heritage markets potentially offer. This includes developing quality certification systems for traditional products, supporting e-commerce and export market development, and creating public procurement policies that generate domestic demand for traditionally produced goods in government buildings, official gifts, and cultural institutions.

Conclusion

Westernization has reshaped the landscape of traditional technology in Nigeria across more than a century of intensifying cultural, economic, and institutional influence. The effects have been uneven and contested: some traditional technology systems have been displaced effectively beyond recovery; others have crossbred with Western elements in ways that extend their viability while changing their character; still others have demonstrated resilience rooted in the social and ecological embeddedness that no Western origin alternative can replicate. What unifies these varied outcomes is that they have occurred within a structural environment produced by colonial policy, perpetuated by postcolonial institutional choices, and continuously reinforced by global market integration that systematically disadvantages indigenous knowledge systems relative to Western origin alternatives. This structural disadvantage is not a natural consequence of technological competition on equal terms; it is a product of specific historical and political choices that could be made differently. The path forward requires recognizing traditional technology not as a relic of a pre-industrial past that westernization is gradually, naturally superseding, but as a living knowledge system with genuine economic potential that will remain unrealized without deliberate state investment in documentation, protection, institutional support, and the kind of intellectual respect that would make traditional technology careers attractive to a new generation of Nigerian practitioners. The consequences of failing to act are not merely cultural. They are economic, ecological, and developmental in the fullest sense.

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