

ARTS AND CRAFTS AS SPRINGBOARD FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INDUSTRIALIZATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to highlight the potentialities of Arts and Craft as viable wealth creation area which government can tap and explore through industrialization to create employment and boost foreign reserve. Through a survey of the various Arts and Crafts practices in the economy, a number of notable ones were identified and appraised by isolating their distinctive capacity as springboard for sustainable development and industrialization. It is found that the embrace of Arts and Crafts as part of a model to fast track the industrial growth of an economy meet with the ideals of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Consequently, government should direct relevant agencies to promote the setting up of Crafts and cultural industries that will not only compete with imported goods but will boost the country's foreign reserve.

Keywords: *Manual dexterity, handicraft, cottage Industry, entrepreneurial skill, traditional art, apprentice*

INTRODUCTION

Arts and Crafts are another Nigerian industrial cluster project. The benefit of Arts and Crafts is not quite derived from the present National Development Plan. Rather, emphasis on development is geared more to the exploitation of the crude oil and other mineral resources. The folk art of Nigeria has a long and rich tradition behind it. Its international popularity today can be seen from the enormous number of hobby and Crafts departments, shops and stores springing up everywhere (Verlag, 1976). Arts and Crafts are traditional art of Nigeria that has meaning and relevance to the society. Crafts have subject content that both the productive and appreciative aspects are important. It reflects the industrial state of a nation (NERC 1977).

In a world of change and continuity, there are bound to be challenges in attempt to industrialize an economy. Governments focus attention on industrialization not only to provide employment opportunities for their citizens but also to diversify the economy. In Nigeria, apart from the abundant agricultural resources, mineral potentials, the country is endowed with a lot of Arts and Crafts resources which when fully tapped and managed properly will provide job opportunities to the teeming masses (Information Department, 1971). Government industrial policy aims at promoting small-scale industries including those connected with the processing and utilization of agricultural products. The processing industrial projects underscore the need for foreign assistance in view of the lack of trained indigenous manpower and technical know-how.

Thus, Government could attract overseas business concerns to invest in a country using local resources and labour thus providing the indigenes opportunities to acquire technical and managerial skills. In consequence therefore, one of the most pressing needs of the African continent today is industrialization which gives room for the development of individual skills. Manual dexterity is an essential ingredient for technological accomplishment and practical crafts can help to overcome many problems in the technical field. It is a matter of recognizing that every person is a creative artist in his own right and of helping him to acquire entrepreneurial skill that will enhance the economic development of a country.

The situation in contemporary Nigerian economy is not exactly this. The benefits of Arts and Crafts are not quite derived from the present National Development Plan (Iriwieri 1986). This is because emphasis at development is geared more to the exploitation of the "black gold" and other mineral resources. It is on this backdrop that this study seeks to highlight the potentialities of Arts and Crafts as wealth creation medium which government can explore through industrialization to enhance foreign exchange reserve.

ARTS, CRAFTS AND COTTAGE INDUSTRY

Arts and Crafts are the result of man's desire to improve upon the world by utilizing nature's benevolence. Nature has made everything tangible and intangible available for man's use and development. The tangible things include: trees, grasses, gravel, granite etc. while the intangible is the idea. As such, Arts and Crafts could serve as springboard for sustainable development and industrialization in a given economy for there seems to be a conscious non-awareness of the value, potentials and significance of Crafts in normal everyday life. This is evidenced from people's purchase pattern and positive attitude towards machine-made products more than man-made objects in spite of their high standard of workmanship and their durability.

Art is variously defined. It is often regarded as human skill, as skill applied to the art of imitation and design, painting and architecture. It is also seen as a means of formulating our feelings and giving them tangible expression (Encyclopedia Americana International, 1995). In a way, arts and crafts can be seen as the articulation of the tangible and intangible resources made available by nature for the development of the society and enhancement of lives. This goes to say that an artist must have the ability to marry his artistic ideas with the available tangible resources to create an item or items that captivates man's sense of beauty. The word Craft is understood to refer to a piece of handiwork which has some claim to beauty. It is a result of a union of the craftsmen's aesthetic feeling and his skill. Today, when it is used to describe industrial production, it is referred to as industrial Arts but other sections - Textiles, Graphics, ceramics, photography and other allied subjects are called applied arts (Tomlinson, 1950).

Art handicraft is defined as craft governed by the will of the artist, a form of production in which the material used is an essential point of departure for the whole of the creative process and in which practical function plays an important part. "Design" includes things traditionally made by hand but now produced more rapidly and efficiently with the aid of machine and industrial organization. It is otherwise called art industry or industrially produced handicraft. Industrial design deals with complex technical products and in earlier decades, silversmiths, potters and other trained craftsmen as well as engineers and other technologists were involved in industrial design. Cultural industries include textiles (small scale and capital intensive), furniture (small scale and capital intensive), ceramics and pottery (Aig-Imuokhuede, 1988).

The word technology is derived from the two Greek words "Techne" which means art or craft, and "logos" meaning speech or word. Therefore, it is a discourse upon the arts, particularly Fine and Applied Arts. It is a unity of technique, form and task. Crafts or any mechanical contrivances that could be produced with one's traditionally or locally acquired creative technique; materials are the "ABC" of technology. Production gives life's assurance while consumption shows life's unpredictability. In the words of Leon Sullivan, "Give a man fish and he will have fish for one day. Teach a man to fish, and he will have fish for the rest of his life (Oloidi 1989). Traditional Crafts are of two types:

- (i) Utility Crafts which provide the essential items such as clothing, farm implements, utensils, furniture, materials for house construction.
- (ii) Art Crafts such as wood carving, fancy leather ware, jewellery and other decoratives. While utility crafts are largely full-time occupation of particular groups or families such as carpenters, blacksmiths, boat makers, basket weavers, tinkers etc, the Art Crafts are often part - time occupation.

Cottage industry is a small scale industry comprising service sectors of repairs and maintenance of vehicles, production of implements and tools etc. Craft skill is acquired through formal training or at another craftsman's workshop. Crafts embraces skills involved with the following: batik, book-binding, calligraphy, candles, castings, ceramics, clothes, clothing,

embroidery, enamel, mosaic work, pressed flowers, furniture, fur and skins, glass, engraving glass and stained glass. Others are horn products, jewellery and silver smithing, knitwear, leather, metal work, models and miniatures, musical instruments, paper sculpture, plaques, painting on paper, stone work, tapestry, macramé, textiles, textile kits, toys and dolls, weaving, wood and many others.

Cottage industry is carried out in the home by members of the household as part-time or full-time occupation and its products are generally of the essential consumer type such as hand-woven cloth, handloom carpets and pottery (Aig-Imoukhuede, 1988). Handicrafts are also produced in the cottage or home as part-time activities utilizing implements and hand tools and are characterized by the lack of machinery with motive power, by high artistry and skills of manipulation by employment limited to members of the household or a particular artisan community.

GENRE OF CRAFTWORKS AS POTENTIALS FOR INDUSTRIALISATION

Craft articles possess artistic qualities which enhance their attraction and market value. The local craftsmanship includes cloth weaving, mat-making, pottery, basketry, utility carving, smithery, jewellery etc. These are briefly discussed as follows:

Pottery: It involves moulding or hand building of clay objects like utensils, animals and other-shapes. Where possible they are decorated, fired and glazed. Pottery is another occupation dominated by women. Clay is obtained from river banks. It is mixed with water and kneaded sufficiently to enable the potter mould whatever objects is required. The moulded object is allowed to dry in the sun for three or more days. It is then sprinkled with water and scraped to become smooth. It is dried in the sun again before being finally baked over an open fire. The potters produce a wide variety of earthenware including cooking pots bowls, mugs and the traditional Ukoko pipes with a six-foot long bamboo mouth-piece (Information Dept, 1971). With the acquisition of kiln and varieties of glaze and potter's wheel, a cottage pottery industry, which will be self-sustaining, can take off. This pottery art is peculiar to the states in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria such as Osun, Ondo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo, Ebonyi amongst others.

Weaving: This embraces a whole gamut of crafts such as making of clothes, baskets, hats, fans, carpet, rug, bags, chairs, mats and other items peculiar to almost all the states in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria particularly those in the core North and South-south. The materials for production of these articles are derived from raffia fibers, grass, palm fronds and canes among others. For instance; clothes are hand-woven and highly dominated by the women folk who employ the same technique. Weaving is done on a simple loom installed in a corner of the room. The looms usually consist of two wooden poles, each about six feet long planted on the floor, side by side with each other in a slanting position and at a distance of about three feet apart. Two other poles are tied across the standing ones. The first about eighteen inches from the ground and the other about four feet away from the first. This constitutes the basic framework. The yarn is produced by ginning raw cotton on a special type of bow.

A mass of cotton is placed over the bow and as the string is pulled in a speedy manner at rapid intervals, the seeds are wrenched from the cotton wool. With a wooden spindle consisting of a long spin and a knob at the base, the wool is spun into a yarn or thread. Lengthy coils of thread are fixed on to the loom and swung round the cross poles to form the base fabric. They are held in required positions by carved sticks, designed for the purpose. Weaving is carried out with the help of a wooden shuttle with two pointed ends. The shuttle is used to shoot the yarn across the warp or fabric to form a weft or web. Patterns are affected by the use of large needles. Coloured threads are obtained from camwood and kolanuts. Generally, the clothes are thick and rather coarse in texture, but lighter and smoother ones are also made. The finished clothes are used for dresses and home furnishing such as door and window blind, bedding, table covers, theater stage background, curtains, architectural theatrical designs (costume, mask, stage scenery, models and set puppets) among others.

Mats are thick and coarse fabric made from the fronds of the raffia palm or the soft tender and glossy kind made from rushes. Plaiting is done mostly on the floor where the mat-maker squats and on the top when certain decorative patterns are to be plaited. Some mats are used as bedding, some as table mats and others as wall mats. Mat-making is traditionally a woman's



Fig. 1: Pot making

occupation. Fans are produced by mat-makers from rushes, while the gorgeous chiefs fan with woolen frills and leather embroidery is made by special craftsmen. Embroidery on plain cloth or other materials with yarn of cotton or silk can also be produced. Baskets are made extensively in the riverine areas. The basic raw materials are obtained from palm fronds and canes. Products include fishing baskets, farmers' wicker baskets, shopping and waste-paper baskets and cane-chairs.

Carving: This is another craft which involves making of patterns on calabashes, wood, slab of clay and cement. Objects produced include wooden ash-trays, stools, chests, walking sticks, candle holders, canoe paddle, ebony rings, ear-rings and carved iroko paneled doors. This is extensively produced in some of the Northern and Southern states such as Sokoto, Kano, Kaduna, Edo, Delta Osun, Ondo among others.

Blacksmithing: This work provides farmers with cutlasses, housewives with articles such as kitchen knives and hair-pins, wrought iron gates and window grills. There are gold smiths and silver smiths- who make trinkets, rings and exotic silver jewellery incorporating Nigerian amethyst and other stones. This is prevalent in the South-eastern states such as Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi among others.

Leather works: This is another veritable occupation particularly in the northern part of the country where most of the people are engaged in livestock, cattle, goat, and donkey rearing trade amongst other animals. Decoration of leather by printing and sewing on patterns, bags, footwear, wallets, belts, pouffes, dresses, etc. The states where this is predominantly practice include Sokoto, Kano, Kaduna, Borno, Gombe and Taraba.

Graphic Arts: Graphic Arts are concerned with the problems of preparing and organizing visual symbols for the communication of ideas and information and satisfying the needs of the advertising industries (Sheridan College, 1983). Diverse creative graphic art works can readily be established from a very humble beginning with little cost, which in no distant period, create further jobs for the teeming population. Crafts workshops and art studios where some hand and machine crafted articles are produced and sold could be set up. In this area, is book-binding which entails the making of prints into book cover and folders, cutting paper and cloth prints to make jackets and the binding of old and new books. As part of environmental

design with wall decorations, walls are decorated with mosaics, beads, collage, broken pottery, reliefs, stained glass, etc. Graphic Arts is commercial art which span through all the metropolitan cities in Nigeria such as Lagos, Port -Harcourt, Warri, Enugu, Kaduna Kano Abuja among others. During the industrial revolution in Britain, greater considerations were given to both the aesthetic and technological aspects of industrial products. This is a clear demonstration of the strong relationship of Arts and Crafts and Industrial design (Adetoro, 1987). However, the above listed and discussed arts and crafts practices if well harnessed will provide a base for developing countries, to set up small scale cottage industries, as springboard for industrial growth and development. This could be done at minimal costs, in terms of materials and equipment. Some samples of the Arts and Crafts practices under discussion are presented in figures 1-11 at the end of this paper.



Fig. 2: Hand weaving with loom

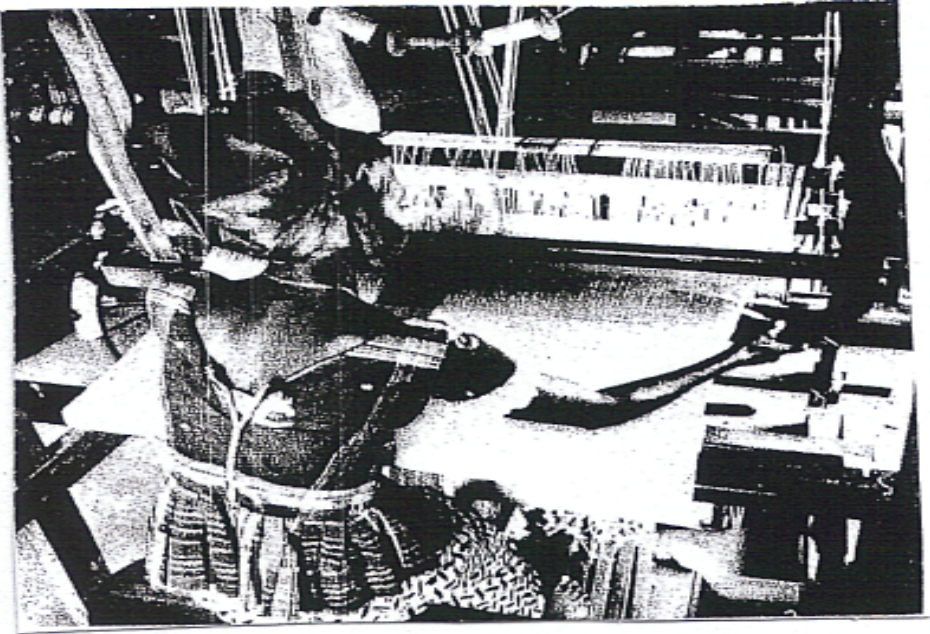


Fig. 3: Cottage weaving industry



Fig. 4: Mat Making

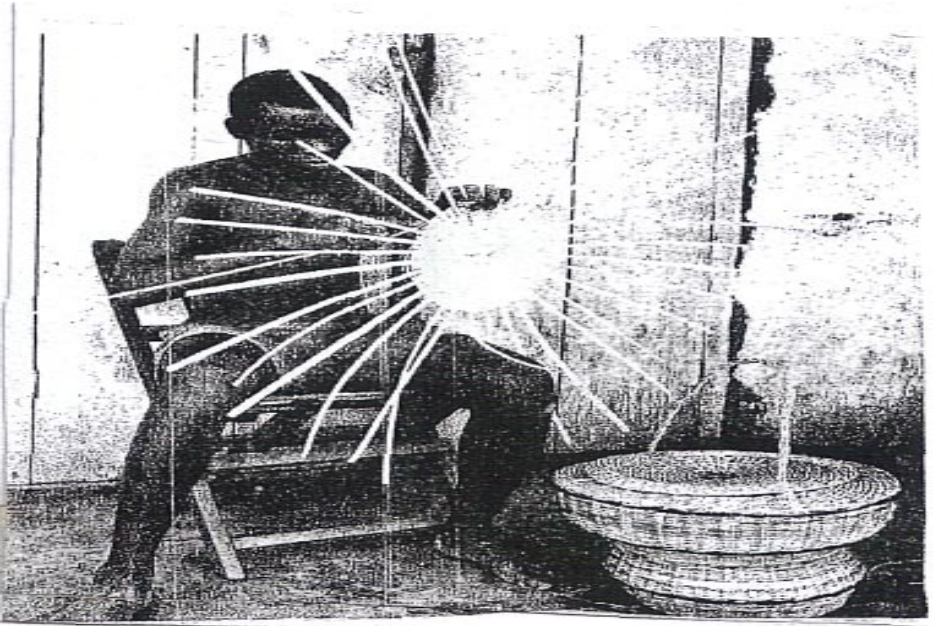


Fig. 5 : Basket Weaving



Fig. 6: Cotton Spinning

DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY ARTS AND CRAFTS PRACTICES

According to Jowitt (1933) many Africans learn to look down upon native arts and crafts which they erroneously despise as belonging to a past which they are too anxious to disown. His contemporary Ruskin, was of the view that the practice of art if undertaken in the right spirit would improve mankind and he emphasized that if Art is practiced for the sole object of increasing profits, it would have a contrary effect and based his methods on examination of nature or study of those parts of nature which lend themselves to this process.

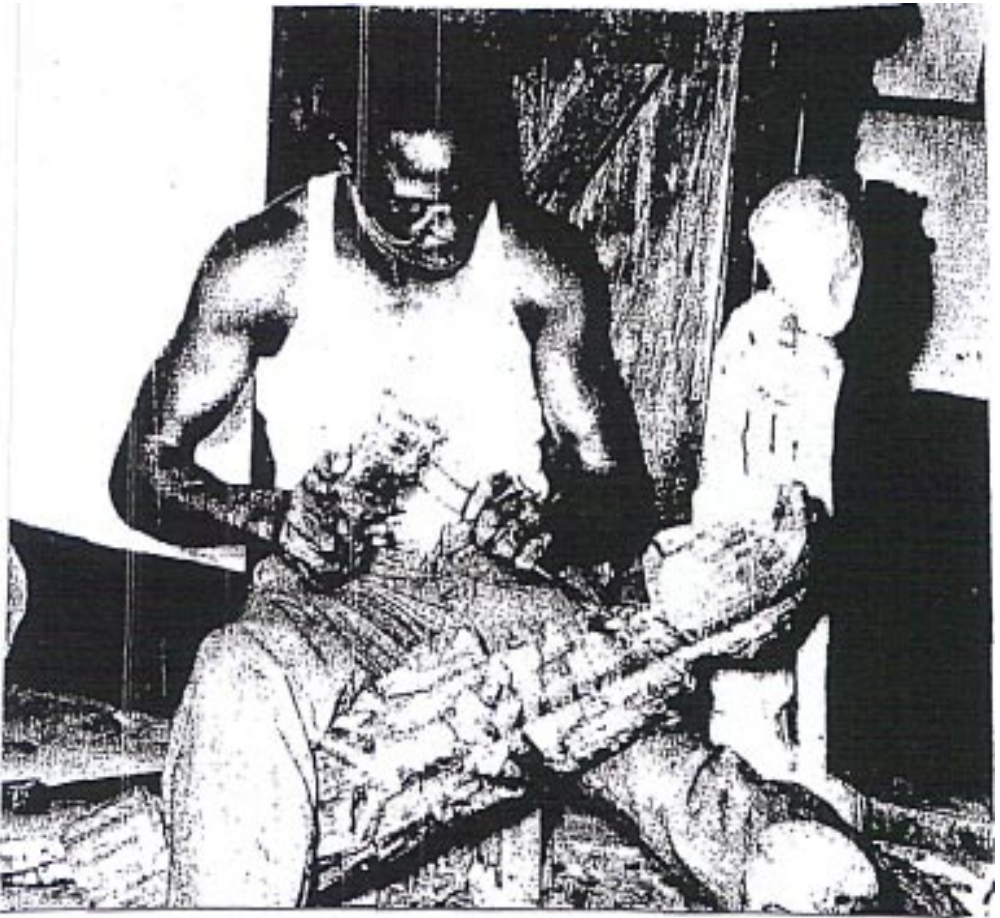


Fig.4: Benin Carver at work C

This doctrine of Ruskin was applied with a more coherent social theory by William Morris and his followers, Walter Crane, who with other members of the Arts and Crafts movement tried to regenerate the notion by a method of art training which placed great emphasis upon the study of manual Crafts. Contemporary Arts and Crafts have been influenced by Western Arts. Formally, Crafts were taught by Craftsmen to their sons, daughters, domestic slaves and bondmen (people who gave their services in lieu of interest on money owed by them), hence Crafts became linked to certain compounds. Nowadays, apprentices may be recruited from the sons and daughters of friends and customers who admire the quality of the craftsman's work and see that he is prospering.

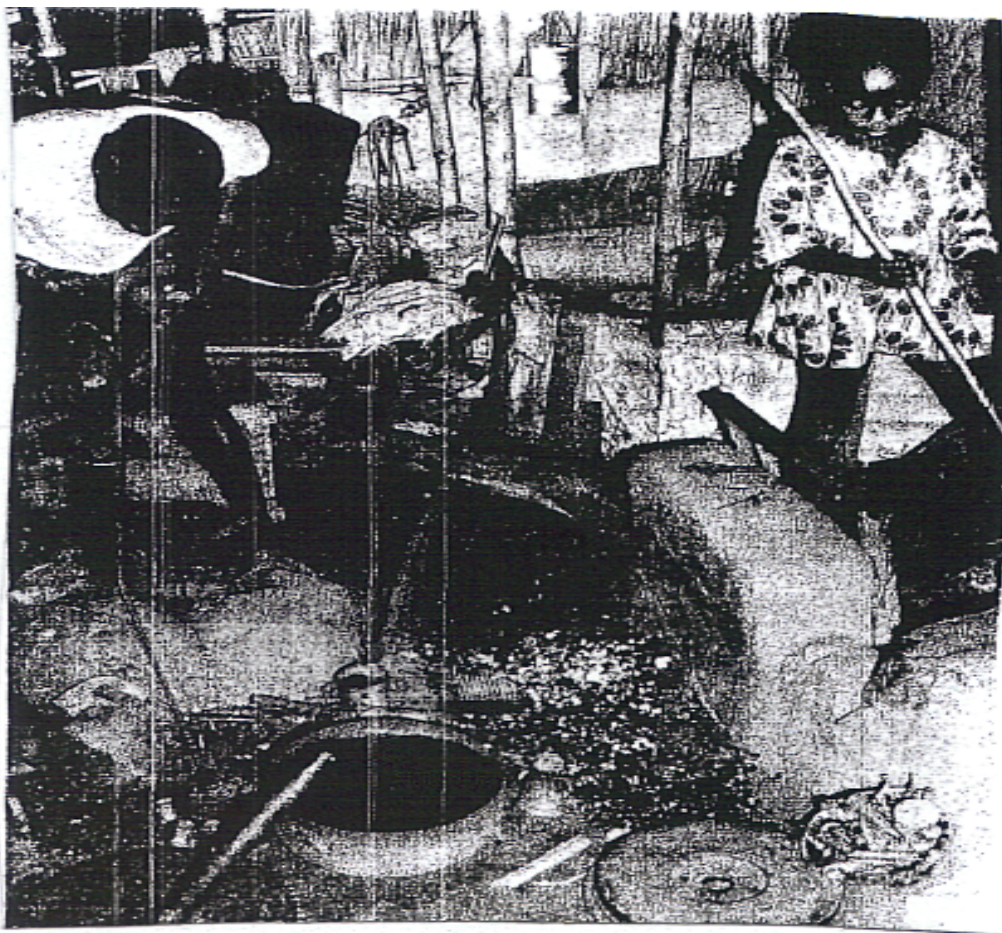


Fig. 5: Blacksmith's workshop

An apprentice starts by running errands, performing domestic task in the workshop and observing the craftsman at work. Then, he undertakes the simpler crafts processes going on to more complicated processes as he becomes more proficient. The relative sponsoring the apprentices training pays a fee to the craftsman and when the apprentice has become expert in the craft, he celebrates his "freedom" at a ceremony, where gifts of food, drink and money are presented to the person who trained him, who now offer prayers for his success and other paraphernalia to enable him start up his workshop.

The colonial experience had profound effects on Nigerian society - some good and some bad. The greatest harm was the undermining of the confidence of the people in their own culture and institutions (Oyelola, 1981). It became a mark of prestige to dress in European style and to acquire possessions which came from overseas. This taste for foreign goods hard led to a decline in many of the crafts practiced in Nigeria but ironically many Europeans working there, appreciate indigenous craft objects, using some items in their homes and buying others as presents for friends and relatives. Other factors such as the change to a money economy and the emphasis placed on modern technology have adversely affected the growth and development of crafts in Nigeria.

John Kenneth Galbraith - a one-time president of the American Academy of Arts and letters, as reported by Aig-Imoukhuede (1988) declared that "... let no one minimize the service that the arts render to established industry. In the years since the world war, there has been no economic miracle quite like that of Italy ..." The Italian success derives from the Italian artistic tradition. Italian products over the widest range are superior not in durability, low cost but in engineering excellence. They are better in design. Italian design and the consequent industrial success are the result of centuries of recognition of including massive subsidy to the arts. The trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic trades depended largely on crafts exports which represented the highest level of existing technology of the time and after agriculture, contributed not less than forty percent of the economy. The grafting of import on local skills and techniques, established shoe factories manned by shoemakers from Zinder and Katsina at the foot

of Dala Hills and factories by Arabs from Ghadames at Gangan - Alfindiki where they made lantami shoes for the Emirs of the Western Sudan, some of which were exported to Tripoli. Silk embroidered slippers were exported from those centers to Sokoto, Gwandu, Nupe and Adamawa for use of the upper class and turkudi cloth for turbans was exported from Kano as part of the trans-Saharan trade.

The quality of Nigerian leather craft was already known to Europe where products from the Sokoto red goat were christened Moroccan leather because of its last port of exportation from Africa into Europe. These sources of national income have survived as cottage and small scale industries and their resilience is demonstrated by the inevitable presence of craft items at agricultural shows and trade fairs. The guilds still exist in Bida, Sokoto, Oyo, Benin City and other towns and states but without a deliberate government policy for their effective re-integration into the mainstream of national economic planning.

A survey taken of the local textiles industries, in the country that is, hand woven cloth, dyed cloth (including tie-dye) embroidery (shoes, cap, gowns, blouses etc) shows that the annual turn over is over two billion naira. Textiles are better developed than other areas of crafts which need proper organization to re-orient their producers. There is need therefore to extend the security of employment to these areas, enhanced and re-establish the self-reliance and self sufficiency in order to create more job opportunities at the grassroots and a wider distribution of the fruits of development. For instance, Sweden, despite its reputation for hi-technology, actively promotes crafts and design as a necessary linkage to the industrial process and the Swedish society of crafts and design provides support for activities ranging from craft to industrial design. This point is made for the Nigerian government to understand that Arts and Crafts are a valuable medium that will bring sustainable development in the country. This is evidenced from the input it has made in other developing economies.

BENEFITS OF CRAFTWORKS AND PRACTICES

Handicrafts offer the satisfaction of working on the whole production of an article. Persons who work on an assembly line usually work with only one or several parts. They miss the pleasure of planning and making an

object from the beginning to the end. Handicrafts also offer relief from monotony and uniformity of mass production. People often turn to Handicrafts for enjoyment and recreation. Handicrafts also serve as occupational therapy. Many Hospital patients as well as the blind and permanently bedridden, take part in handicraft programmes. A patient who tools leather or weaves belt, rugs or Handbags, often is too busy to think about his illness. Special organizations train these people on various crafts and help them to sell the articles they make. In this way, patients and handicapped people can earn income. Craftworks give scope for the development of manual dexterity. The training of the human eye to see correctly and to appreciate things according to their values goes together with the development of skills in craftsmanship.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If manufacturing and services sectors do not grow sufficiently to absorb the surge of labour to urban areas and if rural areas are not transformed to stem the growth in migration to urban areas, the rate of urban unemployment could become unmanageable. The implication for poverty and crime, conflict and the maintenance of democracy are grave. Therefore, government should direct the relevant agencies to focus attention on the setting up of Crafts and cultural industries that will not only compete favorably with imported goods but will boast the country's external earnings/reserves. In the words of a great English philosopher, A. A. Whitehead in one of his books "Aims of Education" he stated thus: You cannot without loss ignore the life of spirit, so great a factor as Art. Our aesthetic emotions provide us with vivid apprehensions of value.

If you main these, you weaken the force of the whole system of spiritual apprehensions. If the aim of education is the development of the whole personality, and if Art is the supreme and natural subject who fosters this development, one must not arbitrarily refuse its urgent demands. Furthermore, history shows us that an efflorescence of Art is the first activity of nations on the road to civilization" (Robert, 1976)

Its import thus is on the role of Arts and Crafts as veritable tool and springboard for sustainable development and industrialization of a country.

By and large, Arts and Crafts should be considered as another Nigeria's industrial cluster project, for her to join the first twenty economies of the world in the years ahead. From the above discourse, it is imperative for governments of developing economies to embrace the ideals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) worldwide, as part of the models to fast-track industrial growth of their countries, by paying attention to the development of Arts and Crafts (National Planning Commissions, 2004).

Traditional artists and craftsmen according to Lawal (1989) should be encouraged to upgrade their techniques with modern tools. Their crafts should however, not be subjected entirely to machine production, as this will degrade the quality and also throw many practitioners out of job. It is hoped that the promotion of traditional handicrafts side by side with well-designed, machine-produced goods, will encourage a cross-fertilization of ideas between them. As an incentive, the Government should offer favourable business conditions by granting capital allowances, tax holidays, import duty relief and tariff protection in accordance with the income Tax Relief Act. This should be complemented with the provision of potable water, good accessible roads, steady power supply and good distribution network of finished products.

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