

**CHANGING PATTERNS IN FEEDING,
DRESSING AND NAMING AMONG YORUBA
OF SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA SINCE 1960**

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to trace the changing pattern in some aspects of Yoruba culture like feeding style, dressing and naming among the Yoruba people of the Southwestern Nigeria. It is a descriptive survey with a sample of 180 men and women spread across the geographical location with the minimum age of 51 years. The questionnaire they responded to asked them to identify the changing pattern in feeding, dressing and naming among Yoruba people of Southwest from 1960 to 2013. The instrument contained 56 items of five (5) point rating scale. Three questions were raised for the study on the pattern of changes in feeding system, dressing and naming among the Yoruba of the Southwestern Nigeria since 1960. It was discovered that the pattern of change in feeding, dressing and naming among the Yoruba is gradual and steady. It is recommended that efforts should be made to promote the cultural heritage of the people.

Introduction

Every member of the society is socially dependent on the culture to provide the acceptable prescribed behavioural pattern for successful and acceptable living in the social environment. The term "culture"

is derived from “Kutura” German word which translates literally to civilization (Robbery, 2008). Culture is the total way of life of a people, the collection of ideas, and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation. Culture embraces all the materials and non-materials expression of a people as well as the processes with which these expressions are communicated. To Fageyinbo (2005), culture to a large extent determines how members of a society behave, think and feel: direct their actions and define their outlook. Kukah (2007) views culture as the society’s entire heritage, including all the knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills acquired by an individual member of a community, as well as their learned behaviour, habits and techniques which are passed on from generation to another vice the process of socialization, as cited by Fageyinbo (2005).

Hoffman (2008) sees culture as the total socially acquired lifestyle of a group of people and consists of patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are characteristics of the member of a particular society or segment of a society. There are two broad aspects of culture namely: material culture which refers to such material things like arts, craft, food, houses, dresses, artifacts, tools, as well as the technology of the society. Thus, the material aspect of culture involves the products of man’s ingenuity in his attempt to exploit his environment for survival. Non-material culture refers to the norms, values, beliefs or religions, languages, ideas and philosophy, music and dance, drama, festivals, ceremonies, folklores, etc. Both material and non-material aspects of culture influence each other. It was on the basis of the above that this paper traced the changes in feeding, dressing and naming among the Yoruba of the Southwestern part of Nigeria.

The Yoruba’s spiritual heritage maintains that the Yoruba ethnic groups are unique people who were originally created at Ile-Ife. Legend holds that the creation was delegated by the supreme spiritual force, Olodumare. This task attributed to Orisha-Nla Obatala, actually may have been conducted by Orisha Oduduwa assisted by Orisha Eshu, the divine messenger (Shonibare, 1990). The name “Yoruba” is most likely an adaptation of Yoruebo, meaning will venerate (make offerings to the Orisha). This refers to Aborisha, spiritual religion of the Yoruba prior to Islamic and Christian proselytism (Kola, 2005).

Some contemporary historians contend that some Yoruba are not indigenous to Yoruba land, but are descendants of the region. This version of history contends the Oduduwa was a mortal king probably from the Near East whose leadership Yoruba land was conquered, towards 600BC and the kingdom of Ife was established. The Southeastern Benin Empire ruled by the dynasty that traced its ancestry to Ife and Oduduwa but largely populated by the Edo and other related ethnicities, also held considerable sway in the election of nobles and kings in eastern Yoruba land (Madubuike, 2003).

Yoruba was traditionally sprung up not by rivers as common to other civilizations but in location surrounded by rain forest. The thick forest provided from tribe wars, a place of refuge. The Yoruba people live on the West Coast of Africa in Nigeria and can also be found in the Eastern Republic of Benin and Togo. The Yoruba are one of the largest cultural groups in Africa. Currently, they are about forty million Yoruba people worldwide. They created strong economy through farming, trading and art production. Their outstanding and unique artistic traditions include wood carving, sculpture, metal work, textiles and bead work (Kukah, 2007).

Yoruba culture refers to the idiosyncratic cultural norms of Yoruba land and the Yoruba people. According to Tiamiyu (2001), he sees Yoruba culture as aggregate of ways of life of the Yoruba speaking peoples of southwest Nigeria and kiths and kins elsewhere in the world. It is a continuum beginning from their subsistence, communal agrarian life of pre-literate and pre-colonial times to the capitalist, industrialist. Free enterprise life of the literate, colonial and post-colonial modern aspect of Yoruba culture provides a true picture of this concept. It is a dynamic phenomenal.

Yoruba have one of the richest, enduring and perhaps the most sophisticated ways of life on the continent of Africa. Yoruba people have similar culture which is evident in their beliefs, values, customs, practices and social behaviours and this is manifested in their arts, music, political institution, local economy, family structure, burial, numerals, literature and other related activities which define Yoruba ways of life. Yoruba's ways of life are embedded in their culture, despite several years of struggle with co-existing and contending interests (Christianity, Islam, Colonialism, Post-colonialism and

Industrialization). The culture has survived and became irresistible. In fact, it has become a binding and unifying force for Yoruba people at home and abroad (Afolabi, 1996). Among the cultural pattern are feeding, dressing, naming, language to mention a few.

Feeding according to Ogunbameru (2008) is the process by which organisms typically animals obtain food. The Yoruba culture surrounding food are as follows: invitation to eat, no drinking while eating, eat with your hands, eat with spoon not fork, no walking while eating and cooking for women only. Yoruba feeding styles are classified as (a) couple-to-couple feeding (b) exclusive breastfeeding (c) continued breastfeeding with addition food or milk added to complement breast milk while (d) mixed breastfeeding, additional food added after the first six month of breastfeeding. Food are consumed for the promotion of good health, prevention, management and treatment of chronic disease of the modern age and for acquisition of energy, thus some are consumed due to their increasing popularity with health/body building function.

Factors influencing pattern of feeding among Yoruba includes that Yoruba consists of starchy tubers, grains and plantains. These are supplemented by vegetable oils, wild and cultivated fruits and vegetables, meat and fish. The differential intake and variation of the nutrient content of individual foods with dietary beliefs and practices responsible for how certain foods are taken. Some foods are prescribed as preventive measure while others for treatment of illness. Thus, traditional beliefs and practices in many societies are being modified by the influence of media and government programmes (Nworgu, 2007). Classes of food known to the Yoruba people are carbohydrate, protein, mineral salt, vitamin, water, fats and oil.

Thus, food perform the following function (a) body building foods which is protein and minerals (b) energy giving goods which is carbohydrate and fats (c) protective foods which are vitamin and minerals, while regulatory foods are water and roughage.

Dressing or clothing is the effort of man to cover his nakedness and protect him from the shame and harsh element of life (weather). The purpose of dressing is to protect ourselves from weather, for decoration, to cover our nakedness. It is regarded as mark of decency, for occasion and national symbols, and finally to identify with our

culture and appear smart. The Yoruba type of dressing are Agbada, Sokoto, Dansiki for men while women wore Buba, Iro, Gele and Ipele to match. According to Johnson, Yoruba dress was traced to the east to which they trace their origin.

Yoruba have peculiar types of clothes that make them distinct from other cultures. They have Aso Ibile (traditional clothes) for both male and female. Yoruba used Bante before the coming of white men, to cover their private parts for both male and female. The cloth is made from the type of cloth called Kijipa. Later, they started wearing Aso-Oke with material like Etu, Petuje, San-an-yan, Alaari and so on. Men wear Buba, Esiki and Sapara regarded as underwear with Dandogo, Agbada, Gbarye, Sulia and Oyala. Some of their Sokoto are called Lambe, Gbanu, Sooro. Their caps include Gobu, Tinko, Abeti-Aja, Oribi, Bentigoo. The most commonly found dresses among women are Iro and Buba or wrapper with blouse. They also have Gele and Ipele to complete their dressing. Apart from these, they have Iborun or Ipele. They used Sinmi or Tobi as underwear. However, with modernization and education, Yoruba people wear suit and ties, shirt and trousers, shirts and blouses, suits, gown, all borrowed from the Europeans. They also wear Caftan, Babariga, Senegalese, Baubau, Socks are the like that are borrowed from the Arabs including Turbans (James, 1974).

Factors responsible for dress selection among the Yorubas are sex, social class, nature of job, religion, financial capability, position in society. In Yoruba, whether a king is rich or not, his dressing with distinguished him from other member of the society i.e. wearing of beaded crown which is the exclusive preserve of the Obas (Osokoya and Jegede, 2009).

Naming ceremony are believed to be performed with spiritual mind where the eldest family member are given the responsibility of performing the ceremony with the use of items like honey, kola, bitter-kola, atare (alligator pepper), water, palm-oil, sugar, sugarcane, salt, and liquor. Each of these has a special meaning in the world view of the Yoruba. For instance, honey represents sweetness and the prayer of the parent is that their baby's life should be as sweet as honey. They also give gift of money and cloth to the baby. There are three (3) major categories of names:

1. Those which are given to the child after birth (Abiso);

2. Those which are brought from heaven (Amutorunwa); and
3. Those which suggest the return of dead child (Abiku).

It should however be mentioned that names in Yoruba culture reflect the religion, profession and cultural roots of the family. It is also the believe of the Yoruba people that names children bear have influence on the entire life cycle from sundry, behaviour, integrity, success and so on. The Yoruba culture and traditions call for children to receive names from their fathers, mothers, grandparents and other close kin (Oral Traditions in Ile-Ife Academic Press, 2009). The changing nature of our society, modernization and technology has great influence in Yoruba culture. But in what ways has the modernization affected the naming, feeding and dressing of the Yoruba?

Purpose and Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to trace the changing patterns of some aspect of Yoruba culture. The specific objectives are to (a) examine how feeding patterns of Yoruba have changed from 1960 to 2013 (b) trace the changing pattern in the mode of dressing of the Yoruba people from 1960 to 2013 (c) trace the changing pattern in naming culture of the Yoruba people from 1960 to 2013.

Method

The research design is descriptive. The population consisted of all aged men and women (51 years and above) in the six States inhabited by the Yorubas in Western Nigeria. The sample was drawn as follows: two (2) States were randomly selected i.e. Ogun and Oyo, four (4) local government areas were randomly selected from each of the States. In each of the local government, one secondary school was randomly selected. The breakdown shows that the total sample was 180, made up of 90 from Ogun State and 90 from Oyo State with 100 males and 80 females. The instrument contained 56 items of five (5) point rating scale. The questionnaire used was distributed to the aged men and women (51 and above). The questionnaire has four (4) sections: the first section requests bio-graphical data information i.e. age-group, gender, religion, and qualification. The second section contains Yoruba food with 26 items to obtain information on how common these

foods were used in the past and how common they are used now e.g. Amala, Eba, Ebiripo, Pounded-yam, Fufu, Lanfu, Ikokore, Yam boiled, Tuwo, Ewa, Asaro, Ekuru, Gari (Cassava Flour), Gbegiri Soup, Plantain Flour, Shapala, Ewa Kokodo, Ewa Otili, Ila Soup, Ilasa Soup, Adalu, etc. The third section contains Yoruba names which has 8 items to obtain information on how common these names were commonly used in the past and now e.g. Abiku names (Durojaiye, Ekunsunmi), Abiso by warrior e.g. (Ologundudu, Akin), Abiso by occupation e.g. (Odegbemi), Abiso by traditional ruler e.g. (Oyelowo, Adegboyega), Abiso by home status e.g. (Afolabi, Oladeinde), Amutorunwa by believe e.g. (Taiwo, Kehinde, Idowu, Ilori, etc). The fourth section of the questionnaire contains the Yoruba dresses which has twenty-two (22) items to obtain information on how common these dresses were used e.g. Agbada, Sokoto, Sokoto Sayinmotan, Fila, Fila Eleti-Aja, Fila Bentigo, Dansiki, Iro, Ipale and Gele, etc. The questionnaires were distributed with the aid of four (4) research assistants. The responses were coded and scored.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the pattern of changes in the feeding system among the Yoruba of the Southwestern Nigeria since 1960 to 2013?

Table 1: The meals of the Yoruba

1a. Main Food

Table 1a shows the main meal of the Yoruba. In the period of 1960 to 1969, all meals were taken very frequently. No one was below 4.0. But, all the meals were gradually reducing from that time to the present. Eba, pounded-yam and fufu have reduced below 4.0. Only amala is still 4.13.

Table 1b shows the subsidiary/light meal of the Yoruba. In

Period	Amala	Eba	Ebiripo	Pounded Yam	Fufu Egba	Lafun	Ikokore
1960 – 1969	4.90	4.64	4.18	4.70	4.23	4.12	4.27
1970 – 1979	4.78	4.41	4.03	4.64	4.18	4.09	4.23
1980 – 1989	4.58	4.05	3.72	4.62	3.77	3.53	3.29
1990 – 1999	4.48	3.98	3.29	4.40	3.77	3.53	3.29
2000 – 2009	4.26	3.87	2.92	4.11	3.56	3.27	3.13
2010 – 2013	4.13	3.70	2.68	3.96	3.34	3.31	2.82

1b. Subsidiary/Light Meal

Period	Yam Boiled	Tuwo	Ewa	Asaro	Ekuru	Garri	Gbegiri Soup
1960 – 1969	4.28	4.10	4.35	4.32	4.13	4.24	4.42
1970 – 1979	4.22	3.93	4.27	4.18	4.05	4.19	4.49
1980 – 1989	3.81	3.73	4.10	3.83	3.63	3.88	4.15
1990 – 1999	3.72	3.38	3.82	3.59	3.36	3.64	3.67
2000 – 2009	3.52	3.11	3.75	3.34	2.94	3.56	3.31
2010 – 2013	3.48	3.86	3.73	3.24	2.62	3.43	3.20

1c. Super Meal

Period	Plantain Flour	Shapala	Ewakokodo	Ewa Otili	Eko Mimu
1960 – 1969	3.92	3.76	3.75	4.01	4.05
1970 – 1979	3.78	3.63	3.70	3.96	3.93
1980 – 1989	3.51	3.15	3.39	3.73	3.71
1990 – 1999	3.11	2.72	2.84	3.10	3.29
2000 – 2009	2.66	2.36	2.48	2.60	3.04
2010 – 2013	2.52	1.90	2.13	2.25	2.81

1d. Vegetables and Others

Period	Ewedu Soup	Egusi Soup	Ilasa Soup	Egbo	Oshigi	Adalu	Ila Soup
1960 – 1969	4.70	4.60	4.36	3.94	3.79	3.90	4.50
1970 – 1979	4.62	4.53	4.30	4.03	3.77	3.77	4.52
1980 – 1989	4.25	4.20	3.89	3.61	3.24	3.34	4.21
1990 – 1999	4.00	3.84	3.59	3.18	2.81	2.77	3.92
2000 – 2009	3.77	3.70	3.41	3.04	2.92	2.50	3.54
2010 – 2013	3.70	3.71	3.18	2.81	2.73	2.08	3.43

the period 1960 to 1969, all the subsidiary meals were taken very frequently. No one was below 4.0. But, all the meals were gradually reducing to the present time. Yam boiled, asaro, ekuru and gbegiri have reduced below 4.0.

Table 1c shows the super meal of the Yoruba. In the period of 1960 to 1969, all super meals were taken very frequently. No one was below 3.70. But, all the super meals were gradually reducing from that time to the present. Shapala, ewakokodo and ewa otili have reduced below 3.70.

Table 1d shows the vegetables and other meal of the Yoruba. In the period of 1960 to 1969, vegetables and others were taken very frequently. No one was below 3.74. But later, all the vegetables and others were gradually reducing from that time to the present. Ilasa, egbo, adalu, oshigi and ila soup have reduced below 3.74. However,

ewedu and egusi still maintain the status of 3.70 and 3.71 respectively.

Research Question 2: To what extent has the dressing aspect of the Yoruba culture been changing from 1960 to 2013?

Table 2: Dresses of Yoruba

Fig 1: Agbada Dressing among Yoruba

From the table 2a above, Agbada were often used from the period of 1960 to 1999, while they are sometimes used during 2000 to 2013. In the period 1960 – 2009, Sokoto is often used while from 2010 to 2013, it is sometimes used. Also, between 1960 and 1979, Sokoto Elenu was worn often but from 1980 – 1999, they were sometimes used, while in the period 2000 to 2013, they were very rare. For Sokoto Soro, in the period of 1960 – 1989, it was often used while in 1990 to 2013, is sometimes used. For Sokoto Kembe, it was very often between

2a. Dressing

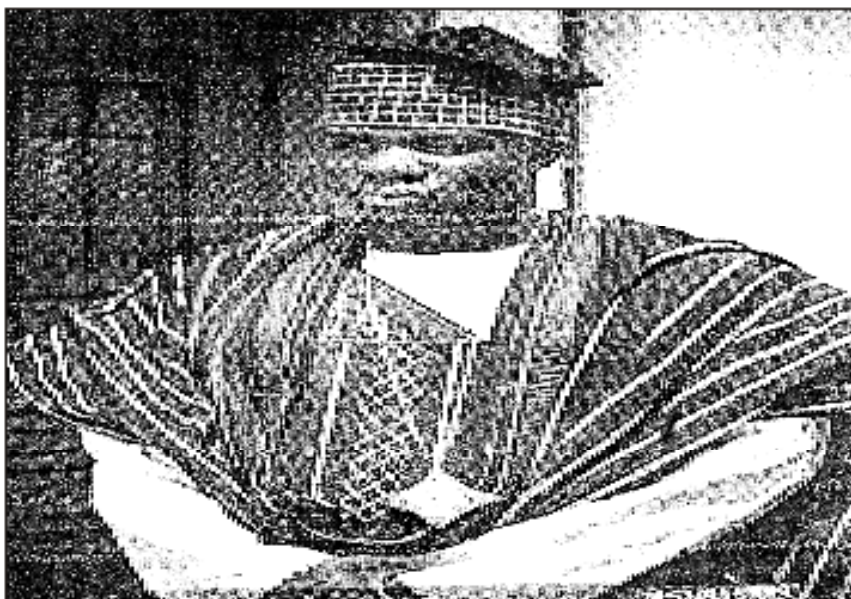
Period	Agbada	Sokoto Elenu	Sokoto Soro	Sokoto Kembe	Sokoto Sayin-	Sokoto Efa	Sokoto Aibobo
1960 – 1969	4.93	4.92	4.60	4.82	4.52	4.55	4.55
1970 – 1979	4.87	4.72	4.50	4.70	4.43	4.32	4.32
1980 – 1989	4.45	3.88	4.27	3.83	4.53	3.53	3.78
1990 – 1999	4.18	3.00	3.55	2.85	2.67	2.75	2.18
2000 – 2009	4.62	2.50	3.12	2.33	2.18	1.80	1.98
2010 – 2013	4.85	1.97	3.03	1.73	1.68	1.22	1.45

2b. Ewu

Period	Dansiki	Dandogo	Gbariye	Buba	Oyala	Ginke	Sulia	Gele	Oja	Ipele
1960 – 1969	4.87	4.87	4.85	4.88	4.80	4.70	4.87	4.92	4.93	4.88
1970 – 1979	4.75	4.68	4.75	4.75	4.70	4.48	4.77	4.78	4.88	4.82
1980 – 1989	4.12	3.98	4.20	4.42	3.87	3.57	4.03	4.50	4.52	4.50
1990 – 1999	3.60	3.75	3.12	3.95	3.20	2.90	3.62	4.10	3.92	3.82
2000 – 2009	2.60	2.12	3.68	1.95	1.77	2.77	2.77	3.78	3.47	3.40
2010 – 2013	2.32	1.65	3.70	1.67	1.65	2.43	2.43	3.67	3.00	3.23

2c. Fila

Period	Fila	Fila Eleti Aja	Fila Bentigo	Fila Akete
1960 – 1969	4.83	4.90	4.50	4.80
1970 – 1979	4.70	4.80	4.50	4.50
1980 – 1989	4.60	3.95	4.02	4.02
1990 – 1999	3.82	3.13	3.20	3.32
2000 – 2009	3.47	2.52	2.53	2.37
2010 – 2013	3.45	2.25	2.47	1.90



1960 and 1979, while in 1980 – 1989, it was sometimes used but from 2000 to 2013, it is very rare. For Sokoto Sanyinmotan, often used in the period of 1960 to 1979, but from 1990 – 2009, it was rare while between 1980 and 1989, it was sometimes used. In 1990 to date, the use of the Sanyinmotan reduced greatly.

Fig. 2: Fila Eletiaja

Fila were highly often used from 1960 to 1989 but from 1990 to 2013, it was rare in use. Fila Eletiaja was often used during 1960 to 1979 while 1980 to 1989, it was sometimes used and between 2000 and 2013, it is rare in use.

From 1960 to 1989, Fila Akete was used but in the period 1990 to 1999, it was sometimes used while from 2000 to 2013, it is rare in use. Fila Bentigo was often used during 1960 to 1989, while from 1990 to 2013, it was rare. Between the periods 1960 and 1989, Dansiki was often used but from 1990 to 1999, it was sometimes used while in period 2000 to 2013, it was rare in use.



From 1960 to 1979, Dandogo was often used while during period 1980 to 1989, it was sometimes used. Between 1990 and 2013, it is very rare in use. Between the period 1960 and 1989, Buba was often used, while from 1990 to 2013, it is sometimes used.

For the period 1960 to 1979, Oyala dress was often used and in 1990 to 1999, it was sometimes used. From 2000 to 2013, it is rare in use, where as Ginke was highly often used, it was sometimes used. In the period 2000 to 2013, it is very rare, but from 1960 to 1989, Ginke dress was often used and between 1980 and 1989, it is sometimes used. In the period 2000 to 2013, it is rare in use. Gele was highly often used, from 1960 to 1969, but from 2000 to 2013, it is still sometimes used.

Fig. 3: A Woman Putting on Modern Gele

From 1960 to 1989, Oja was highly often commonly used, in the period 1990 to 2013, it is sometimes used. Ipele was highly often used from 1960 to 1989, but for the period 1990 to date, it is sometimes used.

Research Question 3: To what extent has the naming aspect of the Yoruba culture changed since 1960?

Table 3: The naming aspect of the Yoruba culture

Table 3 shows that the Oriki names and the Amutorunwa by home status were commonly used from 1960 to 2013. Likewise, the



Abiku names and the Abiso by warriors were very often used during this period. From 1970 to 1979, the Amutorunwa names and the Abiso by home status were often used. The lowest name used is Abiso by warrior in the period of 1980 to 1989, the Abiso by home status and the Amutorunwa by home status have slightly reduced a little but sometimes used. The commonest name used is the Amutorunwa and the Abiso by home status but the Abiso by warrior were the lowest names used. From the period 1990 to 1999, the Amutorunwa and the Abiso were the highest names while the Abiku names were the lowest names and were rarely used. Similarly, the period 2000 to

Period	Abiku names	Abiso by warrior	Abiso by occupation	Abiso by traditional religion	Abiso by traditional ruler	Abiso by hometown	Amutorunwa by home status	Oriki names
1960 – 1969	4.87	4.72	4.80	4.78	4.82	4.83	4.88	4.88
1970 – 1979	4.63	4.58	4.72	4.75	4.80	4.87	4.88	4.85
1980 – 1989	3.72	3.50	3.62	3.68	4.28	4.63	4.63	4.07
1990 – 1999	2.87	2.87	3.07	2.85	4.07	4.38	4.27	3.48
2000 – 2009	1.92	2.13	2.13	2.15	3.40	4.07	4.02	2.62
2010 – 2013	1.32	1.80	1.90	1.55	3.02	3.65	3.62	2.42

2009, the names were still rarely used. The highest names used were the Amutorunwa by home status and the Abiso by home status while the lowest names used are the Abiku names. Between the period of 2010 and 2013, the names were very rare. Abiso by home status and Amutorunwa by home status were commonest names used while the Abiku names were the lowest names commonly used.

All the names have witnessed reduction from 1960 to 2013. Abiku names are going into extinction, likewise abiso by warrior and abiso by traditional religion. But abiso by home status, home town and traditional ruler are still very much in use.

Concluding Remarks

It is not new that a society feature is changing including Yoruba feeding, dressing and naming as a distinct group. What is important is the rapidity and the significance of the change to the well being of the people. It is in this light that this article highlights the changing pattern in feeding (food), dressing (cloth) and naming among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria. Report shows that the Yoruba culture of feeding has not been changing very much from 1960 to 2013. Though, the patterns of change have been gradual, thus more research work should be carried out by the scholars in this area to further increase the knowledge of students and on-coming researchers may want to undertake similar work. Effort should be made to promote feeding aspect and the cultural heritage of the people. On dressing and naming, findings show that the Yoruba culture of dressing and naming has been changing from 1960 to 2013 but the changing is gradual. It is also noted that Yoruba people has not encouraged nudity and hardly could there be any ceremony without dress code. The report further explained that Agbada, Buba, Sokoto, Oja and Ipele are still commonly used among the people with different style. Further research is recommended with different statistical variables used to test the questions for wider scope and for comparison.

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