

## **Nigerian Economy in Precolonial Times: An Argument of Globalization as New and Old Phenomenon**

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### **Abstract**

*While globalization is well a twentieth century ideology, the phenomenon is as old as man's development into groups and states. The idea of the world being a global village is quite novel but it is interestingly so that the phenomenon has always existed overtime. In time past, peoples of the world have related with each other in varying forms and Africa even before the colonial era was not exempted. Although this interaction has now come up in several writings as "inter-group relations", what this paper hopes to establish is the claim that to use the term "inter-group relations" will be to oversimplify the kind of relationships that existed among nations in what we can refer to as globalization. It is in line with this that the paper argues from conceptualizing globalization and the nation that the Nigerian economy has been in global economic relations since pre-colonial times though differing in scope and measure from what exists today.*

**Keywords:** globalization, Nigerian economy, nation, nation-state

### **Introduction**

Globalization as a concept is one of the most debated issues of our time. It borders on every aspect of societal life so much that its discourse elicits both great enthusiasm and deep concern. The central idea behind globalization is one of integration, interconnection, and interdependence of nations and states around the world. It is suggestive of the shrinkage of the world so much that there is in view the creation of a global village. However, the argument continues to loom whether the phenomenon is either a recent phenomenon or an old process that has its roots in the past of human history. While social scientists would prefer the first position, many historians pitch their tent with the second.

The term 'globalization' may be a new concept as its usage gained widespread recognition in the 1980s, however, the phenomenon is an old one, and it is the claim of this paper that Nigeria even before the colonial phase of her history was actively involved in this process. At that time, the entity, Nigeria as we know it today did not exist and what was in existence were independent sovereign nations, what most scholars refer to as groups, tribes or kingdoms/chiefdoms. This paper hopes to question the position of globalization in the early stage and the role played by the economies of these sovereign nations. How were these independent nations in the pre-colonial time able to integrate their economies not just within their regions but also with other foreign economies at that time? Were they dormant and passive players or active in matters that concerned their economies? To what extent can their interaction be classified as being part of the globalizing process as is witnessed in contemporary times? These are some of the questions that this paper hopes to answer.

### **Concept of Globalization**

The concept of globalization possibly owing to the fact that it is a very recent occurrence and an ongoing one at that has received and in fact continues to receive sufficient attention from a wide variety of individuals - scholars, experts, and stakeholders alike. Despite the vast literature and ongoing discussion on globalization, it remains that there is no one universal definition of the concept. This is as a result of the many different perspectives from which such definitions have been attempted and as such the confusion

subsists of whether it is a term generally employed to refer to a historical epoch, a process, a theory, or a new paradigm (United Nations, 2001). Effort will be made to consider some of the descriptions put forward in an attempt to explain the term and a definition will be designed as a framework for which the paper will be based.

David Harvey (2000) suggests that globalization should be viewed as a process rather than as a political-economic condition that has recently come into being. This according to him will enable the understanding of how globalization has occurred and is occurring. Many others agree with the suggestion of Harvey and in like manner, have given the description of globalization as a process. One of such is Clark (2000) who points out that globalization is the process of creating networks of connections among actors at multicontinental distances mediated through a variety of flows, including people, information and ideas, capital and goods. This implies that the globalization process involves the creation of networks on a wide scale across continents and movements of all categories. Further, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (2001) although recognizing the difficulty in defining globalization has offered a similar description thus, as the increasing and intensified flows between countries of goods, services, capital, ideas, information and people which produce national cross-border integration of a number of economic, social and cultural activities.

The point of note here is that globalization is a process that is integrative of all parts of the world and occurs in all spheres of human life be they economic, social or political. This becomes important because some like John Williamson (1998), Mike Kwanashie (1999) and Mike Obadan (2004) among several others believe that in the present time more emphasis is placed on the economic aspect than any other aspect and they argue that this makes it the very heart of globalization. However, Riggs (slide 1) in a research from members of the International Sociological Association was able to explain this. He explains that different categories of scholars consider the concept of globalization differently thus, while economists will focus on production/consumption, money, distribution capital as key variables; political scientists will be more interested in governance, peace and conflict, justice and order; and Anthropologists and Sociologists on the other hand will concentrate on class and caste, social structures and pathologies, communities and groups with each of them feeling the more that his own area is the most important aspect of globalization. From the UN report above, what is implied is that globalization includes a lot of trends and tendencies and is not a single process but a combination of different processes that is multidimensional in character not only economic, but also political, social, and cultural. As such, we can talk about different facets or dimensions of the concept to include economic globalization, political globalization, sociological globalization, anthropological globalization, communication globalization and geographical globalization. Indeed, while the fact remains that globalization is manifested in several respects, this paper will attempt a concentration on economic globalization because it will be considering the role that Nigeria's economy played in pre-colonial global relations.

Economic globalization refers to the process of change towards greater international economic integration through trade, financial flows, exchange of technology and information, and movement of people (Obadan, 2004). Kwanashie (2000) like Obadan opines that it is a process of increased integration of national economies with the rest of the world to create a more coherent global economy albeit, the integration referred to encompasses all forms of economic activities from economic decisions of consumption, investment to saving processes and others in order to create a global market place in which free markets, investments flows, trade and information are integrated.

Again, economic globalization has been described as the increasing breakdown of trade barriers and the integration of world markets (Akindele *et al.*, 2002). There are others that have associated it with the spread of capitalism describing it as an "imperial policy" that connotes the final conquest of capital over the rest of the world (Toyo, 2000). Madunagu (1999) here sates that the concept connotes the rapid expansion through giant multinational companies of capitalism through principles that are repressive and obnoxious. Although this places moral judgment on what is referred to as economic globalization, it gives the idea of its inseparation from the factor of capital, and more of its linkage with the age of capitalism dated from the

1500s. In recent time, the concept is characterized by rapid economic expansion of international trade, foreign direct investments (FDI) and capital market flows (UN, 2001) and is propelled by the forces of technology and telecommunications and especially with the reductions in transport and communication costs, capital account opening, financial market deregulation, trade liberalization, and privatization of state enterprises (Obaseki, 2002).

Although the definitions given above by the different scholars have their individual interpretations, a line can be drawn that links them. This is in the fact that the general point being made is that of integration and interconnection of the world economies into a global economy such that what happens in one part of the world has a direct or indirect bearing to a nation in another corner. Also, this is suggestive of the creation of a borderless world where trade restrictions that used to exist in the past are no longer there. The definitions most likely revolve around the contemporary and recent events surrounding globalization. As a term, globalization may be new and rightly describe the current ongoing economic integration in and around the world however, it is possible to infer that these definitions can be related to the kind of economic interconnections that existed in ancient times especially in the period before the colonization of Africa.

On the issue of the start of globalization, Thomas Friedman (2000) maintains that the concept is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before, in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, deeper and cheaper than ever before. Globalization is not simply a trend or a fad but it is, rather, an international system that replaced the Cold War. By this definition, Friedman claims that globalization is a new phenomenon and it is impossible to explain the concept from a similar process in the past or a historical perspective. However, Kwanashie (1999) on the other hand avers that globalization is an integral part of human history and in its most generic and broadest sense, part of the movement of history. Also, Donald Weidner (1973) opines that all through history, inter-country movements, travels, trade, and migration had been taking place and gives a clear case in hand in the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East where goods and ideas and people moved frequently and easily in Phoenician, Greek and Roman ships sailing as far as India.

Further, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2001) reports that globalization is not a new phenomenon; that interdependence and interconnections among nations and peoples of the world like Weidner stated have a long history as early as the sixteenth century or even earlier during the era of the Roman, Hellenistic and even Persian empires. In the ancient and medieval world, international trading companies were formed, promoted and financed by states, governments and groups of individuals to explore and at times pillage and conquer distant and less privileged peoples to their benefit (Aluko, 2004). All these operated internationally and in the globe/world of their time. The mid-eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries according to the UN report has experiences that are quite comparable to the current development in globalization. In fact, Aluko (2004) has referred to these worldwide enterprises as 'globalization' of some sort or as he puts it, "internationalization" in a bid to set a distinction between the ancient manifestation of world integration from the recent stage.

According to Wells (2001), globalization is a process inherent to life, from the creation of life's self-sustaining envelope aeons ago to the trans-migration of primitive humans that ultimately encompassed the entire planet characterized by continual flux and adjustment. This description dates globalization as far back as the very early history of man and his migration to different regions and areas around the world as no boundaries were in existence at that time. The implication therefore is that since globalization refers to world integration and interconnection, it can be rightly subsumed that this relationship existed since the formation of nations. Also, with the development of needs that were unavailable in one region and abundant in another, there was the need for exchange. The transformation came with technological discoveries and breaks first in ancient times that enabled communication and transportation across inter-continental boundaries. This sped up and boosted the interaction especially economically among once separated peoples of the world. It is to this form of relationship that Nigeria though as independent individual nations had their economies as active participants. Thus, instead of distinguishing and designing another concept

to explain the early phase of globalization, it would be more acceptable to appreciate globalization as a historical process that is very dynamic; one that continues to witness succinct and impressive changes and in the recent time, as a result of some driving forces especially the advancement in information and communication technology, have progressed into an advanced phase which differs in scope, manner and intensity and one which continues to accelerate with an unprecedented momentum.

### **The Idea of a Nation**

The concept of nation like others such as state, nation-state, nationality and nationalism are usually easier to identify when encountered than to define in their abstract nature however, effort will be made to give a brief explanation in this section of what the idea of a nation connotes in order to explain off the fact that although the term is used to describe modern political groups in the eighteenth century, it appropriately fits into the status of the independent individual groups that made up Nigeria till 1914.

The Greek word for nation *ethnos* shares the same root with the Greek word for custom, *ethos* and may as such indicate that the idea of the nation connotes people with shared customs (Afolayan, 2002: 12). To Minogue (1967), the 'nation' identifies people of common birth and is described as the 'stock'. To this end, a "Nation" can be described as a group of people possessing common traits (without necessarily living together within a bounded territory) and therefore implies two important points – the first, that these groups are those whose past and recent history suggest a long period of grudges and political antagonism around contested interests and the second that these groups possess certain cultural commonalities such as language and religion among others (Afolayan: 13). Craig Calhoun (1993 216) further asserts that claims to nationhood do not just constitute internal claims to social solidarity, common descent or any other basis for constituting a political community; they are also claims to distinctiveness vis-à-vis other nations, claims to at least some level of autonomy and self-sufficiency and claims to certain rights within a world system of states.

The concept of the nation seems to have taken full shape in the late eighteenth century with the French Revolution when it referred to a public interest which contrasted favourably with the tangle of the special privileges which made up the *ancien régime* with plurality of classes, regions, corporations, and religions (Minogue). Before then, what seems to have existed were the ideas of the 'tribe', 'clan', 'citystate' or the 'empire' to which men pledged their loyalty. This was evident in the scores of civilizations that developed in Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome Rourke (2006: 138-9) in distinguishing between a nation and a state notes that a nation is a less tangible phenomenon than is a state and although it includes some tangible elements like people, it is created by less tangible elements such as similarities among the people, a sense of connection, and a desire of the people to control themselves politically.

Given the above description therefore, it is clear that although simpler and less definitive terms have been used to describe people and groups in very early times the point being made here is that the term "nation" is deeply rooted in peoples' culture and history and incorporates fundamental elements of their identity and is also closely linked to political ideologies, which have exploited it and adulterated its original meaning (Council of Europe, 2005). A nation in general can be referred to as people of a particular political group who share some form of bond in their relationship and herein lies the justification for independent political entities such as existed among the Igbo, Yoruba, Benin and Hausa amidst several others and their classification as nations that qualified in their economic activities within and outside the African continent into what can be regarded as globalization.

### **Early Economic Interaction of the Nigerian Economy to 1500**

Nigeria as a political entity was the creation of the British colonialist in 1914. Although many scholars have argued that the process for integration was already in motion, it was to the British that credit for the amalgamation is owed. The individual independent nations that made up Nigeria had been in contact with each other in one form of relationship or the other whether political, military, social or economic. However, they considered themselves as strangers or foreigners to each other owing to their divergence in culture,

language and beliefs and related with each other as such. The economic activities of many Nigerians were divided into four branches: agriculture, transportation, trade, and manufactures. Agriculture constituted the mainstay of most of the people in pre-colonial times and trade was only a subsidiary. However, trade was to become more prominent in the later history of these people because of the importance that was attached to it and the role it came to play in the socio-political development of the various nations and empires.

Most of African prehistory was not documented and this has continued to create serious contentions when it comes to constructing events that occurred within that period. Other sources such as oral tradition, archaeology, art history, linguistics, anthropological and ethnographical studies have been employed in a bid to achieve a recovery of the African past within this period. Thus, it is from archaeological evidence that long distance trade within West Africa is recorded to have begun as early as 700AD (Shaw, 1980: 41). Long distance trade was engaged in by peoples in and around Nigeria, within the West African region and farther to include North Africa and the Mediterranean states, to Europe and the Middle East. Although until about the beginning of the nineteenth century many of their traders did not get to either of these places directly, their goods and products found their way there.

Again, from archaeological findings, some distinctive and peculiar art culture was discovered in the area of Nigeria to have existed in the very early period of her history. These included Nok, Ife, Benin and Igbo-Ukwu art cultures. The distinguishing feature of these cultures lay in their production of lifesized sculptures and the use of brass, copper, bronze and terracotta materials. There is no evidence to prove that brass, copper and bronze can be found anywhere in Nigeria. In fact, the nearest sources of copper to Nigeria were at Azelik in the Ahir region of the Republic of Niger; at Nioro in Mali and at Akjoujt in Mauritania (Ibid.: 46). This shows therefore that these materials were imported into the regions where they were utilized. Shaw (1980: 46-7) argues that the archaeological proof of the existence of trade that carried brass, bronze and copper comes from the wreck of a caravan discovered in the Mauritanian desert carrying over 2000 brass rods in about the twelfth century. Also, Arab records of the tenth century include copper as a commodity exported southwards from Islamic North Africa. This was probably in the conduct of the popular trans-Saharan trade which involved the exchange of goods between West Africa and North Africa across the Sahara Desert. Originally, there was the use of cattle, donkeys and later Camels and goods such as gold, ivory, kolanuts and slaves from West Africa were exchanged for copper, salt, horses, textiles, and glass beads from North Africa.

Benin was one of the Nigerian nations in its southern hemisphere that were adept when it came to trading activities in this period. They had established trading links with other nations within not only Nigeria and Africa but also their link extended to Europe. Benin is noted to have drawn some of her wealth by collections from toll points for trade in products from a wide area of the forest, which ultimately went up the Niger northwards as evidenced by the fact that Benin used small white shells as currency even before Europeans arrived on the coast. These cowries were not common on the Guinea coast but only on the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf again, showing the existence of inter-regional trade between West Africa and East Africa. Arabic records show their usage on the middle Niger from the tenth century although this excluded the Hausa states and Borno until much later suggesting therefore that Benin trading activities went directly up the Niger to Gao and Timbuktu in the Western Sudan (Davidson 1967: 127). In addition, the fashion for pink coral in Benin suggests connections, which led finally to the Mediterranean (Shaw: 51).

In the northern part of Nigeria, there was Kano whose economy participated fully in economic integration and interdependence within this period. Kano lies within the Sudanic vegetation zone about 840km south of the edge of the Sahara Desert (Olaniyi: 304). Through the effort of Sarki Abdullahi Burja (1438-52 A.D.), Kano was transformed from a small kingdom into a city-state with wide economic networks in the Sudan. The political and economic expansion was followed by provision of safety and incentives to traders, which attracted merchants, scholars and artisans from Borno, Mali, Songhay, Asben and North Africa. Another leader that continued the work started by Sarki Burja was Sarki Yakubu (ca. 1452-63 A.D.) who made political and strategic alliances to create and expand external markets for Kano's manufactures and

products and to strengthen Kano's position as intermediary in the long-distance trade. It was to effectively achieve this that in Kano's external relations with Nupe, commercial links was established such that re-exporting horses in exchange for human cargo (Ibid.). Again, mail coats, iron helmets and quilted armour reached Kano possibly from Egypt, which distinguished her military base amongst others in the central Sudan. Many of the slaves acquired by Kano were transported across the Sahara to North Africa.

Kano also had large market centres, which were regarded as the hub of both regional and intercontinental trade as it put in place major economic transformations that increased the volume, value and variety of goods exchanged across the Sahara. One of such market centres is Mano market. The market has been described as crowded from sunrise to sunset every day and drew traders from areas as wide apart as Tripoli in North Africa, Salaga in modern Ghana to the south, Tuat in north western part of West Africa and Barghimi in the south eastern part of the Middle Belt of Nigeria (Itsueli, 2002: 98). Another prominent center was Kurmi market established by Sarki Muhammed Rumfa (1463-99 A.D.). From this point, Kano became a major supplier of grains, leather goods and dyed cloth to the trans-Saharan markets in North Africa to regional markets in the Sudan and the savannah rainforest belt. In fact, Kurmi market was so important in its commercial relevance that it was classified as one of the three most important markets in Africa during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – the other two being Fez in Tripoli and Cairo in Egypt (Smith, 1997: 1).

Furthermore, Kano was not just a mere terminus on the trans-Saharan trade routes, but was also a starting point for the trans-Saharan caravans and a distribution node for other regional trading networks especially the ones that linked the Sudan with the rainforest belt. From Kano, caravans traversed the Saharan desert to various circuits of trade on the shores of the Niger and the Nile rivers, the Mediterranean littoral, and the Red Sea. Kano was also one of the trans-Saharan commercial traffic through which Kukawa and Wadai in the east were linked with Gonja and Timbuktu in the west, and Kumasi, Bida and Old Oyo (Katunga) in the south. There was also strong economic links with the other Hausa states including Zamfara, Jega, Kebbi, Katsina, Zaria, Zinder and Agades showing the strong web of economic connection created by Kano's economy in this period.

Several other forms of local trade were engaged in within West Africa across the different vegetation belts such that the people in the mangrove swamp provided riverine goods to those in the rainforest belt and vice versa. As has been mentioned the rainforest belt supplied the savannah and Sudanic regions with products from their region and from the swampy regions and vice versa, such that there was a network of connection amongst the people even before foreign interactions ever began. The propensity of this trade however increased with its linkage to the trans-Saharan trade, which connected West Africa to North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Europeans began to arrive at the West African coast from the 1440s and the Portuguese were the pioneer in this move. Although this was still at its novel stage and the interaction limited in scope, it was from this time that the Nigerian economy and its connection to other economies within and outside its region was to witness very significant transformations.

### **The Beginning of Intercontinental Relations, 1500-1800**

Economic globalization is the ongoing world integration of economies that long began with the civilizations of the Greeks and the Romans and the spice trade between Europe and Asia in the early years before the 1400s. At that time, Europe had come in contact with the Northern part of Africa and had established both a political relationship (via conquest) and an economic interaction. However, the Muslim conquest of North Africa and penetration into Europe via the Mediterranean first disturbed the spice trade with Asia which necessitated the discovery of a subsequent route and second, it created the need to stop this penetration. Therefore, the church in Rome began series of wars of re-conquest known as Crusades to prevent the further spread of the Moorish religion and the recovery of already conquered territories. The end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century witnessed the rise of two major sea powers in Europe – Spain and Portugal that pioneered explorations for the discovery of new lands and a subsequent sea route to India and also for the Christian evangelization of these lands. It was to Portugal that the discovery of

West African coast was accrued and in fact, they were the first European nation to have visited Nigeria (Alagoa, 1980: 71-2).

Portuguese interest in West Africa has been explained under two principal reasons. The first was economic and lay in the commercial expectation of the hidden riches and wealth of Africa especially the flourishing cities and trade centres of Timbuktu, Mali, Gao and Taghaza which the Catalan Atlas compiled by a Mallorcan Jew in 1375 depicted (Ryder, 1965: 218). The other reason was more socially inclined as it relates to the century-old conflict between Christianity and Islam where the Portuguese with the intention of continuing the Crusades against Muslim hegemony in the Mediterranean and North Africa embarked on explorations of evangelization. By 1441 (Ibid.: 219), the Portuguese had reached the coast of West Africa. Nevertheless, the Portuguese were not alone in their search for new lands of opportunities as they were closely followed by the Spanish. Under the leadership of King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella, Spain having advanced in science and technology considered explorations as necessary for both economic profits and religious demands. It was in achieving this twain motive that a flag was granted to Christopher Columbus of Genoa, whose exploration led to the discovery of the Americas called the West Indies in 1492. The West Indies opened up vistas of opportunities to Europe and other countries besides Portugal and Spain joined the race for colonies there. Thus, the Dutch, Danish, British and French all became major players in the Americas. This discovery was very significant to the history of globalization as it marked the very start of direct intercontinental integration involving people from three different continents – Europe, Africa and America.

Several occurrences in Europe constituted reasons why Europeans moved in their large numbers from the sixteenth century to the West Indies ranging from political unrest, religious persecutions to economic considerations. Under the economic sphere, the lands in the West Indies were greener and far more fertile than the lands in Europe. This led to the developments of plantation agriculture which had been earlier introduced to the off-shore Islands in West Africa where it was not much of a success. The Spaniards were the first to introduce this system in the West Indies followed by the Portuguese who introduced the same from the Cape Verde Islands and San Thomé in West Africa to Brazil in the Americas (Oliver & Fage, 1962: 118). The early Spanish colonies had been supplied with African slaves, mainly through the Portuguese from about 1510. This was the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and meant that the Europeans were engaged in obtaining slaves in exchange for their goods which was transported to the West Indies although the number at this time was still very few. However, it was not until the competitive irruption into the West Indies of the Dutch, French, and English in the seventeenth century, when there was a rapidly growing European demand for sugar that the transAtlantic slave trade began to dominate European activities in West Africa (Ibid.: 120). Sugar was a crop that made heavy demands on labour and as such the number of slaves imported and the unavailable labour of the indigenous people – known as the Red Indians – were insufficient to cater for the high demand. Thus, it became a necessity to embark upon the importation of a larger number of Africans and this marked the increased volume of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In the conduct of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Nigerians featured prominently whether as the captives or the captured that is, they participated both as slaves and the slave merchants that protracted the trade. Ryder (1980: 236) discloses that the first cargo of slaves carried from Nigerian shores in European ships were destined not for the Americas but for the Gold Coast where Portuguese traders seeking gold found it necessary to offer slaves alongside other goods in exchange for slaves. It was soon discovered that slaves could be obtained in the rivers of the Niger Delta and by 1480, it became regular for Portuguese caravels to enter these rivers in search of slaves. The attention of West African merchants from this time began to move from the Sahara to the Atlantic and the hinterland created the commodity for the new market.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade has also been referred to as “the triangular trade”. This is because the trade was a connection from Europe to West Africa, to the West Indies and back to Europe. The advent of the Atlantic commerce transformed the economic perspectives of the nations that made up Nigeria and while some were victims (acquired from kidnapping, slave raids and/or intergroup wars and criminals or as

tributes from vassal states) and never received any economic benefit, there were others that amassed so much wealth that it elevated their socio-political status amongst others.

The Delta region for one became a center for the collection of European merchandise and for redistribution in the hinterland. In its early stages, the trade involved the export of such goods as ivory, pepper, beeswax and some enslaved peoples in exchange for European imports. However, by the late seventeenth century through to the eighteenth century, the African exports from this region were dominated by human cargo (Okpreva, 2005: 403). Thus, the Delta merchants played the role of middlemen as they operated between the Europeans on the coast and other Nigerians in the interior.

There was also the Aro of Igbo land that possessed an intricate economic structure that needs be mentioned here. They were strategically located on the border land between the Igbo, Ibibio and Cross River peoples and came into prominence as traders in the middle of the seventeenth century. They were soon to build up a trading network which covered the former Eastern region of Nigeria penetrating into the areas covered by the Idoma, Igala and some peoples of the Western Delta (Afigbo, 1980: 87). The Aro were able to combine trade and magic (as oracle agents) to demonstrate outstanding entrepreneurial skills during the eighteenth century, the period the trans-Atlantic slave trade peaked. The commercial exploits of the Aro transcended the entire southeastern Nigeria extending as far as its Cameroon border and parts of the Benue Valley in the Middle Belt (Okpoko & Obi-Ani, 2005: 431). The items of trade consisted of both imported European objects and locally produced items, including objects of wealth, instruments of magical and religious rites, cult objects, cloth, plaited fiber work, mats and tobacco pipes amongst others. The Aro economy was closely linked to the Atlantic commerce as such, their sphere of influence in the hinterland expanded as the European demand for human cargoes on the coast increased. By 1750 the traders had gone beyond Awka and Nsukka in northern Igbo land. As they moved farther hinterland, they established outposts and small settlements to facilitate their commercial, especially slave trading activities.

Several other nations at that time had their economies geared towards providing human cargo for the Atlantic trade. The direct trade boosted Benin's economy with the Europeans. Kano in the eighteenth century witnessed the introduction of cowries from the Atlantic Ocean, which was acquired in exchange for slaves. The importance of the monetization of Kano's economy meant that her trading horizon was expanding and in fact reached its peak in the eighteenth century; also, that she was now more connected to the major continental commercial centers through intermediaries in both the North African in the trans-Saharan trade and West African coasts through the trans-Atlantic trade.

Fyfe (1981: 246) notes that from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards Europeans were trading along the coast of West Africa and this completely altered the map of West Africa making the coast the center of trade; intercontinental export trade hitherto absorbed into the center and then dispersed to the north now diverted to a new outlet on the coast in a new pattern of trading networks. This diversion did not terminate the trans-Saharan trade rather it created two principal spheres of influence in West Africa – the Muslim sphere inland and the Christian sphere on the coast (Ibid.: 247). The point is that the Nigerian economy was incorporated in an intercontinental web that cannot be denied. The European merchants and their plantations in the West Indies depended so much on the slaves supplied by West Africa much of which came from Nigeria (Ryder, 1980: 238) and so did the Nigerian nations come to depend on the goods imported from Europe for the growth of their economies. The significance of the European trade can be seen in its injection of merchant capital into the Nigerian economy although this took the form of mainly consumer goods, which could be produced locally. It is evident from the events within this period that what today is regarded as global interconnection or interdependence began a long time ago and the Nigerian economy was not dormant as it participated fully in the unfolding of the process.

### **The Nigerian Economy in the Nineteenth Century**

The nineteenth century was an epochal one for Nigeria as it was for all of Africa. More importantly, it marked a period of tremendous changes especially in its external economic relationship that was to completely tilt the tide and alter the course of its history. The century began on the note of the flourishing

trade in slaves across the Atlantic that had dominated the previous two centuries. In 1802, Denmark abolished the slave trade within its territories becoming the first European nation to accomplish this feat. Britain followed in 1807 by the Act of Parliament for the abolition of the transAtlantic trade. By the end of the eighteenth century, socio-political and economic events in Britain pointed to the fact that the end of the slave trade era was in sight. She took the lead in the Industrial Revolution in Europe, which represented a ground-breaking transformation in economic production with the establishment of industries to replace labour afore-handled manually. Again, she was already experiencing losses in her sugar plantation in the Americas following from the high competition of sugar in Europe and the constant slave revolts in her colonies. These alongside pressures coming from a new class of abolitionists consisting of missionaries and humanitarians have been advanced as explanations why the country pioneered the abolition movement (Webster & Boahen, 1967: 76-9).

In Britain, the new industries created new needs. These included raw materials such as palm oil needed for the lubrication of the machines, the production of other materials such as soap and candles; and new markets for the surplus products from the industries. Instead of labor therefore, Britain needed Africans to remain in Africa, produce these raw materials, and provide the markets. Although Britain had abolished the Atlantic trade, other European, American, and African merchants continued the trade, which even received a boost in the nineteenth century. These other nations had not quite become as industrial and therefore did not see the advantage in this system. Britain knew she had to adopt all measures possible to get the others to buy into their idea of abolition and thus through treaty signing, bribes to African chiefs and Europeans and even punishable sanction with the establishment of an AntiSlavery Naval Squadron (Ibid.: 79-82) they were finally able to convince the others into their camp. The British proposed a new form of trade, which they called the 'legitimate trade', which was trade in agricultural products. The argument was that trade in human cargo was inhuman and evil and against the law of nature as such, a more humane and legal form of trade was to be opted for with the Africans. The other European powers and the United States of America soon began to abandon the slave trade and embrace the legitimate trade. In the 1840s, the French became industrial and it was from this time that she began to engage in the legitimate trade in high measure. New European nations such as Germany also joined in this trade.

Nigeria was one of the numerous West African states that were engaged in the business of the legitimate trade. Palm oil was the major commodity for export in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was in high demand in Europe to create oil and fat. It was also used as lubricating oil for the machines, to manufacture candles and soap as earlier stated. One of the greatest centers of production was the Niger Delta, which became the Oil Rivers. Calabar, Brass and Bonny became the abode of oil production in the Delta. Other agricultural products that became important in the latter part of the nineteenth century included groundnut, timber, rubber, cotton, coffee, pepper and indigo amongst others. These raw materials were exchanged for European manufactures as guns and gunpowder, hardware, beads, tobacco, salt iron, textiles, spirit and some food items (Falola, 2005: 101). Iron, salt, spirit and textiles were the chief imports, accounting for about three-quarters of the total value of export.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade did not alter trade relations within Africa. In fact, since it redirected trading activities to the coast, it created more networks intra-regionally and inter-regionally to meet the demands of the foreigners. One of the most vivacious trading relations in this century that involved the Nigerian economy was between Sokoto Caliphate and Asante. The trade was mainly conducted through the cities of Salaga and Kano and the trade commodities were kola nut and natron. The two cities fulfilled complementary functions thus, Kano acted as wholesale center for kola distribution in the central Sudan while Salaga served as the bulking point and transit terminus for kola exports and other northern imports (Lovejoy, 1980: 113). However, kola and natron were not the only commodities in this trade, Asante exports to Sokoto also included gold and in the course of the century, European manufactures acquired from the coast mainly guns, gunpowder and metal ware. Sokoto on the other hand exported to Asante animals such as horses, asses, donkeys, bullocks, sheep and goat, textile and leather goods, dried onion leaves and some

North African re-exports, particularly silk. Slaves constituted another item that moved in both directions (Zeleza, 1993: 275-6).

The importance of this trade was measured in the events that unfolded from its conduct. The idea of monopoly came to dominate the affairs of the trading companies in Nigeria and rivalries arose between merchants of same nationality on one hand and between merchants of separate nationalities on the other. A case in hand is that of how new small-scale traders in Bristol and London sought to challenge the big established Liverpool traders from the 1830s to the 1850s for the palm oil trade of the Niger Delta; another is the deep-seated antagonism between French and British traders in the same Niger Delta. The French companies – *Compagnie Française de L’Afrique* and the *Compagnie du Senegal* formed in 1880 and 1881 respectively, established branches all over the delta. British companies especially Goldie Taubman’s National African Company later the Royal Niger Company was given to much concern by this development and continued to cause tension until 1884 when the NAC bought over the French firms (Zeleza: 383 & 386).

Trade rivalry amongst the merchants soon translated into rivalry amongst the governments. The European powers were torn between who would hold political control in the region most dominated by their traders and/or missionaries. It was to avert a major conflagration between these European powers that the Berlin conference held in 1884 to first, give international recognition to an already existing condition of the scramble for Africa and further to decide the future of European relations in Africa. The legitimate trade was mainly between Europe and Africa and started a period of integrating Africa into an international mercantile capitalism. In a bid to establish direct control over these states, the gunboat was employed to subjugate nations that refused to peacefully sign away their independence in treaties drawn by the Europeans along biased terms. Thus, was the conquest and colonization of Nigeria as was taking place all over Africa and a direct control of these nations, which implied that their economies were to be infused into the European economies and the terms of trade determined by these powers.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, what this paper has done is to establish from the various definitions advanced that economic globalization involves the integration and interconnection of the world economies into a global economy such that what happens in one part of the world has a direct or indirect bearing to a nation in another corner. Although the concept is new in that it was only in the 1980s that it gained widespread usage making many social scientists and economists argue that its roots can only be found in the contemporary process of economic integration, the phenomenon is historical and is rooted in ancient economic interactions across national, regional, and continental boundaries. The Nigerian economy in the pre-colonial era was involved in commercial linkages with other economies of the world though existing as independent nations.

What the paper has done is to use examples of the economic relationship that existed between Nigerian economy and other national economies within and across continents in the pre-colonial period to prove that globalization is as Kwanashie describes it, an integral part of human history and a historical process that connected economies of the world and also uncover the active participation of Nigeria in this process. Having seen clear examples from Kano, Benin, and Aro amongst others in their connection within the West African region and outside from early times, the argument for the progressive nature of globalization can be established. Thus, the influence of technology cannot be under emphasized as was first witnessed in the sixteenth century when Europeans began to move out of their continents into other parts of the world. This point to the fact that globalization especially in its economic sense may indeed be a new concept nevertheless, the event surrounding the idea is as old as man’s interaction economically within and outside his sphere of influence.

Today, Nigeria is not aloof in the increased speed at which globalization is engulfing the world. In fact, she like other African countries stands to be one of the major benefactors of the flows across borders in all the ramifications globalization manifests. In the economic aspect, Nigeria’s economy although a developing

one has witnessed increased integration with several nations of the world in terms of the flow of goods and services, foreign direct investment (FDI), capital and labour amongst several others.

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