

**The Effects Of Modern Forms Of Entertainment On Folk
Traditions (A Case Study Of Indigenous Kono Youths In Four
Towns In The Nimikoro Chiefdom, Kono District, Eastern Sierra
Leone)**

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Abstract

This study investigates the loss of traditional cultural interest in the youths of the kono district in the Eastern region of Sierra Leone. The study consisted of four major diamond mining towns in the Nimikoro chiefdom. A descriptive survey was used for the study and a total of one hundred and twenty mixed sex youths were randomly selected from four towns for the study. This implies that thirty youths were selected from each town. A structured questionnaire was administered and a focused group discussion was held to fully achieve the stated objectives of the study using simple percentages and measures of central tendency mean scores.

The major findings indicated that, the earlier hours of the night which is appropriate for telling folk stories, riddles, learning proverbs ,tongue twisting contest, etc. have been overshadowed by other forms of entertainment such as watching movies on videos and televisions, engaging themselves with their mobile phones, attending dance sessions, and listening to FM(frequency modulation) stations. Spending time with these forms of entertainments has impacted the traditional cultural sustenance of these youths to some extent. It has explained reasons for their choice of western dress to African dress, foreign music to traditional kono music, western dance style to traditional kono dance style, their knowledge in folk tales, proverbs, riddles, and other forms of folk traditions.

KEY WORDS; folk traditions, frequency modulation, disco sessions, television, mobile phones.

STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in the Nimikoro chiefdom, in the Bumpe, Bandafayie, Jaima, and Njgbwema towns in the Kono district of eastern Sierra Leone. Njaima is the head quarter town of the Nimikoro chiefdom. These study areas are considered appropriate for the research because, even though the chiefdom is a diamond mining chiefdom which makes it a multi-cultural society, yet, it had been preserving its traditional cultures. Its closer proximity to the district head quarter makes it possible for the objectives of this study to be achieved.

SAMPLE SIZE

A random selection of one hundred and twenty respondents was made. With thirty respondents from each town. All of the selected respondents were youths (18 to 35 years) .As the objective of the study is geared towards identifying the possible impacts of modern forms of entertainment on the traditional(folk) culture of youths in kono, the educational background of the respondents was not of primary concern though it contributed in achieving the objectives of the study.

PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Focus group discussions were held at local entertainment centres which included palm wine bars (poyo bars), green tea shops (Ataya bases) and video centres. Personal visits were made to individual homes to administer questionnaires to respondents, especially youths who do not visit these centres. First-hand information was acquired by attending video shows and dance sessions.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of modern entertainment has extensively affected the folk traditions of most cultural institutions of Sierra Leoneans .If researches had been conducted on this study, then there had been little or no impact on the existing problem, as much evidence of folk traditional death is seen in the rural areas within the country. There is a drastic change in the way people of the rural areas dress, speak, their taste for music, and above all their acceptance for the existing folk traditions.

This problem is not only affecting the lives of the isolated groups but from observation it is believed to have engulfed a large portion of the entire nation. Children find it much difficult to appreciate a culture they don't seem to understand. The normal traditional lives of people of Kono have undergone serious cultural changes. Where the people need to show the effectiveness and beauty of their existing cultures, they tend to shy away from it and instead adore foreign cultures. This study will assess the manner in which the youths of the Nimikoro chiefdom in the Kono district have embraced the use of videos, television, mobile phones,

frequency modulation stations(FM) and disco sessions and the effects they have on their traditional folk lives such as; their proficiency in telling folk tales, singing folk songs, riddles and proverbs and performing the traditional kono folk dance. The Nimikoro Chiefdom is a chiefdom that had one of the highest diamond deposits in Kono district. From the mid -40s, up to the outbreak of the Sierra Leonean rebel war, the chiefdom had been densely populated. All the chiefdoms that had huge diamond deposits were also over populated which made them highly multi-cultural societies. It was quite difficult for the kono people to practice their traditional cultures due to the presence of the *strangers*. Strangers indeed as most of the non kono where from the other districts within the country, some were from the other countries in the West African sub region. However, few other nationals from all over the world also added to the population as Lebanese and Syrian nationals were active in the diamond trade. Due to this convergence of diverse cultures in the Kono district, the folk traditions of the indigenous kono people were moved to the villages within the districts with lesser diamond deposits. The multicultural settings of these societies did not totally strip the chiefdom headquarters of practising their traditional cultures; it however brought changes in the way the way they were practiced. One basic culture that was altered was the male and female traditional initiation ceremonies (*the poro and sande*) The mining and educational sectors greatly influenced changes in these traditional institutions. Before the coming of these mining companies, initiates of the *poro* and *sande* use to take from six months to one year in the initiation bush. This system changed as most of the youths were engaged in illicit mining and some were going to school. The mines and the academic calendar dictated the traditional calendar. As the reopening of schools drew nearer, youths who were in the initiation bush were rushed to end their stay in the bush .The reasons for these initiation rites were to give the initiates traditional education which included training girls in skills in basic home keeping, their roles and responsibilities as women , mothers and wives etc. The initiates were orientated about the cultural and social wealth of their communities, respect for elders, learning folk songs, proverbs, and a lot of other traditional skills. One significant role of these initiation rites was to train youths to respect their elders in the African society. Wives use to squat to greet their husbands in the morning especially in the rural areas, Children must greet their parents and other elders in the morning and in the evening. Women Squatting to greet their husbands may be frowned at by women right activist. But this tradition and many other cultural traditions had added to this once unique aesthetics of these dying African cultures.

Almost all facets of the African culture have been affected somehow. Baskom and Herskovits (1988) comment that *“there is no African culture which has not been affected in somehow by European’s contact...the cultures of Africa have been modified by contacts with Europe and the near East which long antedate the events that have made headlines in recent years. Elements from outside, accepted generations ago, have been adapted to traditional to traditional African patterns.*

The influence of foreign cultures has reflected on the sustenance of the African cultures either positively or negatively thus contributing to a break down in the existing practices of the people .Kottack (2004)

The former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in his speech to the House of Commons on November 29, 1944 stated that, *“A love for a tradition has never weakened a nation indeed it has strengthened nations in their hours of peril, but new views must come, the world must roll on.”* (Churchill 1944) To some extent, Churchill’s speech expresses ideas about cultural modifications. The world must advance with modern ideas and for a society to grow it must live with new options provided. Leopold Senghor doesn’t likewise frown at the acquisition of modern foreign cultures(which is conserved within the confines of assimilation),what he believes to be harmful to the African is rejection of his traditional African culture through imitation .It is quite clear that the rate at which modern technology is infiltrating African cultural societies is very high and quite necessary, the problem lies with the role it has and is playing in the lives of African youths especially towards their folk traditions. The question Africa should be asking is *“shouldn’t this growing technology be used for the promotion and advancement of African cultural traditions?*

African culture in the mid-1900s was very unique and different from any other culture. Its unique characteristic was due to the seclusion of African nations which made it possible for the African cultural development, however this situation changed when European colonization started and the change still continues even when colonization has far ended (St. Rosemary educational Institution.2016)

The possibility of divorcing past and present cultures can be quite impossible .Attempting to separate the two will be translated into the agonizing choice of either; Okere (1996)

a) *Identifying with one or the other set of values ,*

Which means denying the other culture which can be either the modern or traditional

b) *Living with both of them as a continuity, since each individual’s life is in fact a continuum*

The first option can be detrimental as no society can exist alone. It is only theoretical, for it is not possible in actual life. Such an option calls for the society to live in a *monastic* isolation where only circumstances of traditional life prevail. Considering the views of Okere, there is no single instance where he suggested a divorce or neglect of traditional cultures for modern cultures. A blend of the two cultures however can foster economic and social developments. Okere (1996) explains Obiechina's views on the breaking of African traditions as it has been experienced in the literary world also. It is the overwhelming awareness that the old traditional culture with its antecedents are breaking up and is being replaced by a new culture and its emergent values which has made culture change the all-pervasive theme in the west African novel.

Sohail (DATE?) in his work *Traditional society vs. Modern Society : which will you prefer?* also discusses the two traditions as inseparable factors because both cultures have their pros and cons *Man is a social animal and has been living in groups since the pre-historic times. With time, these groups have evolved to become organized and civilized societies and have adopted different norms, cultures and trends that distinguish them from the other societies. But the process of evolution did not stop and continues till date, leading to the formation of the modern society by putting the traditional society behind the scene... The question of preferring the modern society over traditional one or vice-versa is a highly debatable issue and cannot be adequately answered without taking into account the pros and cons of both the forms of societies.* While the traditional society boast of its long preserved culture, the modern culture brandishes its technological strength. Notwithstanding these values, the modern culture has to some extent not helped in rectifying what had been and is still being considered evil of the traditional culture such as; the girls being buried alive on birth, widows being buried alive with their husbands because, women are still being raped and sexually harassed by their male counterparts and they are still being subjected to domestic violence. Sohail concludes his work with the view that even though the traditional society had been unaware of all these modern technology and science, they still had control over their own lives.

Each culture has its own personality. Manenji (1978) comments that even though we are all human beings, that doesn't mean we are all the same. Humans are divers in several ways .every society is identified by its specific culture. As such, Menenji views globalization as a factor that has immensely affected the cultural behaviour of people in diverse ways. This view quite agrees with the focus of this work as it is quite evident that most sierra Leonean youths are losing tight grip over their traditional culture. The proliferation of Frequency

modulation(FM) radio stations is quite high, most youths now own mobile phones , disco sessions are frequently organized, and commercial video centres are attractive business ventures in most of the communities.

The united nation has also made a declaration on rights of indigenous people to protect indigenous properties, *Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as manifestation of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources ,seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control ,protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.*(United Nations declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,Artoicle31,2007) As such any means of alteration of such traditional practices or failure of members of these societies to preserve these cultures can be considered a violation of their human rights.

Human right organizations have expressed concerns over the extinction of traditional culture. Preservation of these cultures has also been instituted by these organizations. The human right organizations define cultural rights as; *the group's ability to preserve its culture, to raise children in ways of its forefathers, to continue its language, and not to be deprived of its economic base by the nation in which it is located.* Kottack (2004))

The traditional cultural components outlined by these organizations had been in extensive use by people of rural kono district; story telling sessions at night, tongue twisting contest, folksongs and night plays, had been traditions practices practiced by youths in the rural kono district as forms of entertainments that had been preserved by elders of the district. With the proliferation of other forms of modern entertainment in these areas, there is much tendency for the traditional sub cultures to be impacted by the modern cultures. Thomas (2012) made this point quite clear "*mobile phones are the must get have gadgets among the young as well as the old, whether they are living in remote villages or big cities. Music videos have been criticized by researchers to have significant behavioural impact by desensitizing viewers to violence and making teenagers more likely to approve of premarital sex .Up to 75% of videos contain sexually explicit material, and more than half contain violence that is often committed against women .Paediatric Child Health (2003).* Music videos which are frequently shown in video centres are filled with youthful viewers in both

urban and rural areas in Sierra Leone. If this mode of entertainment has desensitized teenagers, then it is quite possible for youths to be culturally desensitized too.

Similarly popular music also has a huge following in the world, the dissemination of popular music has a lot of channels through which it has smoothly filtered down to the diverse societies. Such channels can be videos, television, mobile phones, etc. *music plays an important role in socialization of children and adolescent. Popular music is present almost everywhere ,and it is easily available through the radio, various recordings, the internet, and new technologies ,allowing adolescents to hear it in divers settings and situations alone or shearing it with friends .Paediatrics(2013)*The journal further explored that popular music has also affected schoolwork, social interactions, mood and effect and particularly behaviour, highlighting the attitude of adolescent towards drug usage and attitude towards sex and violence . A clear relationship has been established between music and emotions regardless of age .Paediatrics (2013)

Traditional culture differs much from modern culture; out standing among these differences is the power to bring unity among people.it functions as a unifying factor by creating a bond among people of the same society. . *While traditional and modern culture may be similar in some ways, in some very significant ways they are clearly different from each other. Traditional culture ,such as our human ancestors enjoyed ,is held together by relationships among people-immediate family, extended family, clan and tribe .Everyone lives nearby. Everyone knows how he or she fits into the mix because relationships and the behaviours that go along with them are clearly* Knick(2011)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicated that 105 of the entire respondents representing 87% do watch television and video shows and only 15 representing 13% of the interviewed youths have little or no interest

In watching television and video. This explains the huge interest youths have in this sector of entertainment.

As time plays a vital role in the transmission of kono folk culture to youths, 85 (76%) of the television and video watchers do watch television and videos during the early hours of the night and only 20 (24%) don't have specific time to watch movies. This shows that the respondents do not have time to attend story telling sessions, engage in traditional games, listen to proverbs, riddles and other traditional folk traditions which are traditional practices done during the night. The night is most appropriate for this folk entertainment because, most elders use the early hours of the night to entertain youths and themselves after a tedious day's

work on their farms and mines. Video centers are the major relaxation centers for youths in the chiefdom and owners of these video centers often play Nollywood (Nigerian) movies for their customers. This research showed that 85 (81%) of the respondents who do watch videos and television movies do like watching Nigerian movies and 20(19%) of them love watching both Nigerian and other action movies, which include Hollywood (American), Bollywood (Indian) and Chinese movies. 100(95%) of the movie watchers do admire the display of Nigerian traditional dress by the actors and actresses. According to the study, Sierra Leonean movies are seldom shown in these video centers and when they are shown they either display ancient cultures such as wearing animal skins, walking bear-feet, or the Sierra Leonean movies may be modern comedy films which display little or no folk culture of Sierra Leone. This makes it clear that Sierra Leonean movies are not popular with most youths. If Sierra Leonean movies are popular they can as well appreciate the Sierra Leonean cultural dress. However, admiring the African traditional dress and acquiring them are issues addressed by the study. Even though majority of the youths do admire the African dress, only half 35(29%) of the entire respondents do have traditional Africa dresses and 85(71%) don't have traditional African dresses. The major factor responsible for youths not acquiring the African dress is because of the cost involved in sewing it. The other factor responsible is that these African dresses are dresses worn on specific occasions. All of the youths who watch movies on television and video do appreciate the other folk traditions displayed in The Nigerian movies including traditional African dance, riddles, proverbs and music.

78 (65%) of all the respondents disclosed that the kono do have a cultural dance and 42(35%) admitted that they were not aware of such dance. However, 85(81%) of the movie watching respondents can't dance the traditional kono dance even though they were aware of the Nigerian and Indian cultural dance seen on screen.

The frequency modulation stations were also used to observe how it has impacted the lives of these youths. The study proved that, 110(92%) of all the respondents are active and frequent listeners to the FM stations in the district and only 10(8%) were not active listeners. These stations have been educating and entertaining members of the communities in which they are situated. Educating the community involves transmitting cultural knowledge to its members. The study proved that only one specific program for the promotion of kono culture is produced and aired on the government owned radio station. (Radio *Koadea* FM 90.2). The youths themselves have little time to listen to the kono cultural program, *music of our land* as 25 (23%) of the active listeners listen to the kono cultural program and 85(77%) of the entire

radio listeners listen to music from other countries popular among which are American, Jamaican and Nigerian music.

Mobile phones like television, video and FM radio stations have also played an important role in traditional cultural sustenance. Mobile phones are used not only for making calls. It has a lot of functions like playing music, radio, video clips, internet browsing, Facebook, etc. 83(69%) of the entire respondents own mobile phones and 37(31%) don't have mobile phones. 80(96%) of the respondents who own mobile phones do not download traditional kono folk music into their phones nor do they have traditional sierra Leonean musical clips nor do they have any video clips that can transmit traditional kono folk culture.

Dance sessions are frequently organized in the study areas on Saturdays and during the night. 62(52%) of all the respondents do attend these dance sessions. It was realized that traditional kono music are not played during this sessions. 32(56%) of those who attend dance sessions can sing the music played during the sessions and they do know the names of some of the artists who sang them but they cannot sing any traditional kono song nor do they know the names of kono traditional musicians.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results obtained indicated that, most forms of modern entertainment practices are done during the night. The night is the most appropriate time for the transmission of the kono folk traditions. In most Kono villages, elders transmit traditional folk traditions such as; storytelling, explaining proverbs, explaining riddles to youths etc. during the early hours of the night. This tradition is fading off and it being replaced by these new forms of entertainments.

The film industry is being crowded with foreign movies. The study has proved that the youths who watch these movies do admire the traditional African cultures shown. The limited Sierra Leonean movies do not adequately portray Sierra Leonean culture. The Sierra Leone film industry should be adequately advised to produce more films which should project the folk traditions of Sierra Leone.

The Frequency modulation stations should present more programs that will educate the youths about the kono culture.

The study also indicated that, all the modern forms of entertainment considered in this work exposed just two traditional aspects of the Sierra Leonean culture, these are traditional kono music, and the African dress exposed in Nigerian movies. Because of this inadequate dissemination, some youths are not aware of some folk traditions. Folk traditions such as

proverbs, riddles, folk tales, etc. have not been transmitted in any form to the kono public. It is therefore necessary for these folk traditions to be appropriately transmitted.

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