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NO HOPE FOR SURVIVAL OF BLACK CULTURE IN THE NEXT CENTURY

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NO HOPE FOR SURVIVAL OF BLACK CULTURE IN THE  
NEXT CENTURY

When a traditionist looks at what is happening in African countries today, he will agree with us that there is no hope for survival of our black culture. It has undergone a period of transition largely due to the fact that, it has been unable to withstand the appeal from the new generation of young men and women to have it replaced by the Western Culture. Our way of life which was typical of African origin has been changed tremendously. English systems of life have had a lot of influence on most Africans, for example during the past decades if a village old woman wanted her house to be thatched, she could brew some local beer, and then incite young men to come and assist that old lady, this way of working together, is no longer practised in many countries in the advent of money. The same could apply if a village man was attacked by a lion, soon the news reached the village, all men in that village could get their spears and whatever weapon one had, and rush in the direction where the killer was and hunt for it, until either the man was discovered, or the killer animal. This was previously the way of mutual life that the fore fathers live, before the dawn of european civilization but these days, mutual way of living together, is much honoured in breach than in observance.

Nowadays old men and women in villages are no longer respected instead, they are being feared as witch doctors and wizards, as people who have grown old simply because they have been sucking human blood. This is how we look at the old age in our circles, If an old lady or a man is suffering in the village or town location, a person who is not related could not take up the challenge to assist the sick to take him or her to the hospital.

The old mutual ways of life which our forefathers practised have been abruptly brought to an end, the traditional dances which they organized in villages are no longer done. Many traditional customs, have been replaced, and others removed from the catalogue of traditional culture. Respect for the aged is no longer there, traditional marriages have been replaced by simple town marriage, respect for our traditional chiefs seems to have been declined and instead a political party branch chairman is much venerated than a traditional chief.



Our African way of making pots from local clay has been discouraged in the course of time probably by western civilization. Curving is now done for commercial purposes by young men and women and not for the love of our culture, because if it was for the love of our culture, educated men and women, would have taken up curving as a hobby as spare time occupation.

In our African customs, marriages were honoured and no-body would marry without the authority from the parents; because in our customs as Africans our forefathers maintained that it was not a good thing to marry a girl of not your tribe and whose clan you do not know. It is not in our customs to marry a girl you meet on the road, because you will never know whether there was leprosy in her family or clan. Some families too are inclined to be light fingered while other families are pugnacious and some are mendicant, so that once you marry a girl whose family suffers from leprosy, your offsprings are likely to suffer from the same disease, and if you marry a girl whose family is pugnacious or mendicant, your children are likely to follow suit. This was what our traditional forefathers maintained. They also maintained that marrying a girl of different tribe means losing children because there are still some tribes believe that children are the property of a woman and not a man at all. There are still some women who soon they realise that the children are working they bring the marriage to an end, so that the woman remains alone and enjoys the fruits from them. Other women upon seeing that the children are working they look for African medicine and kill the husband so that she remains alone. Some men have gone mad through this unreligious way, all these are often the results of marrying from different tribes, our forefathers maintained.

But nowadays, this old system is now obsolete and has been attacked by Western Civilization so much so that it has been replaced by the Western type of marriage with the results that it has given rise to a lot of immorality, adultery, promiscuous sex is rife because some girls come from homes where these things are experienced before the right time. Intimate relations between the sexes before a legal marriage are being considered the proper thing and trial marriages outside the binding ties of legality are being advised by social reformers.

The right of a boy and girl to chaste virginity until they legally enter into a clean marriage is being violated. A high number of marriages are proving disappointing in our time.

Elders who are the traditional custodian of our culture have also been unable to maintain our culture, instead they have become traditional law breakers, they are now to be found in bars and beerhalls, with no regard for their age or decency. How can a youth go for an advice to such an elder? It is a national shame to see elders mix freely with their sons and daughters in public places like bars etc. Governments also have encouraged the decline of the African culture, in that they have allowed oldmen and women young men and women to drift to urban areas and leave rural areas with practically no people. There are no young men to take girls for traditional dances, there are no young men to learn how to make nat, axe handles, hoe handles, there are no young men to build "anatala" for ground nuts and finger millet, for the aged. There are no young ladies in rural areas to dance 'ichidelche' during the eveing in villages, there are no girls to take the challenge to help the old women in drawing wates from the village streams. There are no young girls in villages to produce the high-pitched laughters which attract young men and necessitate hide and seek. The government has not controlled the inflow of rural masses to towns. Who can boost cultural activities now?

The wind of change has blown over most of the African countries young men and women and the aged have come to towns, all probably have found it a share waste of time to stay in villages for the whole of their lives. They have all gone to town. All have said "staying in rural areas is for the aged," and the young men and women have said like wise that "staying in rural areas is for the aged. Why staying in villages where is no electricity lights, no tar roads, no intertainments." They have all gone to big cities, they have all gone to Lusaka, to Lagos, to Kitwe, they have gone even to small town. Yet the government have been unable to realise the position at homes. Houses have fallen down, Villages have become hamlets, even a chief does not move about majestically as he used to do previously, for he now has only a handful of villagers, he has become more less like a tree probably fig tree that had qll its branches removed by an axe.



Shanty compounds have sprung up around big cities where conditions are very unsanitary and not fit for human habitation worse still is the problem of unemployment these compounds cause some of them due to difficulty in getting employment have taken to crime, some killing their fellow human beings as if they are butchers, many have been imprisoned yet they have not felt remorse, they have again gone back to crime, for what else could they do? Governments have not rehabilitated them, Governments have not given them employment, yet further more the compounds in which they live have been encouraged by governments. Girls who have been unfortunate in getting married in towns have become beer and tobacco addicts spending most of their time loitering in town streets and ranging compounds in quest of male companion from whom she could derive a Kwacha to spare on clear-tone or Ambi to maintain her facial beauty. Boys too have become bar frequenters and some have taken up plundering as their profession feigning disciplined young men during the day time yet at night become trigger-stars and rejoice at seeing the innocent blood spilt, yet governments can not have these compounds dismantled.

Traditional chiefs too who are the living symbols of our continuity with the past culture have also gone western. It is highly difficult to find traditional music in a palace of a chief as was the case in olden days. The gifts they received if say a village hunter killed either a big animal or small animal is no longer there. If a chief wants some fresh meat, he will either go there personally or sends a wife to go and buy some meat from such an hunter. Chiefs too are given to too much drinking in public places, even dancing foreign music when he becomes merry in a bar. Their popularity and importance have diminished, instead political party leaders have merged important than traditional chiefs. Matters are being settled amicably by political party officials no matter at what level of the party, even a chief at times is requested to go and give evidence if he happens to be involved to a political party committee. Funny enough is the fact that at times chiefs are being afraid of a political party branch chairman, and he can easily be brow beaten into submission by him. When important visitors go into rural areas to visit the people, they are welcomed by party leaders, as if they are the traditional rulers of the people in such areas. The chief is merely introduced to in the following theme:-



Branch Chairman - "This is chief Kaleribe - Kafyuko Sir !"

Visitor : "Mulid Shani ba Chief ? (How are you chief)

What is this culture then ? All governments all over the world particularly Africa should note that chiefs are the traditional rulers and the custodians of our black culture. They should also remember that they can make laws, or even legislate them but as regards traditional laws they can fail because governments are not the custodians of the traditional law and customs ; and these are the only people who can <sup>govern</sup> revive our culture if governments supported them.

If we look at the role of the imported films we shall also observe that films have played unfailing role and many traditionists will agree with me that Africa in the next century is likely to become a cultural desert. Foreign films have seduced the youth of today even the young men and women. All what our culture considered secrets have been made public through cinema, books a lady sexually, films showing how to caress a lady are there, films showing how to make love are here in Africa. It is a shame to our culture. Books too which explain all these things are there written by social reformers and are exposed to the public to read regardless of age. If a man or woman who lived a century ago happened to come and see these films and books. She could instantly pick up a rope and repair to the bush to commit suicide that her dignity is absaned. But these days you will find old men and women mixed with the youths in cinema halls watching erotic, amative and dirty films. How can a girl think that virginity is important to her when she can see a man kissing a lady in a film show ? Western civilisation has had an effect on our culture, it has become western oriented so much so that, we can not practise our culture independently without repeatedly referring to western civilization. Black culture is being considered as an hinderance towards civilization in a country. For example the young people nowadays can not repair for an advice of an elder, he or she could prefer to consult a book or go to western advisor.

It is difficult too to find young men and women who can make axe handles, hoe handles, or those who can tell riddles or some traditional stories, and very men can not name local trees except mango tree, banana tree. If the present generation can not mention the names of the local trees, what more with the coming generation ? how are they going to know the right tree for axe-handle-making ? The proverb says "Initi ikula



empanga" (the growing trees become the forest) how can one simply know the word forest and can not name the trees that the forest abounds in ?

Traditionists here too will support me when I say that black culture has become commercialised particularly in towns and this is again largely due to influence of the Western and governments. Governments have set up departments responsible for guiding our traditional culture in many countries. These have invited a lot of people from homes to come to cities and try their luck in cultural dancing or in other cultural activity, leaving rural areas with no interested personnel to push forward culture, particularly traditional dances, and plays, and songs, they are here in town making a living out of traditional culture which was formerly the way of life as Africans. If personnel in these cultural departments are not paid they will not turn up they will register their protest that way.

Cultural activities now centre around big cities and towns, and normally over the week-ends activities are conducted. Some tribes have completely forgotten most of their culture while others have nothing to offer to the nation in form of culture.

Old traditional dancing groups have disappeared from the cultural scene, for example in my area where I come from, there was a popular dancing troupe, called 'Bamulengwe' all these have gone forever and there is no other troupe in the area to emulate them. The art of black-smith making of hoes and axes from metals all have disappeared from the cultural list. Who can now make spears, hoes, and axes ? Who can make bows and arrows ? Where are 'insaka', all these have forever.

These days people can not eat together, drink together, they say it is against the rules of hygiene. The only traditional culture that seems to continue attracting people is 'dancing' and curving the latter being a source of income to those who have taken up this has their occupation.

Handwork in schools especially Upper primary schools is no longer included in the school curriculum thus making it impossible for a youth to know how a mat was made on which he was sleeping.

I have some suggestions towards making our culture survive there are many more but these are the most important ones.



1. Respect for our traditional chiefs should be restored and encouraged in turn they should too restore their dignity, i.e. they should avoid too much drinking and from public places. Chiefs too should encourage traditional activities such as dancing, singing, and mutual working in togetherness should be the basic of our life as Africans. They should demonstrate practical examples of generosity towards the aged and the infirm and those who are not sane in mind for all these are their people. They should also learn to distinguish between the role of a political party leader and their role.

2. The governments should try to repatriate the people back to their homes especially the unemployed. Although this system might make political governments unpopular among the people but it will be in the interest of some people to see that rural areas too are revived.

3. Elders must learn to have self respect and not to frequent the bars for they are the custodians of our culture, they should learn to look after the families. Women being the most important people in all societies as far as rearing children is concerned, must learn to respect themselves, they must dress decently, soft spoken, and should have respect for men, this is within our culture and there is no exaggeration about it.

4. Government should try to do their level best in bringing an end to the inflow of imported dirty films which have seduced the youth of today. Books, too and popular comics which are erotic should not be allowed to sell in the country.

5. Curving should be encouraged in villages, traditional dances should also be encouraged particularly chiefs and elders should do their best in encouraging the young ones to take particular interest.

6. Traditional riddles, proverbs, story-telling, should be encouraged in schools and should be included in the school curriculum. Handwork which was there in the former school curriculum has been removed from there to give room to Western Subjects, which is a clear indication that this type of art is not suitable for the growing generation should be restored. Africans too should demonstrate their love for culture by having some of the items such as pots made from local clay, spears, drums, hoes, axes, etc. in their homes and not hanging copper trays only on the walls of their homes.



7. School children should also demonstrate their love for black culture by establishing clubs at their schools, such as traditional dancers club, Hand craft making club, and all these should compete with other clubs, at district, provincial even national levels. Traditional songs, debates in local languages at schools should be organized to see who can speak pure local vernacular language. Painting of pictures should also be organized at primary, secondary school levels, and these to embrace natural vegetation of Africa, local animals, hunters both, dog hunters, spear hunters, and those hunters who use guns preferably muzzle loading guns.

8. 'Michele' should be demonstrated at district level, and also at certain institutions of learning, so that young men and women, can see how our forefathers netted the iron from which they made hoes, axes, spears, arrows, etc. and how they worked on these Iron metals and bit them to design into various forms of the metals they needed by means of "Inyuba". At the University level this should be established, students here should be able to see practically how the metal was netted in the (furnace) Michele, and how it was gauged to design into hoes, axes, and spears etc. It is not good for the University departments which are responsible for culture to carry research into tribes and how they migrated into particular places only, this is history and has nothing to do with black culture.

9. It is also funny to come across fellow Africans, who can not know the names of the trees, except, mango trees, banana trees, etc. If the present generation can not name few local trees of their country, what more with the coming generation? How are they going to know the names of the trees?

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