Changing Culture: Was it imperative for the Matingo Society?

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Abstract

The social life of Matingo community in Honde Valley, Manicaland Province-Zimbabwe greatly changed since independence in 1980. A research was conducted in this community to establish the impact of the dilution of indigenous culture on people’s lives in this area. The qualitative paradigm was used and 50 participants were purposively selected from a population of 500 households. The questionnaire with open ended questions, interviews and participant observation were used to generate data. The study revealed that the indigenous knowledge systems were diluted as a result of some borrowed alien cultures by the local leadership; deficiency of cultural identity leads to some environmental threats. It also revealed that culture and the indigenous knowledge systems are inseparable in the context of African life. The research recommended that local leadership should make efforts to restore its environmental pride and beauty; indigenous knowledge systems and skills should be documented for future reference.

Key words: Diluted, indigenous knowledge systems, cultural identity, deficiency, restore.

Introduction

The focus of this study is on whether change of culture had any significance to the Matingo community. The study states the background to the problem, statement of the problem and the purpose of the investigation. It further looks at specific research questions, assumptions and significance of the study. This research study covers the delimitations, limitations, ethical and legal considerations. The paper also includes theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding this study and review of related literature. The population, sample and sampling procedure are also included. Data generation was done through interviews, questionnaires and observations.
Background to the study

Every culture has its own unique patterns of behaviour which seems alien to people of other belief systems. According to Arthur, Davies, and Hahn (2008) culture consists of values, moral, norms and beliefs which give identity to a specific group of community. Pederson (1999) argues that culture is the pattern of life which creates meaning to a given community and it is passed from one generation to another. The implication of the above views is that culture is the most important social capital of any community which should be strictly preserved in order to maintain the identity of a community. If, therefore the community fails to maintain the norms and values of its culture, the identity of that community is likely to be lost. In most of the communities of Africa change of culture has been the trend and this has greatly affected the life-style of the Africans. Many factors such as leadership styles and adoption of alien cultures are attributed to such changes in the pattern of life within the African societies. Given this sociological background, a research was conducted in order to bring into light how the social life and the cultural splendor of the Matingo community in Honde Valley were destroyed by its leaders.

Historical background of the Matingo Community

The Matingo community under chief Mutasa in Manicaland was a very good example of cultural preservation practices before 1980. Geographically, this place lies between the two rivers of Mupenga and Makute all of which have their sources from the great mountains of Ruunji and Nyakabinga. At the centre of Matingo area is a rocky Zvizara River which used to contain sacred dams, caves and trees because such indigenous systems and the perennial water made it possible to accommodate the much valuable species of the forest.

From an African perspective, all tribes in Africa have history which can be traced from a place known as “Guruuswa” in Tanzania (then Tanganyika). It is believed that from this place the tribes of Africa took different routes (Santrock, 2002). According to the views of the elderly people of the Matingo area, the clan travelled from Guruuswa following the eastern region of Malawi (then Nyasaland) and proceeded to Tete in Mozambique. They followed the Nyadzonya River in Mozambique coming to the east. When they arrived at the confluence of this river and Honde River, they decided to follow the Honde River until they settled at Mount Zeramira which is near chief Mandeya. Mount Zeramira boarders Zimbabwe and Mozambique. From here, the Matingo community then followed the Mupenga River till they arrived at the confluence of this river and Makute River which is to the east of Mupenga River. They later proceeded to this area (under study) which they named Matingo where they found settlement and occupied it from 1916 till this day.

The word “Matingo,” according to the elderly people of this area, is a nick-name given to this tribe by the surrounding communities because of the expertise of the people to catch a certain type of mice ‘matingo.’ It is believed that the Matingo community was guided by their spirit medium of Zinhandai from Mozambique until they settled in this land. This spirit medium instructed its people to observe and preserve the sacredness of this new settlement, because the land was now theirs. According to the functionalist approach (Durkheim, 1982), in order for a society to operate effectively, its function has to demonstrate harmony with what it believes in. In this case, the Matingo community had to stay in harmony with the morals, values, beliefs and ethics of this new settlement.

Within the functional theory are two important assumptions of manifestation and
latent. It is assumed that, when ceremonial activity is performed (latent function), a result will be manifested (Metron, 1957). Thus, the Matingo community was instructed to perform and observe latency so that they would be blessed by the spirit medium. In other words, this would be part of the religion of this community. In Honde Valley, the Matingo community was popular for a particular conduct, even up to the time of the war of liberation. The rituals that were performed promoted cohesion within the Matingo community. Giddens (1998) argues that when latent functions are perfectly organised and performed then the manifestations become evident in favour of the community.

In Zvizara River were natural caves and dams where drums beat and music could be heard early in the morning and towards sunset. In most instances, people could see shining snakes creeping into sacred caves or climbing up some trees. When you saw such miracles, you were supposed to kneel down and clap hands in respect of such a sacred scene. Except for two particular types of wild fruits known as “matunduru and maungo” in Shona, no one was allowed to climb a fruit tree to pick some fruits such as Mexican apples “mazhanje”. It was the responsibility of the baboons to climb up the fruit trees and shake them so that the fruits would fall to the ground and people would pick them. No fruit was supposed to be sold in any way. People were not allowed to wear red clothes, or to speak English language. Travelling after sunset was strictly forbidden because it was regarded as time for the ancestral spirits of the area to move around in protection of their territory.

Vehicles were not allowed in this area because the smell of the fuel would chock the spirits of the area. There was a boundary which demarcated the sacred forest area and habitable land. No tree was supposed to be cut down in this forest, and if one saw something peculiar or amusing he/she would just keep quiet and pass without making comments. Twice a year latent functions such as rain dance and thanks giving were performed. During such occasions, children were not allowed to go out of their homes because the spirit mediums “mhondoro” in the form of lions, would be horrified if they saw them. Such was a typical symbolic interactionalism (Mead, 1934 cited in Giddens, 1998) which directs our attention to the detail of the interpersonal relationship and interaction with the spirits around us as Africans. This was the typical culture of the Matingo tribe which made it function as a unit. Violation of any of the moral values would result in some very serious negative effects (manifestation). Therefore, according to the consensus theory, the function and continuation of a society thus depends on cooperation, which in turn presumes a general consensus or agreement, among its members over what it regards as the basic moral values (Giddens, 1998).

Since 1980, the situation has completely taken a different order. Change of political leadership brought change to the culture. The new leadership in Matingo area has since allocated the once prohibited land to new people from diverse cultural orientations. From a sociological stand, this creates conflict within societies, because of variations of interests and struggle between classes of people (Durkheim, 1982 Haralambos and Holborn, 1994,Giddens, 1998). The new leadership failed to consider the significance of cultural identity to its community. It never consulted its spirit mediums and other important members of the community on what to do. The will of power, autocracy and bureaucracy replaced democracy. Decisions were increasingly taken by executive members within the bureaucracy rather than by assemblies of the rank and file (Giddens, 1998). Sacred places were vandalised; vegetation was carelessly destroyed; values, beliefs and morality were seriously violated; Religion and ethics vanished. Thus, once established, bureaucracy suffocates the basic
principles of a society – identity, values, ethics, virtues and morality and “oligarchy” become inevitable,” (Haralambos & Holborn, 1994 and Harvey, 1982).

The Matingo leadership, having been influenced by the alien cultures of greediness and corruption, made its people and animals suffer. Grazing areas have been turned into fields. Zvizara River which used to be the pride of the area has run dry, sacred places are no longer functioning; latent functions have since ceased. Laxity of morals is now the order of the once cherished area. Therefore, “Change of culture: was this imperative for the society of Matingo?” Indeed, bureaucracy is petty, narrow, rigid and illiberal.

Statement of the problem

The change of culture in Matingo area as a result of the influx of foreign settlers has negatively affected the pattern of life.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out how change of culture has affected the Matingo community. Consequently, encourage the Matingo community to restore its indigenous belief systems for sustainable development.

Research questions

1. How was culture defined by the spirit mediums?
2. Of what significance was culture to the Matingo community?
3. What contributed to the change of culture in Matingo area?
4. How were the Matingo community affected by the change of culture in their area?
5. What strategies can be employed to restore the lost cultural identity in Matingo area?

Assumptions

The research study assumed that:
• The Matingo community understands what culture is.
• Spirit mediums played significant role in maintaining moral values within the Matingo community.
• Democracy yields harmony within communities
• Power hungry, rigidity and dysfunctionalism are the results of bureaucracy.
• Alien culture is important if only it brings sustainable development in the community.

Significance of the study

The research findings will:
• Encourage the communities to be proud of their cultural identities.
• Motivate the communities to document their historical events for future purposes.
• Encourage the traditional leaders to work together with their subordinates in the preservation of their cultures.
• Empower communities with knowledge and skills to preserve their cultures.
• Educate the traditional leaders to adopt leadership styles which encourage growth and development in the communities.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to Matingo Village in Mutasa District in Manicaland Province. The participants were the kraal heads, headman,
ward councilor and the elderly people in Matingo village. The study was delimited to the imperativeness of change of culture to Matingo community.

Limitations

• Some respondents were unwilling to release information because they thought the issue needed approval from the local leadership. In this case, the researchers assured them of anonymity and confidentiality.

• Because the researchers were full time employees, it was difficult to conduct the research during the week. The researchers used the weekends to carry out the research.

• The researchers had problems in selecting the sample because nearly 80% of the people were always busy in their fields and other community work. The researchers selected the sample using the households from which male and female respondents were drawn.

• Some of the respondents did not meet the due date to complete the questionnaire. The researchers gave them more time to complete the questionnaire.

Ethical and legal considerations

The researchers sought permission from the headman, kraal heads, local councilor and the ward chairperson to conduct the research. The researchers used some codes to represent names of the interviewees. The participants were advised not to write their names on the questionnaire in order to promote confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were free to withdraw at any time. Informed consent forms were also signed by the respondents. The researchers explained the respondents of the benefits of the research to the community.

Theoretical conceptualisation

The following theories were used to guide the research:

• Realism (Bryman, 1992) which emphasizes that in order to study a particular community, the researcher should see the community in its real life state and observe the real activities that the community is doing.

• Functionalism (Durkheim, 1982 and Lowe, 1965) argue that this theory sees society as an integral whole, its parts are interdependent; social institutions exist and they do have effects; society is structured and the social structure directs the human behaviour. It also assumes that the function of a society depends on its beliefs, norms values and morals. Therefore, the researcher should immerse him/herself into this whole system in order to understand its philosophy of life. In this case therefore, the researchers were greatly involved in the community’s real life to get its feelings and attitudes towards their problem.

• Symbolic interactionalism; (Haralambos and Holborn, 1994) which believes in the view that society uses symbols for interaction. These symbols have specific meaning to human life. In the case of this study, symbols such as drumbeats and songs in river dams and caves signified happiness; meeting baboons or glittering snakes in the forest signified total protection for humans. It also explains human behaviour and human society by examining the ways that people interpret the actions of others, develop self-concept or self-image, and act in terms of meanings. It acknowledges the significance of the role of society.

• Society Systems Theory: (Giddens, 1998) which sees society as a constituting
system or unit of people with the same concept, beliefs, attitudes and feelings. In this case the Matingo society was seen as a system whose history was traced from Mozambique till the tribe settled in Honde Valley. This community had its social order and organized itself under one leader. Its spirit medium of Zinhandai made it possible for this tribe to settle in this area and to stay in harmony with the spirits of the place, and to develop the land as a system.

**Conceptual frame work**

The research was premised on the concept of social change. Joseph (1989) states that social change refers to any significant alterations over time in behaviour patterns, cultural values and norms. By “significant alteration,” sociologists mean changes that yield profound social consequences. The concept of social change is viewed in various ways by different authors. For example, Linton (1945) views social change as a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society for desired development. In Lederach’s (1995) view of social change is that it is a configuration of knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them for change in the pattern of life. These views assume that social change influences development of new thinking and changing the pattern of people’s life-style. In this research the concept of social change was used to facilitate change of attitude among the Matingo community towards the current way of life which is unproductive. The community should be assisted to adopt positive and productive attitude to make it possible for economic and political transformation in the area.

This research was also based on the view that when a community respects its culture in the context of a social change, then the spirits will be happy and provide the people with all their needs. It therefore implies that if leaders of the community would want to change culture, it is important to consult their spirits for proper guidance and support for the common good of the community and the generations to come. However, Ayisi (1997) suggests that if for one reason or another, the leaders are forced to change culture by circumstances beyond their control, they would, at one time; apologize to the spirits by brewing beer. The whole crust of the process of social change is that it is not done single-handedly, but by the whole community members and the knowledge is upheld by all the subjects.

**Review of related literature**

**The concept of culture**

In the view of Greenblatt (1995) culture is heritage that is built over a long period of time and has to be promoted and preserved as it defines a particular group of people within the global community. Arthur, Davies and Hahn (2008) go further to define culture as cultural values, norms, rituals and religion that have managed to shape people with their own way of life, religion, beliefs and the way they relate to the entire global environment. In light of the definitions given above culture is the totality of the indigenous knowledge systems that make a community to be what it is. It is passed on from one generation to the other as an important identity of a particular group of community within a larger system. It therefore implies that culture is what a community preserves and clings on to it as its native life-style. Damen (1987) also defines culture as learned and shared human patterns or models for living day-to-day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. This definition implies that culture is mankind’s primary adaptive mechanism. Banks & McGee (1989)
argue that most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. From the realism theory, the essence of a culture is not its artefacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artefacts, and behaviours in the same or in similar ways.

The African perception of culture

From an African perspective (Ayisi, 1997), culture is marching along with all that is important as possessions and heritage from our ancestors. This suggests that within the Africans culture even their dead are also part of them. Mbiti (1999) sees relevance in respecting the presence of the dead in the African life-style because they guide and protect lives of people. From this view it is important to realise that what constitutes the Africans are the spirits of their ancestors. According to Pedersen (1999), the ancestral spirits are important in the African minds since they form the communication system and linkages with their gods. From this understanding, the belief is that African culture is whole when the ancestors' spirits are present. From the symbolic interactionalist thinking (Harvey, 1982), the Africans feel satisfied with life when their communication with their ancestors is perfect and undisturbed. Therefore, the communion that exists between the living and the dead form a strong "social capital." This defines culture in the context of African community.

According to Hammar, Raftopolous and Jansen (2003), the Africans' spirits move along with their people because they would want to protect and guide them in their daily activities. From the functionalist view (Giddens, 2011), these spirits and their people are connected and work as a collective unit in harmony in order to sustain working relations and for prosperity. This forms the very fabric of the community which, from the African perspective (Sowell, 1987), is a rich cultural heritage built over a long period of time. For example the Zimbabwean culture, particularly religion and the ancestral spirits, was one of the unifying factors during the second Chimurenga War. The implication is that the African community, as Giddens (2011) puts it, never neglects its spirits because they are one and there is always great need to revitalizethe relationship as a unifying factor, for nation building, protection, guidance and prosperity.

Significance of culture to the community

According to Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skoopol (1992) there are some significant benefits when the communities and their spirits work in harmony. For example in Zimbabwe and other African countries, identity and social order are maintained. Joseph (1989) maintains that the connectivity of the spirits and its people work as a social capital upon which all the wealth is anchored. Furthermore, states Copi (1973), ‘that blending of people and their spirits is heritage and legacy for generations and it helps to foster the identity of a community.’ From the social constructivists angle (Sowell, 1987), the community gains knowledge, values, belief systems and latent skills from its spirits, and this only happens when the spirits are contended with the behaviour of the people concerned. What is interesting is that the spirits speak to the community through a spirit medium
‘homwe’ who is a living member of the community/people of the group that is represented by the spirits. Vera (1994) contends that from an African belief the dead are not dead; they are always around their people protecting and guiding them and there is no living person who is stronger than the departed (the dead). When the whole village prays together, they pray for the ancestral mudzimu. For example, it is believed that when the Africans pray to mhondoro for rain, they are praying to the guardian that unites the whole clan. ‘Mhondoro is one of the strongest spirits of the land,’” (Vera, 1994, p.27). As illustrated by this passage, Vera emphasizes the strength that traditional religion holds over the African people. It, therefore, suggests that the whole community had faith and a belief that the ancestors control fate and that praying to the ancestral spirits represents a way to look for guidance, knowledge, and the answers to life’s questions.

**Origin of the African community and causes of change of culture**

From the Archaeological evidence by Christopher Ehret (2001) most of the Africans lived in Tanganyika (Tanzania) at a place called Guruuswa. Like any other communities of the world, the indigenous populations of eastern Africa were hunter-gatherers and are thought to be speaking Hadza and Sandawe languages. According to Nwaeezeigwe (1997), because of social conflicts as a result of population expansion and greediness for power, each leader broke away with his small group of people. This breaking away was referred to as “Mfecane” which means great scattering. There is very little that is known about the Mfecane. However, according to Nwaeezeigwe (1997) what we know is from the diaries of missionaries and travellers from Europe, and from the stories passed down from generation to generation. One such group which broke away was that of the Ngoni called the Maseko which broke away for fear of the many tribal wars within the communities. It is believed that the group travelled southwards and reached Songea in Southern Tanzania to the eastern side of Lake Malawi. There they settled and intermarried with the local people called the Yao, who had also moved in the same direction from Tanganyika on the same reason as the Maseko. The intermarriages strengthened their relationships. From this brief background, it is clear that political unrest inflicts fear and uncertainty within people and this results into disunity and dysfunctionalism, thereby reducing production in the community.

The disintegration of the community brought with it a lot of changes in culture. Nwaeezeigwe (1997) argues that each leader established his own kingdom and created own policies, rules and governing systems to suit his members’ will. The spirits which used to unify the people were also disunited, causing more problems for the people. ‘However’ say Maidment & Thomson (1993) each leader had to make sure that some mechanisms were in place so that his subjects were safe throughout the exodus. This was all in the form of guidance from the ancestral spirits. The assurance that was given to the subjects was that they would always listen to the word of the spirit medium. According to Maidment & Thomson (1993) what we are not quite sure of is whether each group was able to perform the latent functions that pleased the spirits as before. Nevertheless, the truth is that in most of the groups/communities (Vera, 1994), the spirit mediums were contended with what were performed as the latent functions. For example, the Iraqw, Gorowa, Burungwe and the Mashariki Bantu were all guided by the spirits of Datoog and Mazruli till they settled Angola from Zambia. They later proceeded to Namibia where they are said to have developed some divisions. “Guided by their spirits, they were able to defeat their enemies in all the wars that they were engaged in,” conclude Maidment & Thomson (1993). The views here suggest that the communities were able to preserve
their culture through observing the demands of their spirits; and there were minimal cases where people could misbehave, because they knew that the results would be bitter (Damen, 1987). Therefore, every leader made sure that his subjects were observing the moral values, norms and all the belief systems as dictated by the spirits. The leader was responsible for reminding and encouraging the people to remain united and to respect their spirits for continued support and strength. Therefore, culture remained the principle standard and symbol and emblem of identity of the community. Changing it would cause some damage to the community.

**Effects of change of culture to the community**

Attached to the effects of change of culture are relative deprivation, and the impact of social isolation. According to Sowell, (1987) there is a high degree of relative deprivation when culture takes a new path. The community is deprived of its philosophical ways of life such as ethics and belief systems thereby making it difficult for the affected members to perform normal duties / responsibilities. From the functional perspectives (Santrock, 2002) this retards developmental processes in the community and promotes poverty. Furthermore, when a community loses its ethics there is a likelihood of laissez-faire type of life that develops and this leads to careless treatment of resources such as soil, water and vegetation. Laxity of morals is a serious issue which cripples the social fabric and harmony in the community. A lot of examples can be drawn from the global village where change of culture negatively affected the social life. In Lowe’s (1965) view, since the dawn of the twenty first century, Westernisation has been a phenomenon that has been spreading across the globe at a tremendous rate. The spread of Westernisation can be attributed to many factors of which Globalisation can be said to have played a very crucial role in its spread. Nigeria, like many countries in the Africa has always been at the receiving end of the western norms and value system where the negative aspects of these western norms and value systems are now something that is witnessed in the lives of many Nigerians. Santrock (2002) also argues that the negative impact of westernisation has since spread its tentacles to every nook and cranny of the Nigerian state thus influencing and changing the culture of many tribes and ethnic groups in the country. For example, a growing trend now in Nigeria that is almost becoming a norm is the way many Nigerians dress. While many will say “to dress decent is a choice” they tend to forget that from the pre-colonial era, Nigerians have always had different dress attire that has always been the embodiment of Nigerian traditional value and culture system, dress attire that are very beautiful and more often than not, provoked the envy of many westerners. The way many Nigerians dress nowadays often makes one to wonder about the moral scruple of that individual. This is most common with some Nigerian women. You take a good look at the way some women dress in the society and you cannot help but marvel at the level of indecency being displayed. They reveal almost all the things that shouldn’t even be revealed, things that should only be seen by their husbands alone. Should you even ask why they display such things in public, they tell you it’s their body and they can decide to do whatever they want to do with it. More often than not, these women who often flaunt their intimate parts are often at the receiving end of many men who most times mistake them for commercial sex workers. The women in turn tend to pour their anger at these men forgetting that in Nigeria today most people react to what they see and hear in the society.

Let us shift our attention now to another trend that is by far worse than that of indecent dressing, “Infidelity.” Ehret (2001) points out that if you take a very good look at Somalia today and you just can’t help but marvel at
the way some married men cheat on their wives at will. Before the spread of westernisation, infidelity was something that was severely treated and spoken against in Somalia. Should a man or woman cheat on his or her spouse, that person was brought to the village square and flogged, but now all you see are married men engaging in the act and still say that there is absolutely nothing wrong for a man to cheat on his wife. The Women now have also joined the men in this abysmal act, some women nowadays tend to copy what their male counterparts are doing, that is, cheating on their husbands. When asked why they engage in such act, they tell you “what a man can do a woman can do better” that is cheating is not only good for a man but good for a woman as well.

Ehret (2001) further states that among all these things, the issue that really calls for concern is that of “homosexuality,” To the West African traditional man, homosexuality is a foreign word. If you try to explain to him the effects of homosexuality, he will rebuke you with all the might he can muster. Be that as it may, homosexuality is now almost becoming as morally right as infidelity and indecent dressing in some countries of Africa. Although the National Assembly in most of countries in Africa are trying to ban the act, this does not however stop many from engaging in it. The pressure from many foreign countries on the African communities’s stand on homosexuality goes a long way to say that many homosexuals both at home and abroad are lobbying for the National Assembly to legalize the act. Although homosexuality is against the Bible, many foreign organisations seem not agree with it saying that it is an individual’s fundamental human right. What they seem to forget is that such a thing was and still is a taboo in many of our traditional norms and value systems in our culture.

According to Durkheim (1982) various schools of thoughts in most developing countries indicated that cultural transformation among people in most societies has been more aggressive, and more apparent than the dynamic events in the political arena. It is to be noted that, the philosophy and agendas of politicians, and their financiers have not changed, but politicians have evolved to be more powerful, greedier, more desperate, extremely illusive and insensitive to the plight of the people they govern.

In one of the researches carried out in Nigeria by Harvey in 1992, a participant said this on the agricultural sector:

> It was accorded its share of prominence and attention by all the regional governments.

> Respectability, responsibility, accountability and discipline were integral part of our customer relation services at both private and public enterprises. There was confidence and trust in the profession of Police. Our electricity generating and distributing institution’s popularity was at all-time high. Travel visas were not needed to go to London, and the very few Nigerians in American universities enjoyed federal government scholarships. There exists the spirit of communal cohabitation, where neighbours were greeted as family members. Kids in the neighbourhood come together at Christmas and Easter periods, throwing knock-outs till late in the night. All this has taken a new direction as a result of change of culture (p.136).

Another participant also said:

> Growing up in the 70s and early 80s, I saw Nigerians opened their doors to strangers as brothers and sisters, and neighbours accorded warm greetings with open arms. Love and affection were deep in our culture, while stress and financial desperation were the list of our concerns. Most neighbourhoods were safe for children and hardworking parents, as everybody watched out for the community’s interest. People with nefarious activities were treated with disdain, and often cascaded into the dungeon of disgrace. Yet such things are no more in our culture.’

One other participant had this to say about change of culture in Nigeria:

> The new breed of rogue politicians exploited the goodness and kindness of Nigerians, and ran the country like ‘moles bus.’ They consolidated their grip on the power and resources of the country, and
introduced a scare tactics to force a compromise on our integrity. They ensured divisions in our calm communities, crushed our humanity and forced the progressives to take refuge outside the country. They succeeded in weakening our rich cultures, and introduced assassins and bribery as alternatives. The good citizens were clogged with stiffen conditions, left with the option to either join them or continue to wallop in poverty. (Harvey 1992, pp136-148)

We believe that the issues mentioned above are just about the few of the most worrisome trends westernization has brought to the African communities such as Nigeria. We must all look at these things critically and speak out against them for with the aid of globalization they seem to be spreading tremendously.

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, the researchers used the qualitative paradigm. This was because of its subjectivity in nature. In this case, the researchers wanted to examine the views of the spirits and the community on the change of culture by the leadership of the Matingo area. The qualitative paradigm provided the researchers with the opportunity to interact with the community in order to get some detail about the social facts on the life of the Matingo community, (Haralambos and Holborn, 1994). It also enabled the researchers to triangulate instruments to generate data.

The descriptive method was used in this study because it allowed the researchers to generate data about what people thought, felt and did about a certain changes of culture in the Matingo community (Johnson, 2007). The method permitted collecting data using the participants in their real life experiences, hence the use of the realism theory (Bryman, 1992). This was appropriate because it allowed the use of unstructured or semi-structured interview questions and the data were described to give meaning to the participants.

Results from this design can be generalized to various settings of the same phenomena (Haralambos and Holborn, 1994; Johnson, 2007). In this case, therefore, the factual survey was employed to gather descriptive information on how the Matingo community lived before 1980 and how their culture has been changed by the bureaucratic leadership since 1980 to this day.

The population and sample

The Matingo community had a total of 500 households with three kraal-heads. This community was divided into two distinct categories – that which resided in this area before 1980 had 350 households and the new system to the south below the mountains had 150 households.

From the 500 households, a sample size of 50 households was purposively selected.

Instruments

For the purpose of this study, questionnaire, interview and observation were used to generate data. Thirty participants were given the questionnaire which contained open-ended questions on the phenomena and they were self-administered for a period of three weeks to literate members in the community. The researchers used the instrument because it had an advantage of avoiding researcher bias and it was the quickest way of generating large amount of data in a short time (Jones, 1985).

Semi-structured and un-structured interview questions were used to generate information from the participants. The questions enabled the researchers to interact with the participants in a relaxed manner and this was aimed at getting the in-depth feelings and attitudes of the community towards the phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Codes were used to represent the interviewees so as to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Observation was selected as a vital data generation technique which allowed which
allowed the researcher to be involved in the participants’ natural environment (Hill, 2005). The data that were generated through observation was rich and unbiased because whatever was observed and recorded was the real world of experience of the community (Johnson, 2007). In this case, therefore, the researchers observed the once sacred places, the state of the vegetation and the almost dry river —Zvizara. The researchers also observed where the boundary between the habitable and non-habitable land used to be and how some new settlements have invaded the sacred forests. Such information was strong enough to compare the two scenes — what it was and what it is. This raised the research question: Was the change of culture imperative for the Matingo community?

Data collection procedures

The researchers first consulted the headman and the kraal-heads to explain their intention and to assess the feasibility of the study in the area. The researchers then made some appointments to see the kraal heads, the ward councilor and the ward chairperson. Permission was sought from the headman, kraal-heads, the councilor and the ward chairperson. The researchers travelled with the ward chairperson, kraal heads, the elderly people and the councilor. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants by the researchers and dates were set for interviews and observation.

Ethical and legal considerations

The participants assured of anonymity in which codes were to be used to represent their names and strata. Confidentiality and non-maleficence were also assured and maintained. Cultural values, norms and beliefs were highly respected to gain trust and respect from the community. Informed consent forms were signed. The researchers sought guidance and protection from the headman, kraal-heads, ward councilor and the ward chairperson.

Findings

What is culture?

Analysis 1

The results generated from the participants to define what they understood by culture reflected that they had a general understanding of the concept. Some of the participants defined it as the way people live from one generation to the other and others defined it as what society clings on as its morality. The rest of the participants agreed that culture was the beliefs and norms of society and the society’s ways of practices to maintain its identity. Among the participants who defined culture one of the kraal heads stated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The way people live from one generation to another</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beliefs and norms of society</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What society clings on as the morality</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society’s ways of practises to maintain its identity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kraal-Head 2

African culture is part of us. We cannot separate an African child from culture. We have to know how we live, what we eat, how people should marry, what our spirits (ndzimu) expect from us, places that should not be tampered with and when to ask for the rains. This is all culture.

The views suggested by one of the Kraal Heads maintains the identity of the community and these findings were congruent with the findings by Giddens (2011; Haralambos and Holborn, 1994)) that culture consists of a variety of important aspects such as its functions and patterns of interaction are maintained and preserved as important social capital for future generation.

The spirit mediums had a common understanding of how they interpreted culture; however, one of them explained the following:

Spirit Medium 1

“Tsika dzedu dzinokudziridza kuti unhu nemunhu azivikanwe, kuti magariro edu aenderere mberi zvakanka nje tsika dzedu dzinotibatanidza chese munezimbo yedu. Tsikadzedu dzinotibatsira zvakarewo kuchengetedza upfumi hwemuzimbo ino itichichengerere vana vedu vachatevera.” (It is culture that promotes community identity continuity, community practice for continued functioning, community values for sustainable unity, community wealth and morality for generations).

From these definitions, therefore, it is clear that the Matingo community was aware of what culture was. This was evidenced by the way they maintained original identity, the expressed desire to have a restoration of their original identity which was different from other cultures and was typical of Zinhandai spirit as stated in the historical background of Matingo community.

From Table 1 the participants shared almost the same sentiments on what they knew about culture. The way people live from one generation to another had 11(22%); the belief and norms of society had 13(26%); what society clings on as its morality had 12 (24%) and society’s ways of practices to maintain its identity had 14 (28%). The views suggested that culture is what maintains the identity of a society or community. It consists of a variety of important aspects such as its functions (Giddens, 2011) and patterns of interaction are maintained and preserved as important social capital for future generation (Haralambos and Holborn, 1994).

From these definitions, therefore, it is clear that the Matingo community was aware of what culture is. This was evidenced by the way they maintained original identity, the expressed desire to have a restoration of their original identity which was different from other cultures and was typical of Zinhandai spirit. The latent functions and the manifestations which promoted collectivism and unity among the Matingo community were all what they wanted back in order to restore its pride and identity.

How the spirit mediums defined culture

Analysis 2
The fig. above shows how the spirit mediums interpreted the culture. Community practice for identity continuity had 12 (24%) participants, community practice for continued functioning had 13 (26%); community values for sustainable unity had 13 (26%); community wealth and morality for generations had 12 (24%).

The responses that were given by the participants of this research showed that the spirit mediums were focused towards the future life of the Matingo community. Their understanding of culture perfectly defined the way the community was to behave in order to enhance its identity (Haralambos and Holborn, 1994). The desires of the spirit mediums were that the Matingo community was to inherit the land (Giddens, 1998) through total observation of the moral values, ethics, latent functions, beliefs and norms (Durkheim, 1982). This suggests that the community leaders were, from time to time, to remind their subjects of the need to work as a family to preserve the culture as an important wealth and pride for the future generations. Indigenous knowledge systems are an important society’s inheritance from the ancestors. These systems define the identity of a society. From an African perspective, once these systems are destroyed, the spirits are disappointed and some problems begin to be realised in the community as a punishment for disobedience. When culture is preserved the spirit mediums become effective in protecting and guiding its people. According to Fielding (1996) the leadership of any society/community should be exemplary in maintaining and upholding the guiding principles of that community as dictated by the spirits. This will make the life of people easy and enjoyable.

**Significance of culture to the Matingo community**

**Analysis 3**

The responses were balanced on the significance of culture to the Matingo community. To remain united and functional scored 10 (20%); as wealth for all generations had 11 (22%); to maintain identity had 9 (18%); as an important social capital had 11 (22%) and to remain focused and functional scored 9 (18%). It remains clear that this community is aware that their culture is very important and should be preserved for protection, guidance and for the future generations and as an important community wealth to maintain their identity and to function purposefully and effectively (Murdock, 1949). Before the destruction of their culture, the Matingo community was feared by its surrounding communities because everyone was associated with the spirit of Zinhandai; even at school or
any function they were referred to as “the children of the spirits”. During summer season their crops were never eaten by wild animals at night and no-one was allowed to guard the fields at night as this was the responsibility of the spirit mediums. No-one was allowed to walk during the night even to move with a torch because the spirit of Zinhandai would also be moving around in the form of lions ‘mhondoro’. This suggests that the culture during these days was well preserved and the spirits were very happy. In their return, therefore the spirits offered total protection and wealth for its people of Matingo. It also means that to the Matingo community, their culture was an important instrument that influenced commitment to personal identity and functionalism. According to the functionalist approach (Haralambos and Holborn, 1994) community development takes place when the people concerned respect and preserve their values and indigenous belief systems.

**What contributed to the change of culture in Matingo area**

**Analysis 4**

Disobedience had the highest score of 28%, followed by conflict with 26%, bureaucracy and the need for money with 24% and 22% respectively. The leadership in this area failed to recognize the ethical and moral virtues which had been in existence for decades. Up to the end of 1979, the place was sacred as evidenced by a number of uncommon or unusual manifestations. From the interviews that were conducted with some of the elderly respondents, when war broke between the soldiers and the guerillas, the spirits could send some sacred birds and black ants to bite the soldiers. Sometimes there was mist around the soldiers even when the weather was clear. This would make the “boys” disappear without panicking. One of the elders narrated that when this community was put in the protected village that had been constructed along the Mupenga River, the community’s crops were never eaten by some wild animals. Sacred birds were seen flying from one mountain to the other in protection of the vacated land. Red clothes were even seen spread over some sacred places where latent functions used to be performed. This was a sign that the spirit of Zinhandai was protecting the land and the fields. According to one of the elders of this area, the kraal-head of this community died during the war in 1979.

The rise of the new leadership soon after the war of liberation in 1980, failed to respect the values, norms and beliefs which was the importantwealth and social capital for the
community. The foreigners were allowed to settle in the prohibited and sacred places in Matingo area. They paid some money to the new leadership. The leadership disobeyed the spirits and single-handedly managed/ruled the place. Thus, the bureaucratic and autocratic leadership in Matingo area suffocated the basic principles of the community (Haralambos & Holborn, 1994). The significance of cultural values and identity vanished. Decisions were increasingly taken by the executive members within the bureaucracy rather than by the assemblies of the land and file. This process changed the culture of the Matingo community. **Was this imperative for the Matingo community?**

**The effects of change of culture on the Matingo community**

**Analysis 5**

The above graph shows some serious social effects of the change of culture to the Matingo community with all the responses scoring 100%. The bureaucratic leadership which assumed power in 1980 did not recognize the significance of cultural identity of its community. Because of greediness and dire need for money, the precious land was sold to some foreigners who had their own diverse cultures. The new settlers in the prohibited area were not educated on the culture of the Matingo community. Forests were destroyed; babies’ napkins were washed in the sacred Zvizara River… and it dried up. Vehicles started moving in the area, red clothes were worn anyhow; sounds from the radios echoed in the sacred forest and mountains. People started walking at night with torches and this disappointed the spirits; the leadership no longer performed the once important latent functions (Haralambos & Holborn 1994; Durkheim 1982), which were a sign of paying total allegiance to the spirits, and worked to unite the community. The spirits were very disappointed and communication with the people gradually disappeared. Functionalism and symbolic interactionalism also shrieked. There was no cooperation within the community, hence the rise of conflict and division in decisions, attitudes and perceptions. With reduced grazing area the community was forced to reduce the number of cattle and goats, thereby causing poverty. Indeed, the change of culture in the Matingo community has threatened the life of people.
Conclusions

The few Matingo elderly members are still vivid with their history from Mozambique to this area in Hondo valley. They are still very clear about their cultural identity and role of the spirit medium of Zinhandai to their community. The community is not happy with the settlement of foreigners in the prohibited land because new cultures have developed in the area. Such cultures have bought misery and suffering to the community. The original Matingo culture has been suffocated by the new cultures and life has been negatively affected. The latent functions which used to unite people are no longer performed because no-one cares. The place is divided into three systems although still claiming the same title of Matingo.

It emerged from research that if the community leadership is focused and observes the ethics and the morals of its community, then peace and harmony will prevail, thereby promoting community development. It therefore suggests that sustainable community spiritual, economic, political, social and cultural transformation and development is enshrined in its leadership. For decades the Matingo community gained total protection from its spirit medium of Zinhandai. Unity and positive cultural identity were a result of the respect that the community gave to its spirits. The manifestations from caves, rivers and forests were a result of the well timed and purposeful rituals that were performed; thus the culture for the Matingo community. The new leadership did not respect the spirit of the area. It became too envious of money and sold the land to the foreigners.

From this study, therefore, it is clear that the spirits are important in the African tradition because of their role of guiding and protecting the community. The latent function plays significant role in uniting the community and the spirits of an area. Therefore it is important for the leadership to keep on reminding its subjects to respect the ethics and morals as directed by the spirits. New settlers should be educated once they are accepted to settle in an area. This will enable them to make some informed decisions before they settle in the area and before they introduce their own cultures. It is important for the community to uphold its cultural values and moral virtues for the sustenance of its identity. The Matingo culture was eroded because of the mismanagement of resources, envy and bureaucratic leadership. This yielded some conflicts within the community; poverty and anguish are the order of the day.

Recommendations

The research recommended that

• The indigenous knowledge systems should be restored through resuscitating rituals and re-educating the new generation on the importance of moral values, ethics, beliefs and norms to the development of the community.
• The leadership should encourage planting of indigenous trees and reducing the rate of deforestation so as to restore the original beauty and state of the area.
• The indigenous knowledge systems and skills should be documented for future reference.
• It is important that the elderly people in the community should sit down with the young generation and explain to them their history so that the knowledge is shared and known by all people. This becomes an important asset and social capital for the community.
• The leadership should encourage more research on indigenous culture so that more ideas and knowledge may be gained for the restoration of identity and for sustainable economic, social political, cultural and moral development.
References

Raftopoulos, B. & Mlambo, A. (2009), Becoming Zimbabwe, Johannesburg, Weaver Press.