

TRADITIONAL FORMS OF COMMUNICATION OF THE MALIMBA OF SIERRA LEONE

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this work is to explore some of the various traditional forms of communication of the Malimba people of Sierra Leone. It is worth mentioning here that these modes, devices and systems of indigenous traditional communication of the Malimba discussed in this work are by no means the only ones, nor are they all extinct. Furthermore, these traditional forms of communication are also common with many other African ethnic groups within and outside Sierra Leone. The work attempts to provide a brief history of the Malimba and a discussion on the political organization of the Malimba and the Hulimba language. The work also examines the nature and content of Malimba traditional communication and the mode of control/ ownership of the communication system. Communication processes among the Malimba and many other African people are in various forms and are geared toward achieving different communication goals and objectives such as *directives, news, advertising, public relations, education, and entertainment*.

The original African spirit is that which cherishes the virtues of good conduct, altruism, hard work and productivity, fairness and honesty. These virtues were the values Malimba society held in high esteem and communicated to one another and outsiders. The entire community owned or controlled the communication system while the “Gbaku” (chief) and village or clan heads acted as trustee(s) and head of the ‘gate keeping’ process (cf.Des Wilson 1987). The original Malimba spirit believed and was committed to the well-being of every member of the society. The system was not competitive since it belonged to the entire community. A strategic function of traditional communication in Africa is the regulation of justice and deviance, set conventions, customs, and traditions which regulated social behaviour, harmony and stability (Bussottii (2015), pp.205 – 222). The Malimba indigenous traditional communication was people-centered, pragmatic, objective and, to a great extent, transformational. Unfortunately, with the incursion of Arab influences and western imperialism into Africa, with all their exploitative, parasitic and dehumanizing traits, came the spirit of materialism, mindlessness and egocentrism which brought along myriad of vices and traumas to the entire African society. Sierra Leoneans, like many other Africans, became indoctrinated through western imperialism into thinking and believing that everything western is better and thus went on to emulate everything Western. This work argues that Sierra Leoneans should not neglect the significant traditional communication forms and structures that have been with us from time immemorial, and that we must continue to develop, to invent and to perfect these our indigenous traditional communications and innovations. However, in order for Sierra Leoneans to achieve a true, enduring and sustainable development, we first need to set right the issues of ethics in our work and social life, and also address our patriotic credentials. Development is a matter of attitude. And for us to have the right attitude we will have to grapple with those good values prevalent in the traditional African society. The traditional African society was/is rooted in its ethics and therefore we must inculcate those rich values embedded in the traditional Malimba media and the society in general.

KEYWORDS : Communication,Culture, Traditional, Channels,Traditional communication,Development communication

INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, the Malimba's growth, like every other group of people's growth, survival and continuity, depended on, among other things, a system of communication, through which people could exchange ideas and feelings, an economic system for the production of goods and services, a health system to prevent and cure diseases and ensure human reproduction, a socio-political system to maintain law and order and a defence system to protect their territories against external aggression. Of all these essential requirements of society, the system of communication formed and continuous to form the mainstay of all the other systems, which came to depend on it for effectiveness. Communication is at the core of our humanness. How we communicate with each other shapes our lives, our communities, nations and our entire world.

Communication involves different forms which includes the intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, mass communication, etc. All these are different ways through which the Malimba interact, associate, communicate, relate, share ideas, views, opinion, information, norms and values within themselves and others.

Although there is now a sizeable literature on Mass Communication in Africa, its development and challenges and the general role of Mass Communication in the development of African countries and nation building in the Developing World, however, very little attention has so far been paid to the history, transformation and significance of the indigenous traditional African communication systems especially in the pre-colonial era. The main objective of this work is to discuss aspects of Malimba indigenous and traditional communications – modes, devices and systems. The introductory section focuses on the concepts/definitions of some terminologies utilized in the work and the historical background of the Malimba. The work further explores the Hulimba (the Language of the Malimba) with its various dialects, and the nature and content of the traditional Malimba communication system.

It is argued in this work that the Malimba have no history of migration and settlement in the present day territory of Sierra Leone. In other words the Malimba are the original indigenes of this country. Their original abode was the Wara Wara Mountains. This work strongly advocates for a pragmatic balance between the traditional forms of communication, especially in the rural areas, and the promotion of advancing technologies in order to preserve Sierra Leone's rich culture while fostering its ICT growth. In this respect, existing traditional communication channels should be properly examined and improved for the purpose of incorporating such channels into the country's overall ICT plan. This is because Malimba, like most other African people, have always used communication as a medium of education, enculturation and socialization. It is further suggested that Malimba and other Africans must continue to develop, to invent and to perfect their own communications, innovations, experiences, knowledge and skills of the indigenous and traditional communication systems to develop them further scientifically and technologically.

We must start by pointing out that in the traditional and indigenous Malimba communication system "WULIMBA" (a Human Person) is at the centre of it. From the cradle to the grave the Malimba person is encouraged and taught to be industrious, honest, humble, patient, brave, honest, noble, compassionate, respectful, especially to elders and constituted authority, have love for others and the entire community, nurture a spirit of endurance and to strictly observe secrets. In the Malimba culture the concept of 'MABOHANDAY' or 'BAMIN FOMA' (oneness/unity/togetherness) implies that individuals only exist in their relationship with others. The Malimba affirm their humanity ('MABOHANDAY' or 'BAMIN FOMA') on the recognition of the humanity of others, and in harmony with the whole creation (cf. Vasquez, May 2013). It is interesting to note that from the point of view of the spirit of 'MABOHANDAY' or 'BAMIN FOMA', the Limba proverb " *hulongo hunthe sa luku hugbon*" (meaning one hand alone cannot tie a bundle of sticks) says it all. This means that the living human being must not only share with and care for each other, but must share with and care for both the living and the ancestors (true models of life and intermediate

towards God) and must depend on each other. Another important thing to note about the religiosity of the Malimba is that the cultural concept of 'MABOHANDAY' or 'BAMIN FOMA' has a significant religious meaning. In the religious dimension, the other(s) include the ancestors (members of the extended family who have been called to the next life in a worthy manner), and those who are still in the world of the living. Malimba believe in the power and strength of the intermediaries between them and God. They love, fear and respect 'KANUMASALA' (God Almighty), and entrust their lives to Him. Ask Wulimba (singular of Malimba) about his/her health, the answer you get is "Akalan ngan Kanu" meaning "I thank God" for His mercies.

The traditional Malimba communication system was people-oriented, pragmatic, objective and development-oriented. The original Malimba spirit believed and cherished the virtues of hard work, honesty, altruism, productivity, good conduct; and was committed to the well being of the society. But with the incursion of Arab and western imperialism into traditional African society came the spirit of materialism, exploitation, parasitism and egocentrism which brought along innumerable vices and traumas to Africans (e.g. slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism). In a nutshell, what is required is a fundamental change of attitude. Salawu, cited in Salawu (2006) strongly argues "that since the Foundational Paradigm advocates going back to the roots, retracing our steps to that old, but tested African traditional value-system, we need to speak in African idioms which are best encapsulated in the folklores". We must study and utilize the past to enable us build a true and sustainable society. The task of this work is, among other things, to admonish all Sierra Leoneans and non-Sierra Leoneans not to allow our culture to shrink, decline and die but to encourage its growth and development in whichever way we can. This work has tried to make a case for the utilization of African traditional communication systems by relevant stakeholders in pursuit of our national development. The knowledge and appreciation of our past (history) is an ingredient of general education. For a proper understanding of the present (i.e. how we have arrived at this present level of development), we need to take a look at the past. And it is only when we compare the past and present that we will be able to predict and prepare for the future.

CONCEPTS/DEFINITIONS

Etymologically, **communication** finds its roots in the Latin verb "*communicare*" meaning to share, deriving from the word *communis* ("public", "common"). This in essence means that the act of communicating assumes that people have common values and beliefs, and are able to constitute a community (Harper Douglas, "Communication". Online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved 2013-06-23. Communication is the act of conveying meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood signs, symbols, and semiotic rules.

Communication is a process embedded in our everyday lives that inform the way we perceive, understand, and construct our views of reality and the world. Communication is the foundation of our culture (Stanley L. Baran (2005, p.7).

Culture is the learned behaviour of members of a given social group. According to M. Harris (1983, p.5) quoted in Stanley J. Baran, (2005) culture is the learned, socially acquired traditions and lifestyles of the members of a society, including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting.

Nwagbara (2006) sees culture as the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, meanings, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion, concepts of self, the universe and self – universe, relationships, hierarchies of status, role expectations, spatial relations and time concepts acquired by a large group of people in the course of generations through individual and group strivings. Every culture has symbols that are unique to them commonly referred to as cultural symbols.

Traditional refers to cultural institutions, ceremonies, events, and arts of African ancestors observed, practiced and perpetuated by successors from generation to generation.

Channels are link up ways and means by which ideas, messages, information, orders, instructions, secrets and movements are carried out, contacted and contracted. In communication it is the means through which information is shared or disseminated.

Traditional mode of communication is a complex system of communication which pervaded and, to a certain extent, continues to pervade all aspects of rural life in Africa.

Development communication : Moemeka(1999), cited in Salawu, 2006, Winter,p.100) defines *development communication* as the application of the process of development to the development process. In other words, development communication is the use of the principles and practice of exchange of ideas to fulfill development objective. Generally, development for each society is determined by that society's own needs which in turn are a question of the peculiar circumstances of climatic, historical, cultural, and social conditions.

Salawu (2004) subscribes wholly to the Ethical Paradigm of Development because it requires the psyche being spoken to. A fundamental change of attitude is absolutely required. He further argues 'that since the Foundational Paradigm advocated going back to the roots, retracing our steps to that old, but tested African traditional value-system, we need to speak in African idioms which are best encapsulated in the folklore'. This author shares Salawu's view.Indeed, we must continue to invent, develop and perfect our traditional communication system, scientifically and technologically.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MALIMBA

Before examining briefly the historical background of the Malimba people of Sierra Leone in West Africa, it is important to mention that there is also another ethnic group in the Federal Republic of Cameroon that goes by the name Malimba (Limba people) and their language is Hulimba. They belong to the Sawa peoples on the Cameroonian coast. The Malimba of the Republic of Cameroon must not be confused with the Malimba of Sierra Leone.

The Malimba (Limba) people of Sierra Leone constitute the third largest of the seventeen ethnic groups in Sierra Leone. According to the 2004 National Population and Housing Census, the Limba were estimated at 407,114 which represents 8.1% of the total population of Sierra Leone (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2004). The Malimba occupy an area of roughly 19,000 square miles in the Northern Region of the country between rivers Rokel and Scarcies. A number of Limba villages also extend to the present day Republic of Guinea. The *Kamuke dialect* speakers of the Hulimba (the Limba Language) are mainly found in the neighbouring territory of the Republic of Guinea. Although no serious research work has yet been undertaken on the subject of the presence of Malimba tribes in the Republics of Cameroon, Guinea and Gabon, this is an area that should interest our scholars, journalists, politicians, economists and business-minded people. After all it is believed that the Bantu migration originated from the Cameroon Mountains and spread to the western Atlantic coast and Southern parts of Africa.

After several decades of research on the history of the Limba (Malimba) in Sierra Leone, the issue of Limba (Malimba) origin and migration is still to be adequately addressed and resolved. More researches still need to be done on the Limba (Malimba), especially by Sierra Leonean scholars, journalists, authors, students and others. It is popularly said that only the person who wears the shoe that knows where it 'pinches'. The terms *Limba* and *Malimba* are used for the same ethnic group in Sierra Leone; hence they are interchangeably used throughout this work.

Historians and other scholars have shown that many, if not all the other ethnic groups of Sierra Leone, have long and rich traditions of origin and migration to the present-day territory of Sierra Leone. The Limba have no such tradition of migration (See for example Finnegan, 1965, Fyle,1979, Joe Alie,1990 and Conteh,2006). The Limba are believed to have been the first indigenous inhabitants in Sierra Leone. Archaeological evidence exists that indicates that some stone tools strongly believed to have been left by the Malimba and

dating to the eight century were found in Wara Wara Malimba territory near Kekoia in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone (cf. Alie,1990).

The prefix (Hu) in the word “HuLimba” is a descriptive term meaning “To” and the stem word “Limba” means “Wait”. When these two words are put together they now mean “To Wait”. It is believed that the Limba must have waited for a very long time before the other ethnic groups today populating Sierra Leone could join them. In fact it is believed that it was God who placed the Limba in this part of the world. Hulimba refers mainly to the language “Hulimba”.

The Limba believe that “Kanu Masala” (the Almighty God) originally made them and placed them on the Wara-Wara Mountains. Though they predominantly occupied the regions of the Wara-Wara Mountains, the Malimba have in the course of the centuries, spread out and occupied strategic areas in five main Districts in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone.**(This is before the political adjustments of districts, chiefdoms and local councils carried out before the 2018 General Elections in the country).**

The Malimba are found in the Bombali, Koinadugu, Port Loko, Kambia and Tonkolili Districts in the following chiefdoms:

1. Wara Wara Bafodia Chiefdom in Koinadugu District
2. Wara Wara Yagala Chiefdom in Koinadugu District
3. Kasungo Chiefdom in Koinadugu District
4. Safroko Limba Chiefdom.....in Bombali District
5. Biriwa Limba Chiefdom.....in Bombali District
6. Thonko Limba Chiefdom.....in Kambia District
7. Sella Limba Chiefdom.....in Bombali District
8. Sanda Magbolotor Chiefdom....in Port Loko District
9. Kalansogoia Chiefdom..... in Tonkolili District
10. Mapaki Masabong Chiefdom....in Bombali District
11. Bramaia Chiefdom.....in Kambia District
12. Kafe Simira Chiefdom..... in Tonkolili District

The main economic activities of the Malimba include subsistence farming, hunting, fishing, and indigenous industries like weaving; soap, mat, pottery making, iron and other metal smiting and wood carving. The Malimba grow mainly rice, millet, maize, cassava, groundnut and other farm crops. They also rear some domestic animals. Apart from these economic activities, the Malimba are also notably engaged in palm wine tapping. The Safroko Limba speakers have made palm wine tapping one of their main commercial activities (Sesay, 2011:21). They are seen in almost every nooks and crannies of Sierra Leone carrying out their palm-wine tapping trade, peacefully and diligently.

The Malimba share common borders with the Soso on the northwest, Yalunka and Fula on the northeast, the Kuranko on the east, the Loko on the southwest and the Temne on the south and southwest. The Malimba homeland comprises mainly savannah, with occasional areas of farm and grass and some inland swamps. Small rivers and streams flow through the territory. In the northern and eastern areas there are hills rising between 300ft (100m) and 2000 ft (667m), interspersed with low plateaus (Conteh, 2006).

POLITICAL ORGANISATION

The Malimba were brought into prominence by a great warrior and astute administrator, Chief Suluku of Biriwa, who established a relatively large and formidable empire/kingdom and united the various Hulimba groups with his capital in Bumban (Magbailay Fyle,1989) in the present day Biriwa Limba chiefdom, Bombali District. In the pre-colonial period, Malimba had a well defined and refined indigenous political system; and they lived in separate kingdoms or chiefdoms. Each kingdom/chiefdom called *Kekein* was ruled by a single powerful ruler called “Gbaku” (Chief/King) who descend from special ruling families with patrilineal succession. Gbaku was the supreme administrator and head of the machinery of the legislature,

executive and the judiciary. He was the commander of the armed forces (warriors) of the entire chiefdom and chief patron of all the secret societies, e.g. Gbangbani (for males) and Bondo (for women). These secret societies served as institutions of learning. During the initiation ceremony, the initiates were taught special skills in the art of farming, personal hygiene, warfare, home economics, and hunting. They were also tutored in medicine, politics and government. The “Gbaku” was assisted by a Council of Elders, whose main function was to advise him (the Gbaku) and to elect and install a new chief on the death of the incumbent. **Another prominent political figure in Malimba territory was Sese, the ‘Gbaku’s cousin, who was/is also a chief adviser to the ‘Gbaku’ (Chief). The first wife of the ‘Gbaku’ also played a major role in the day to day administration of the chiefdom.** The elder sister of ‘Gbaku’ and the other sisters helped in settling minor disputes amongst ‘Gbaku’s wives. The chiefdoms/ kingdoms were divided into several towns and villages known as ‘Metin’ with their own traditional rulers/headmen called “Bathagba” or “Bayahain”, usually appointed by the “Gbaku” from the Chiefdom /Kingdom headquarters. There were various checks and balances imposed on the authority of the “Gbaku” (chief) to prevent him from being dictatorial, ruthless and autocratic. The Chief (“Gbaku”) was provided with a virgin or an unmarried woman called “Basaraka”. She commanded great respect and lived a very luxurious life in the kingdom/chiefdom. Her special duties included offering special rituals for the “Gbaku” and to always be near the “Gbaku” when sacrifices are being made. In the Malimba areas where the “Gbaku” went into KANTHA (Seclusion) before installation, the BASARAKA accompanied the “Gbaku” into seclusion. The Chief (“Gbaku”) and office –holders (“Bayahain”) or Council of Elders, who must be fairly experienced, old, responsible and of indelible character, adjudicated disputes, especially over the inheritance of land, family disputes, fishing rights, issues of witchcraft, etc. The BAYAHAIN also represented the various communities to outsiders.

The Malimba ethnic group is very unique in nature and character. The Malimba are generally industrious, very intelligent, resilient, peace-loving, friendly, dependable, law-abiding and extremely patient. The Malimba quite easily adapt to new environments and situations. They detest controversy and trouble shooting. As a result of their peaceful nature and their tendency to preserve their customs and traditional way of life, and trying by all possible means to avoid confrontation with other people, the Malimba often prefer to create and live in settlements at the outskirts of big towns and villages outside Malimba territory known as “Limba Corner” (Sesay,2011:21; Koroma,2016). The Malimba are very religious; and religion pervades every aspect of their life from conception to death. As far as the Malimba are concerned, life is a holistic journey, which begins and ends with God (“Kanu masala”) who is consulted every step of the way (For more details, see Conteh, 2007). Malimba tradition is based on a very strong sense of solidarity, which promoted readiness to socialize. Every Malimba person feels part of a family from cradle to grave. The household was the basic social unit and each household among the Malimba consisted of a husband, wife or wives, children and the extended family (the husband’s immediate family and other relations). The children belonged to their father’s clan. The Malimba were predominantly polygamous. A man may marry a number of wives for prestige and for economic purposes. The wives and their children provided the labour force to embark on large scale farming and other economic activities like oil palm production, carving, weaving and knitting.

HULIMBA LANGUAGE

Language is one of the most fundamental aspects of human behaviour. It is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication. The development of language into a defined instrument of expression and communication is probably man’s greatest gift. Language is a gift from God and therefore all languages are equally important. Language plays a significant role in human society- in existence, development, and civilization.

The culture, tradition and values of human beings are identified and known through the interaction of individuals using language as a medium. Language has been in existence for thousands of years and will continue to exist for generations to come. It is transmitted to us through verbal and other means of communication. To preserve this heritage the Malimba must therefore learn to read and write Hulimba (Limba Language). Hulimba is a “prefix language”(Finnegan, 1965). All efforts must be made to include Hulimba and other Sierra Leonean languages in the curriculum of schools and tertiary educational institutions at all levels and ensure that they are taught and learnt.

The Limba language (Hulimba) must not be confused with the Limba Language spoken in the Republic of Cameroon, also known there as Limbu. The Limba Language (Hulimba) is an erstwhile Atlantic Language of Sierra Leone. It is not closely related to other languages and appears to form its own branch of the Niger-Congo family. Dialects include Tonko,Sela, Kamuke(or Ke),Wara- Wara,Keleng and Safroko. The eastern variety, spoken primarily in the Republic of Guinea, is quite distinct. Limba “has a system of noun classes, marked by an old, eroded set of prefixes augmented by a newer set of enclitics”

(https://en-wikipedia.org/wiki/Limba_Language).

In terms of genealogical classification, the *Hulimba* belongs to the Kissi-Landoma group of the West Atlantic Language family (Conteh,2007; Sesay,2011). This language group is further divided into the Northern branch, Bijago and the Southern branch. The southern branch is further subdivided into Sua, Mel languages and Limba (see Sesay, 2011).

Hulimba is spoken in a variety of very similar dialects with only slight differences between them. According to the *Source Book for four Sierra Leonean Languages* prepared by the Centre for the National Curriculum Development Centre, Freetown(1993: 61-82), most individuals who speak one dialect are also able to understand and communicate with individuals who speak another dialect. Overall, the similarities outweigh the differences (For more details, see Sesay (2011) and *Source Book* (1993).

Although no detailed empirical research has yet been done on the Hulimba dialects, it is assumed that Hulimba comprises about ten to thirteen dialects. These include:

1) Tonko 2) Safroko 3) Sela 4) Biriwa 5) Wara wara Bafodia 6) Wara wara Yakala 7) Gbonkobor 8) Kalanthuba 9) Kelen 10) Kamkeh 11) Sonkon ,and 12) Thamiso. Linguists have classified the Hulimba dialects into five main regions based, to some extent, on the level of mutual intelligibility:

1. North-Western dialect ... Thonko and Sela
2. Central dialect.....Biriwa, Sonkon, Kelen ,Gbonkobor and Thamiso
3. North-Central dialect.....Wara Wara Yakala, Wara Wara Bafodia
4. Far North dialect..... Kamuke
5. Southern dialect..... Safroko and Kalanthuba.

Depending on regional topography and climate, Malimba households cultivate rice, beans, corn, groundnuts, millet, potatoes, pepper and yams. Malimba households controlled defined and inheritable parcels of land all over Malimba territory. Family members use indigenous farming tools such as hoes, cutlasses, axes, etc. to prepare the soil, tend the plants and harvest the crops. These same Malimba households engaged in palm wine tapping, fishing, hunting, indigenous industries, manufacturing textiles and other household goods, some of which they carry to regional markets for both batter and sale.

Farmland was communally owned by the entire people of the given village/settlement. Land was never owned by an individual.

NATURE AND CONTENT OF MALIMBA TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION

Communication processes among the Malimba and many other African people are in various forms and are generally geared toward achieving different communication goals and objectives such as *directives, news, advertising, public relations, education, and entertainment.*(Nzewi, M.1979; Des Wilson,1987,pp 87-104, succinctly put it thus:

1. *Directives* are given in the form of

- (a) Announcements concerning public or community works, duties or responsibilities of the collective citizenry which must be carried out or defaulters within the community automatically face certain sanctions.
- (b) Instructions to groups or individuals to carry out certain decisions of the traditional authority.

2. News is often in the form of

- (a) Information about events which have already taken place.
- (b) Information about deaths, usually of prominent persons in the society.

© News may be about forthcoming events. Sources of information leading towards self-actualization and ethnic development. The main objectives include informing people's social, moral and humanistic values.

3. Advertising generally aims at promoting and selling goods, services and ideas. It is done through

- (a) the display of the products on a flagpole, trump or table.
- (b) use of peripatetic hawkers, vendors.

© singing and drumming of the name of the product to be sold or service to be delivered.

4. Public Relations is carried out through

- (a) person-to person or person-to-organization /Age Group basis where the individual tries to promote the image of his organization through praise singing.
- (b) performances and announcements made. Public relations promotes unity in adversity.

5. Education is carried out most often

- (a) Informally but also formally through cultural groups.
- (b) Through membership of certain societies.
- (c) Through membership of other socio-cultural groups. Generally, education promotes intra-cultural inter-cultural and other communication throughout the ages leading to group, ethnic and national cohesion (unity).

6. Entertainment is perhaps the most pervasive in nature. This is done through music, dance, drama performances put up to be received free or paid for in public or private settings. Itinerant musical entertainment groups sing satirical songs, praise songs, and may generally criticize wrong doings of chiefs, elders and individuals in the society. Usually names of those being satirized or praised are mentioned or descriptions of their physical or personality attributes, their place of abode, and their occupation may form part of such songs. Entertainment defines Malimba culture and who they are. It differentiates Malimba culture from others. The songs, proverbs, stories, parables, riddles, etc. are important medium of communicating the ethics of the tribe. They are informative and meaningful, having contents that teach ethical values of dedication to duty, honesty, humility, selflessness, justice,etc.

MODE OF CONTROL (OWNERSHIP) OF THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION

To enhance a better understanding of the Malimba traditional system of communication, it is necessary that we examine, even if briefly, the mediators involved in communication and the mode of control (ownership) of the said system. Under the traditional system of African communication, there are two types of mediators involved in communication, the visible (human) and the invisible mediators. The visible mediators through whom communication is done are human beings and they include priests, seers, prophets, oracles, diviners, medicine men/women, witches, rain makers, chiefs, elders and other special people. These human mediators are believed to communicate with God, the divinities, ancestors and all the living dead (cf. Fr. Ateh, May 2007). The invisible mediators include the living-dead in general, the ancestors in particular and the divinities. According to Fr. Ateh (May 2007), "at the ontological cycle the living-dead and the ancestors occupy the intermediate position between men and God. They speak a bi-lingual language of human beings where they recently left through physical death and God to whom they are now nearer".

On the issue of the ownership of the means (media/ channels of traditional communication) this lies with the society/community. The village chief ('Gbaku') or the clan head only acts as a trustee and head of "the gate keeping process" (cf. Des Wilson, 1987).

TIMES AND PLACES OF TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION

Malimba traditional system of communication was and is still carried out every day at the observation of the various rituals, e.g. rituals of passage, i.e. birth, initiation, marriage, death; harvest ceremonies, planting time rituals; rituals in time of disaster, distress, calamity, illness, war, hunting, fishing and during very important undertakings by chiefs, "opinion leaders", elders, and the professionals of the communication industry such as griots, diviners, priests and priestesses, seers, medicine men/women, prophets, rain makers, etc.

The places of communication include homes, shrines, temples, altars, trees, rivers, mountains or anywhere that looks somewhat mysterious. (cf. Mbiti, 1970, pp 178-193; Ate .May 2007, pp. 113-127).

ETHICAL CODES OF MALIMBA TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Achieving public good was the ultimate aim of Malimba traditional media practice. The ethics which guided what the traditional communication media ought or ought not to do or report or communicate were reflected in the unwritten (oral) codes of professional practice. For example, it was considered unethical for a Town Crier (the village 'broadcaster'/ 'journalist') or the griot to be engaged in blackmailing, character assassination, sensationalism, falsehood, war mongering and other abuses characteristic of today's 'Yellow Journalism'. Giving or taking bribes to media practitioners and other related stakeholders hardly took place. The ethical codes of Malimba traditional communication system laid emphases on accuracy, fairness, objectivity, balance and informativeness. Although these ethical codes were unwritten, they are very similar to today's principles of the Social Responsibility Theory that guides contemporary media practitioners. The principles of the Social Responsibility Theory on which the codes of professional practice are modeled emphasize 'truth, objectivity, fairness, accuracy, balance and informativeness' (See McQuail, 1987).

The Malimba traditional communication system comprising of songs, stories, theatre, proverbs, puzzles, riddles, dances, music, myths, symbols, idols, rituals, festivals, prayers, offerings, sacrifices, thanksgiving, etc. are important media of communicating the ethics of the society.

VARIOUS MALIMBA TRADITIONAL FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

The undermentioned are some of the various traditional forms of communication amongst the Malimba people of Sierra Leone in West Africa.

1. Oral Tradition is made up of verbal or spoken language communication system which is made up of sounds and words. Oral tradition contains all forms, styles and techniques of expressing and communicating thoughts, feelings, and actions and so on. Oral tradition is one of the oldest and most important media through which the Malimba and other African people interact or communicate with themselves and other people. Long before the introduction of Roman, Arabic, Amharic letters and scripts in Africa, tradition in the form of history, cultural values and heritages were handled down by word of mouth in the form of drama, poetry, proverbs, songs, legends, religious liturgy, ballads and invocations. They are passed on from people to people, from generation to generation, from area to area and become legendary and immortalized with the passing of time. Malimba traditionally communicate within themselves, with each other and with other people through storytelling, riddles, songs, maxims, poetry, ballads, proverbs, speech, various forms of oral dramatic performances by choral groups etc. The Malimba, whose tradition is essentially oral, the word (language) is a very powerful and vital means of communication and specialization. The art of speaking and the good use of speech are indeed central in the Malimba tradition. Malimba tradition is based on a strong sense of solidarity, which promotes readiness to socialize. Every Malimba individual feels part of a family from cradle to grave. The education of Malimba children is the responsibility of all adults. Malimba children are introduced to the world of work very early in life. They learn everything from their parents, including the mother tongue, the reverence for “the sacred forests” (as means to prevent the destruction of our environment), and how to worship and praise Kanu Masala (God Almighty). The key points of their faith, the African Traditional religion, interiorized by mime. The big traditional festivals are also occasions for learning, socializing and building a bond of understanding and unity.

2. TOWN CRIERS serve as the traditional communication link between the village chief, village elders and the general village populace. The Town Criers occupy a very important position in a Malimba village setting. The Town Criers are responsible for the announcement of very important meetings, events, ceremonies, messages and imminent troubles. They summon the town elders for decision and policy making for the progress of the given community. The village chief, the elders and other stakeholders in turn relay their decisions to the rest of the villagers for implementation through the Town Criers. The Town Criers are very well informed and are considered the society’s “journalists or broadcasters”. They are almost always abreast of the latest development both within and outside their local communities. The effectiveness of the Town Criers usually lies in their oratory skills and their perfect knowledge of the community’s norms, values and heritage.

3 AGE GROUPS comprise people of both sexes within the same age-bracket, usually those born within one to five years age range. Age Groups help to maintain law and order in their communities. In addition,

Age Groups carry out community development projects which include the cleaning of the source of water supply, the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, village squares, Assembly houses, deity shrines, etc. Age Groups help in the execution of laws and decisions of the respective Councils of Elders including collection of taxes, market dues and fines, the punishment of crimes and the burial of the dead. The Age Groups also help in educating the younger groups of the clan and tribe in general about the traditions, needs and aspirations of Malimba. Age Groups are the main source of recruiting warriors/soldiers in time of war and rescue brigades in time of natural or man-made disasters. In the course of living, playing and working together, Age Group members acquire some unique modes of communication which are known only to its group. These may include verbal, bodily and symbolic modes of communication. The members of Age Groups should always be in familiar and friendly terms with each other no matter their status, positions and influence in the society.

4. THE RELAY SYSTEM: Malimba walk and run from one village to another for the purpose of delivery messages. Usually, it is the young people who are actively involved in this message- relay system.

When an important event has taken place or about to take place in a certain Malimba village, the chief (“Gbaku”) of the said village and his elders will summon their young people and give them message(s) or order(s) to take to the people of other villages/towns. These young people will be arranged into message-relay –runners’ teams. On receipt of the baton (“message(s)/order(s)”) from the chief, the message-relay runners will speed off to their designated places (villages, settlements, towns). The message-relay- runners will station themselves in strategic positions on the relay route to ensure that each runner covers the same or almost the same distance. The message(s)/order(s) the relay runners carried in the past were in verbal forms: in a burning firewood form or palm fronds or in any other form depending on the content of the message. If the receiving chiefs and their elders decided to respond to the received message/order, they did so through the same message-relay-runners that brought the said message/order.

5. THE MARKET PLACE/SQUARE: The market place/square always remains one of the most powerful and important institution in any African village or town. Apart from the original purpose of buying and selling, the market place/square serves also as a communication arena for the Malimba. The Market place/square is both a commercial and information centre. It is a melting point for all categories of people, young and old, rich and poor, fit and able or challenged, from distance places or from neighbouring settlements. Malimba, like other African people, go to the market place/square not only with their goods and services but also with the latest news from their homes and villages and those of their immediate neighbours. Malimba transport goods and transact business in the market place/square while at the same time engage in the exchange of ideas, information, mannerisms, dress codes, etc.

The social climate at the market place/square greatly facilitates the mobilization strategy of Malimba people and the local leadership to transmit development messages to the community members for positive action to improve their living standards and maintain law and order.

The village markets have a cycle, which may be every four to five days intervals. Town markets operate every day,

6.THE TALKING DRUMS : The talking drums are another traditional media of communication which help in the growth and development of the Malimba in very long distance local communities. The talking drums can be heard over a very long distance. They reproduce the tonal pattern of a sentence in the proper sequence which can be deciphered or decoded by other Malimba elders in other villages/towns.

The talking drums serve two pronged communication functions in Malimba society. These are *official and social* functions.

Officially: The talking drums are used to call important meetings for the purpose of making some official announcements and are also used at sacrificial ceremonies and during wars.

Socially: Talking drums add colour to cultural festival celebrations, chieftaincy title taking, weddings of chiefs and other nobles in the Malimba society, etc. Talking drums also provide the atmosphere of suspense and tension during wars and wrestling tournaments.

7. APPEARANCES, HUMAN ACTIONS AND SOUNDS OF ANIMALS

Dressing in Malimba society communicates. There are certain traditional attires that cannot be worn by ordinary citizens. Appearances like neatness and body poise; human actions like singing, drumming, dancing, crying, eating, fighting, nodding one’s head, shaking ones legs, hips, etc. and the sounds made by animals such as owls, snakes other reptiles and insects of different types convey messages of decency, respect, approval, happiness, disaster, sadness, disappointment, death, etc .For example, to see the chief in his palace, a villager (the subject) must be neatly and appropriately dressed as a mark of respect to the throne. It is also a Malimba tradition and custom for a younger person to slightly bow his/her head when he/she is been addressed by an elder. A Malimba wife is expected to genuflect in front of her husband when serving him his food. This is a practical sign of communicating her love, obedience and respect to the husband. On special occasions, the

hairstyles of Malimba women can convey a number of messages such as marital status, membership or not of the Bondo society and positions held in that society and the community as a whole.

Malimba, like other ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, are very fond of singing and dancing. The Malimba communicate messages with different forms of dances, dance movements and singing. They use parts of their bodies to make and communicate sound and music. To Malimba, music is not just a medium of entertainment but a vehicle to spread ideas and doctrines. Age groups have special forms of music and dance movements for special events, festivals, rituals, etc. For example there are special dances and music to bury the dead, to celebrate the birth of a baby and to celebrate initiation ritual. Nodding one's head is a traditional means of indicating approval or accepting a request made in Malimba society.

8 .FLUTES, IVORY TUSKS AND COW HORNS

Malimba use flutes, ivory tusks, cow horns and other musical instruments to communicate messages. These can produce notes that vary in length and tone and are used to communicate long messages and herald important events.

9. TYING AND KNOTING OF ROPES, GRASS, LEAVES, PALM FRONDS, THREADS, ETC

From time immemorial, Malimba society tie and knot ropes, grass, leaves, palm fronds, clothes, thread, etc. in different forms and shapes to communicate messages and to tell stories, give directions and warnings.

For example, a Limba farmer may warn other farmers that a piece of fallow land belongs to him by tying or knotting palm fronds, leaves or grass on the said piece of land. This action wards off intruders.

10. FIRE, SMOKE, FLAMES, ASHES

Fire, smoke, flames, ashes are some of the earliest communication patterns utilized between distant Malimba communities. They were used to exchange information based on agreed codes. Malimba set fire to bushes or burn woods to inform their distant relations or friends that there is trouble brewing up or has already occurred or taken place. Once the distant relations or friends see the flames, smoke or the ashes of the burning bush or woods they get the message decoded, study it and take appropriate action.

10. PLACING OF OBJECTS ON ONE ANOTHER

Traditionally, Malimba placed stones or objects on others such as palm trees, mango, or orange trees, yams, ,pepper, cassava, maize,etc., on farms to communicate. When such objects are constructed on a farm it means that nobody else is allowed to touch things in that farm, without the permission of the owner or someone permitted by him/her.

11. CONSTRUCTION OF TRADITIONAL MEANS OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Malimba in their traditional set up constructed and still continue to construct roads, footpaths, bridges of various sizes and designs (including flyovers over big rivers) to communicate messages to each other and to facilitate general movement of goods and services within and outside Malimba country. Malimba had gifted architects, builders, woodcarvers, blacksmiths; etc.who took active part in the works mentioned above.

Traditionally, Malimba, especially those who lived along the riverine areas and along the sea, indigenously invented and used canoes of different types, sizes and shapes to communicate with each other. The Malimba produced canoes of different sizes and shapes to facilitate marine transportation and communication within Malimba country and beyond.

13. MOVEMENTS OF THE HUMAN BODY

The beating of the heart, the pulsating of the individual's pulses, the flow of the blood, the sweat, urine and liquid from the body, traditionally communicated innumerable messages to the Malimba, individually or collectively. For example, the Malimba believe that the beating of the heart and the pulsating of the individual's pulses may be signs of a pending disaster, misfortune, failure or even death.

14. THE USE OF AIR AND SPACE

From earliest time to date, Malimba have been using air and space to communicate with each other, by flying or moving through them, spiritually, psychological, mystically, etc.

For example, witches in Malimba territory are known to confess flying from one end of Malimba country to another end and beyond to carry out their nefarious activities, mostly at night. These witches are believed to utilize dry groundnut shells as a means of transport. Malimba also traditionally communicate within themselves, with others, with their gods, spirits and other supernatural forces using their inner and outer spiritual human and material powers, forces, abilities and knowledge.

15. DREAMS

Dreams, according to Professor Mbiti (1997, p.514) “are vehicles of communication from God to people-to reveal, warn, and inform”. Angels, according to Traditional Limba Religion, are portrayed as messengers or servants of God who are of unquestionable integrity, goodwill and obedience to God. And therefore their functions as God’s messengers cannot be limited to specialized categories, but rather they are presented in broad and varied auxiliary functions and as such, they appear as helpers and protectors, to people in need, as proclaimers of news or mediators of revelations from God(Conteh 2010 ,p.45).

16. ANCESTOR VENERATION

Ancestor worship goes hand in hand with the worship of “Kanu Masala” (God, the Almighty) and other minor gods or spirits. Malimba attribute creation to “Kanu Masala”(God Almighty) the creator, maker and fashioner who made all things visible and invisible, including the heavens and earth and humankind. Worship therefore plays a very important role in maintaining a close relationship with God. In Malimba culture and tradition, sacrifice is the primary method of indigenous worship. Malimba do not worship their ancestors (“furainibay”) or their dead, but venerate their dead in prayers, festivals and through sacrifice on the third, seventh and fortieth day after the death of a relative. According to Professor Conteh (2010, p.43) “offerings are made to spirits to appease or to return thanks”. He further asserts that sacrifice is offered for the inclusion of the deceased into the ancestral world for appeasement or seeking the favour of the community’s respected and feared pantheon. This sacrifice is offered in the place that is presumed to be the abode of the said pantheon (Conteh, 2010).

Family sacrifice is offered by individuals, usually through the help of a sacred specialist, for protection, prosperity, health, or safe delivery of a baby, or when seeking employment or going on a trip. Traditional sacrificial rites (veneration of the dead) which are performed in honour of the dead entail libation, which links the visible and the invisible and between the living and the supernatural. The relationship with the other world is established and made concrete in the relationship with the ancestors.

Veneration takes three major forms: *Prayers; Offerings, and Sacrifice*. Prayers are addressed to the ancestors for any reason and for blessings. Offerings are regular presentation of food and drinks, as part of the rituals of prayers. In sacrifice, the worshipper kills an animal as a presentation (Idowu,1974; Mbiti,1969). In all three forms the living person maintains regular communication with the ancestors and shows love, respect and care. One reason for ancestor worship in Malimba society is to use the dead to build and maintain cohesion in the lineage and community as a whole. Land, one of the most precious commodities in Malimba country, belongs both to the ancestors and the living individuals, which makes parting with it an abomination (Toyin Falola in Peter Sterns, ed. 1994, pp. 32-33).

17. THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

Malimba traditionalists hold the view that the relationship with the other world is established and made concrete in the relationship with the ancestors. In Malimba traditional society, ancestors and their descendants are in continual situation of exchange of gifts and favours. The link with the ancestors manifests itself through respect and obedience to the ones who represent them in the community of the living ,i.e. the father, the mother, the elders of the clan and the entire tribe. That is to say, those who naturally have established links

with them according to the law of the transmission of life and the vital force (Education in Traditional Africa. Aspects of African culture. Centre of Inculturation, Mariapolis Piero, Kenya, pp.22-23).

The conception of a child brings great joy to Malimba society because it marks the continuation of life and is a sign that the ancestors are happy and the universe is in good order. The child's personality is closely linked with the ancestor from whom he/she receives his /her name and along with it something of his/her social personality, his/her identity and place in the clan. The child will also benefit from the protection of the ancestor and facilitate the ancestor's presence in the present generation (Education in Traditional African Education, p.26).

In Malimba land, like in many other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, the process of the birth of a child consists of at least two phases: "the biological birth, and the community birth". The biological birth is linked to the joyful event of the immediate family and friends which prolongs in a certain way the role of the maternal womb (Education in Traditional African, p.27). But the real birth takes place when the child is given a name in front of the entire local community during the course of a special ceremony. By giving the baby a name , the family and the community confer an identity on the child and recognize him/her as a member .The community also gives itself a means of communicating and exercising control over the child. The name of an ancestor after whom the child is named is chosen with great care by the parents and an elder of the family; and usually a diviner may be consulted for the occasion. According to Malimba tradition, the child is expected to reincarnate the ancestor, thereby making him or her a partaker in the present life. Furthermore, Malimba expects the child to develop the qualities in which the ancestor excelled. Through remembrance in naming, "the vital force of the ancestor is transmitted to the entire clan"(Magesa L. cited in Education in Traditional Africa. 2006,p.29), and the ethical need to preserve life is attained.

Later, the child may be given another name by peers of the same age group; which are usually "laudatory nick names". And at initiation, to mark a new stage of life for the young Limba adult, another name may be given. The name of a Malimba person communicates the identity of that individual, his/her relationship with the family. e.g the first male child of a Limba woman is called Sarah ("Sacrifice?"). the female child is called Sera/ Sirra ("Sacrifice?"), the ancestors and God.

The social function of initiation, among the Malimba is to prepare young adults for marriage, adulthood and citizenship through instruction. Initiation is in four stages: (i) Separation from the community and seclusion usually, in the forest near a village/town; (ii) Instructions(about the traditions and secrets of the clan and tribe, laws of the society, rights and obligations as adults, personal hygiene including sexuality, their personal and social life, songs, symbols and various rites; tests, and physical marking(s) basically male and female circumcision; (iii) The return and reintegration into the community; (iv) The Covenant (see Education in Traditional Africa, p.43).

An important component of the experience of initiation is to learn the domination of pain and acquire self-mastery. In circumcision and other hardships that the Malimba initiates had to endure, there was a very essential aspect of life (See Education in Traditional Africa, p.45).

18. THE SEASONS OF THE YEAR

Being predominantly farmers, fishermen, hunters, palm wine tappers, the different seasons of the year (i.e. the rainy and dry seasons) contain and convey very important messages for the Malimba. Each of these seasons convey messages such as when to commence clearing and preparing rice farms for planting, weeding and harvesting; and also when to embark on non-agricultural economic pursuits such as cultural festivals and rites (e.g. male and female secret societies/circumcision). Rice farming is mostly carried out during the rainy season, while the dry season indicates that it is time for initiations and other cultural festivals. Inability to seriously adhere to the coming and going of each of this seasons means inviting calamity or misfortune to one's family, clan and tribe.

19. USE OF WEAPONS

The Malimba traditionally used and still continue to use weapons such as guns, shooting arrows and other weapons not only for hunting but also to communicate messages of danger, sadness, joy etc. On some occasions, Malimba communicate or report victory in war by firing guns. It is interesting to note that on the war front, Malimba experts in traditional spirituality and medicine use not only conventional arms and “witch guns” but also through spiritual means use “killer bees” to attack, destabilize and frustrate the efforts of their opponents/enemies (See Conteh 2010, p.63).

20. CHARMS, HERBAL TRADITIONAL MEDICINES AND DIVINATION

The supernatural is an important element in Malimba traditional communication. Charms are hung on Malimba doorposts for protection against witchcraft and evil spirits, Medicinal plants (herbal medicine) form the mainstay of traditional medicine practice of the Malimba which contribute to their strategies for reducing the burden of sickness and death due to diseases. African traditional medical knowledge and the medicinal plants, resources are fast disappearing as Malimba territory is being ravaged by diseases, poverty and environmental degradation. Malimba, indigenously and traditionally, communicate within themselves, with others, with their gods, spirits and through traditional herbal medicines, charms and through their numerous divination systems. Malimba women use charms in the form of amulets. The women wear earrings and use amulets to ensure fertility and protection from evil forces. Men wear pendants suspended from chains around their necks to avert evil spirits. Some prominent Malimba people are known to engage the services of sacred spiritualists to maim or kill their genuine or perceived enemies through spiritual means.

DIVINATION is the practice of foretelling the future by means of alleged preternatural powers. It is based on the belief that the future is predetermined, that all things, however casual or accidental they might appear, have significance, and that the pattern of coming events can be read from them(See The Macmillan Family Encyclopedia, 1982, Vol.D, pp202-203). Divination includes all methods of fortune-telling: palmistry, crystal cowries mixing,etc. Some Malimba chiefs and other prominent Malimba personalities seek the assistance of diviners and fortune tellers to win political contests, gain favours with those in higher authority or when seeking for more lucrative political, social and economic positions, wealth and influence. Dream interpretation was once a popular form of divination among the Malimba.

WITCHCRAFT is commonly defined as the use of supposed magical powers to influence people and events.

Witches are believed to be masters of the supernatural world. The supposedly conjure and command spirits. Historically, Malimba, like most other people in Sub-Saharan Africa, have associated witchcraft with evil and usually have regarded a witch as someone who uses magic to harm others, by causing accidents, illness, bad luck and even death (The World Book Encyclopedia, 2001, Vol.21, pp.371-372). However, some Malimba are of the opinion that witchcraft as sorcery, use magic for either good or bad. They may have special helping spirits called *familiars* who take the form of animals particularly cats, owls, snakes, and dogs(World Book, 2001, pp.371-372). Malimba believe witches have the power to *shape-shift* into animals. Witches have great knowledge of how to make magical portions and charms. Malimba also believe that witches inherit their magical power but it is also possible that witches can be trained or inducted by local witches.

21. PLANETARY BODIES

The Malimba communicate with each other and with others through the movements, positions, behaviours, shapes and colours of the planetary bodies, e.g. sun, moon and stars.

22. PAINTINGS, DESIGNS, SYMBOLS, ENGRAVINGS, SCULPTORS, CARVED IMAGES ON OBJECTS

Malimba indigenously and traditionally communicated and continue to communicate with each other and with others through the use of paintings, designs, symbols, flags, engravings, and carved images on objects e.g. stones, woods, clay, etc.

23. CULTURAL SYMBOLS

Traditional signs and symbols are dynamic human activities which touches every domain of living for meaningful development and peaceful co-existence in the African society.(Ushe 2012, cited in Oladumiye,p.). It is worth mentioning that cultural symbols don't have to be actual symbols or signs. They may also be animals, fruits, plants, gestures such as hand signals and handshakes. Some examples of Malimba cultural symbols include *kola nuts* and calabash.

Kola nuts:

Kola nut is one of the most common African plants widely accepted and recognized cultural symbols. Kola nut is a very important aspect of the tradition in Malimba society which also holds great social significance for many other African ethnic groups. The traditional kola nut is regarded as a sacred nut, which is used to communicate with the gods “being that it was chosen by the elders as the head or king of all seeds”(Nenne 2013). The Igbo of Nigeria do indeed express the heart of Sub-Saharan people when in one of their proverbs they state that “he who brings kola brings life”(Nenne 2013). Indeed kola nut is food for both the living and for the ancestors. Kola nuts symbolize solemnity, reverence, communion, hospitality and tradition (Chidume et al 2015; Nenne 2013). Malimba uses kola nuts to welcome distinguished visitors, and to send messages to relatives and friends about forthcoming important events such as marriages, initiation ceremonies, installation of traditional title holders,etc. Kola nuts are used in negotiating marriages, contracts and in the installation of chiefs and other traditional leaders. Kola nuts play a very significant role in the religious dimension of those rituals of the African tradition such as birth, initiation, marriage and death.

CALABASH GOURD sometimes called bottle gourd is technically known as *Lagenaira Vulgaris* or *L.Leucantha*. Calabash is used as ornaments or utensils, such as cups and bowls.

Calabash is one of the symbols of Malimba traditional life. Calabash appears in different shapes and forms: flattened, oblong, elongated, globular, rounded- drop-shaped and oblong –drop-shaped and kidney-shaped. Calabash is used for wedding ceremonies. It is a calabash bowl that is used to pack all the necessary articles for the brides, which may include the dowry, textiles for the bride's relatives, kola nuts, and some cooking utensils. The calabash is also used as a musical instrument to convey feeling, ideas or messages.

THE CHICKEN

Chickens are some of the animals reared for sacrificial purpose and for welcoming august visitors. A chicken given to a relative, friend, neighbour or stranger conveys messages of welcome, love, appreciation, respect, allegiance and reconciliation. An entire chicken can be slaughtered for a young man in the family who has performed creditably in a competition and raised the image of the family/clan/village, e.g. winning an entire regional wrestling tournament. The society's message here is clear; one gets a befitting reward for raising the image of one's family, clan, village and tribe. Normally, the gizzard legs and wings of a chicken are reserved for elderly people. It is a mark of respect.

24. SHAVING

The shaving of the heads of both the young and elderly persons in Malimba society conveys a number of messages and feelings. For example, when an individual dies in a family, members of that family shave their heads to reflect mourning. And when boys are about to be initiated into the Gbangbani secret society their heads are shaved. A Malimba person about to be installed as a Paramount Chief or title holder has to shave his head. Any person found guilty of incest or any other abominable offence in the society gets his/her head shaved.

CONCLUSION

The above are some of the various Malimba indigenous and traditional modes, devices and systems of communications as they were and some still exist in their environments. Communication, whether verbal or kinesics, direct by medium, is indispensable to social existence. A society continues to grind on smoothly as a result of the continuous flow of appropriate and relevant information between and amongst the constituents segments of the said society. The traditional media of communication is a complex system of communication which pervaded and to a great extent continues to pervade all aspects of rural and urban life in Africa. It is complex in the sense that, it is not only one system but a network of other systems which operate at various levels of society.

Ubuntu, an ancient terminology in Bantu Languages, defines humanity in the African culture. Ubuntu is the singular of ubuntu. The Malimba concept of unity is embedded in the cultural concept of “Mabohanday” or “BAMIN FOMA” (unity/unification /oneness). And the Bantu Languages concept of ‘ubuntu’ implies that we need the presence of the other person. Ubuntu defines what it means to be a human being. ‘We affirm our humanity when we recognize the humanity of others’. Muntu (human person) is a person through other persons. Ubuntu, as Nelson Mandela explains, includes “the aspect of respect, sharing, trust, self-giving, collaboration’ (Cited in Giovanni Vasquez, ”Ubuntu”- The Person and the Community...,pp.95-102).

It is interesting to note that Malimba share virtually the same or almost the same view or concept of ubuntu. Malimba and ubuntu hold the view that “I am, because we are”; and that we “affirm our humanity when we recognize the humanity of others”. Education, the job of handing down of culture from generation to generation is the process followed by ‘Wulimba’ (human being) after birth so as to adapt well to life and achieve fulfillment. During his/her lifetime the Wulimba (human being) will be initiated through a series of rituals prescribed by the tradition of the Malimba society: first the passage to adulthood, then marriage and bearing children, and so on until the last passage which is death. At the end of his/her earthly journey and with a very befitting funeral ceremony, he/ she become an Ancestor. However, Wulimba can only become an ancestor if he/she lived a life consistent with the society’s culture and rituals, and if it is a male Wulimba, he must have had a legitimate son and did not die of violent death.

Since Sierra Leone regained her political independence on 27th April 1961, various developmental campaigns have been launched with little or no appreciable improvement in the quality of lives of most Sierra Leoneans while the country itself continues to battle with the problems of underdevelopment (as evident by diseases, hunger, ignorance and poverty). It is generally believed that for us to surmount our problems of underdevelopment, we first have to set right the issues of ethics in our work and social life and address adequately and appropriately our patriotic credentials. In the words of Salawu (2006 Winter) ‘development is a matter of attitude...Attitude is a question of mind; and without the mind being healthy or regenerated, the attitude cannot be positive’. This author cannot agree more with this assertion. A number of scholars,philosophers,civil,religious and political leaders, researchers, pedagogists, journalists,civil activists, agriculturists,etc. are also with the strong view that unless there is a right attitude in the way Sierra Leoneans think, produce, consume, interact with one another and outsiders, and our Creator, genuine, enduring and sustainable development will continue to delude us. It is therefore been suggested that to have the right attitude is to grapple with those good values as prevalent in the traditional African society.

This work tries to make a case for the utilization of traditional system of communication side by side with contemporary system of communication. This is because African traditional system of communication can be instrumental in the mobilization of the people at the grass root level for community development, mainly because the custodians of the culture of traditional society (‘newswo(men’) are considered credible by majority of the rural and urban poor. The Malimba traditional system of communication is people-oriented and not competitive. The traditional forms of communication were embedded in phatic function, which western European imperialism dramatically transformed the phatic function in favour of conative function. And since the western contemporary model of communication did not only change the paradigm and

practices of communication system in African communities, it has also succeeded in building the current permanent gap between the down-trodden rural and urban masses and the small ruling African elite. Information and education are key sectors that aid Sierra Leone's overall development. It is therefore imperative that people in the developing countries and their development partners understand the dynamics among communication, culture and technology in their countries if they are truly interested in the growth and development of these countries. It is pertinent for the ruling elite of developing countries and their developing partners, the World Bank, IMF and UNESCO to truly understand a country like Sierra Leone before they begin to implement their 'development policies'. It is essential to know which forms of communication to utilize in order to assist Sierra Leoneans in disseminating their messages concerning health care, labour, education and agriculture in the country. This work argues that indigenous forms of communication like storytelling, theatre, music, dancing, singing, proverbs, riddles and poetry are effective ways of educating and socializing, hence they need to be developed, studied in (formal and informal) educational institutions at all levels and they should coexist with ICT.

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