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BEYOND CULTURAL IDENTITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW BREED OF PEOPLE IN THE GAMBIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the emergence of a new breed of people in The Gambia; occasioned by the admixture of Western and Arabic values via Christianity and Islamic. As a result, a new type of people whose orientation, perceptions, outlook and view of the world profoundly transcends her indigenous culture is developing in The Gambia from the complex of social and educational interactions of the time. Essentially, it defines a people whose horizons extend significantly beyond their own cultural milieu. The paper adopted descriptive, analytic model and content analysis to drive home its points and relied mainly on syncretism, liberalism and religion to prove the effects of Western civilization and Arab influence on The Gambia. The findings of this paper shows that The Gambian people have imbibed new kind of culture and values that transcend their ancestral- giving cultures and now, a people who are socially and psychologically a product of the interweaving of cultures in this twentieth first century. The central argument of this study is that, although, a larger percentage of the indigenous Gambian peoples are converts to Christianity and Islam respectively, however, it is still the indigenous beliefs and values which, mainly, serve as the mediation for their religious and cultural expressions. The article concluded that the trend of cultural westernisation and arabization of The Gambia has become very pervasive and deeply ingrained, such that Western civilisation and Arab culture have taken precedence over Gambian values and culture and the latter is regarded as inferior to the former. This has led to a cultural dualism that often presents itself as a real dilemma in concrete, real-life situations and this is tellingly so when one examines the socio-economic life styles of Gambians.

Key words: Culture, traditions, Christianity, Islam, Religion, The Gambia.

Introduction

The course of Christianity, Islam and the adoption of western values and the warm embrace of Arabic culture have greatly impacted on the traditional and social lives of The Gambian people. These foreign elements have replaced their traditional (indigenous) belief systems and ways of life. Yet, the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural values have served not only as the mark of expressions for both indigenous Christians and Muslims in the country; but have also reshaped to a large extent, the forms of Christianity and Islam that are practiced and professed, as well as the relationship between members

of the two religious' groups. In turn, the introduction of these foreign religions and western modernity and 'arabization' through western and Islamic education has led to the emergence of new breed of people in the country, whose orientation, mentality and outlook have totally changed from what it used to be.

Moreover, the contemporary integration, interdependence and acculturation of The Gambians through exposure to other external influences like responsible tourism and travelling overseas have also detached them from their indigenous and filial culture. In the main, it seems that a new breed of people whose outlook, orientation and

views of the world greatly transcend his or her indigenous culture is developing from the complex of social, educational and religious interactions of their contemporary time.

In this paper, an attempt is made to examine the loss of cultural identity in The Gambia occasioned by mainly, the impact of these two foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) on the traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices with their underlying variable in bringing about the emergence of new breed of people in The Gambia and the impact of the emergence of a new breed of people in the country. It also tries to interrogate how modernism within the indigenous context and tourism have influenced the lives of The Gambians. Moreover, it tries to explain how the advent of western education assisted in producing an entirely new breed of people who are partly westernized and arabized in outlook and perception.

The study adopts a qualitative approach which allows for the use of selected cases to explore a social phenomenon of interest based on the researcher's curiosity (Yin, 1994). A case study is intended to describe, understand and explain a research phenomenon. In this sense, one of the contributions of this research lies in its role of, "awakening, resuscitating and rescuing the memory" of the indigenous peoples of The Gambia, who are advertently and inadvertently losing their identity. This effort becomes more relevant as the potentials for losing this important aspect of the peoples' identity increases, with the older generation passing on from this life and the reality of the emergence of a new breed of people in The Gambia becoming obvious.

This paper argues that the religiously-motivated alienation of The Gambian minds, which played a major role in the identity crisis, corruption of indigenous culture, and syncretism of culture in the country makes the possibility of a true Gambian identity uncertain. The central argument of this study is that, although, a larger percentage of the indigenous Gambian peoples are converts to Christianity and Islam respectively, however, it is still the indigenous beliefs and values which, mainly,

serve as the mediation for their religious and cultural expressions. The authors further argue that through today's world of development and globalization, The Gambian native people have aligned themselves with the mix of foreign and traditional values which have produced new set of beings.

The Loss of Cultural Identity in The Gambia

The culture of a people is their identity as it affords them due recognition. It is their underlying distinguishing factor from other peoples and cultures. In fact, all societies across the globe have various and divergent cultures which they cherish and practice. Nevertheless, no two cultures, when juxtaposed are absolutely identical as attested to by ethnographers. In order for a society to operate functionally and effectively, they must ensure and maintain strict and constant adherence to the various components of their culture. However, despite the attractions and trappings of culture, Gambians have lost their cultural identity.

Cultural erosion defines the process of a civilization, group or nation-state losing its core elements—often because of new elements taking their place. This phenomenon occurs in the world of work when new procedures, processes, values, norms, and goals are introduced, which replace or enhance existing one. Over time we have seen that the old Gambian traditions are gradually fading away as they adopt western traditions and Islamic traditions and slowly conform to western influence and identity. This continues to occur as the days go by. The western culture has influenced the Gambian culture in different domains. For instance; it has led to loss of native languages and loss of tribal lifestyles.

The concept of cultural identity may be used in two different ways. It could be referred to as the collective self-awareness that a given group of people embodies and reflects in a given polity. This is the most dominant term used to describe the concept. Generally, writes Bochner (1973), "the cultural' identity of a society is defined by its majority group and this group is usually quite distinguishable from the minority sub-groups with whom they share the physical environment and the territory that

they inhabit.” With group as the underlying word, the concept is similar to the notion of a sum total of national or social character which describes a set of behaviour that members of a given community share with one another within and beyond their individual differences. Most often than not these traits or set of behaviours last for a relative long time, thereby becoming part and parcel of that society. Such traits almost always include aggregation of values, norms and attitudes towards life, death, birth, family, marriage, ceremonies, children, God, nature etc. Used in its collective sense, the concept of cultural identity includes typologies of cultural behaviour, such behaviours being the appropriate and inappropriate ways of meeting basic needs and solving life’s essential dilemmas. Used in its collective sense, the concept of cultural identity integrates the shared premises, values, definitions, and beliefs and the day-to-day, patterning of activities, consciously and or unconsciously.

The second, but more specific use of the concept, cultural identity, revolves around the identity of the individual in relation to his or her culture. Cultural identity is used in the sense that it is an operational aspect of individual personality and a fundamental symbol of a person’s existence. But it is in reference to the group (earlier mentioned) that the concept will be used in this paper. In the writing of Erikson (1959), he identifies a rudimentary form of psychic organization which develops in successive psychosexual phases throughout life. Erikson, who focused the greater portion of his analytic studies on identity conflicts, recognized the anchoring of the ego in a larger cultural context. Identity, he suggested, takes a variety of forms in the individual. According to him “it refers to a conscious sense of individual identity: at another to an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character: at a third, as a criterion for the silent doings of ego synthesis: and, finally, as a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group’s ideals and identity.” Erikson’s analytical perspective is only one of a diversity of definitions. Most often than not, though, the concept of identity is meant to imply a lucid sense of self that depends mainly on a steadiness of morals and a sense of wholeness and incorporation.

The most pertinent question is how did Gambians lose their cultural identity? Of course, the answer is not far-fetched. The loss of cultural identity is traceable to the coming of Christianity, Islam, colonialism, modernism and also through European tourists’ infiltration into the country. As soon as Christianity and Islam made an inroad in The Gambia, most of the indigenous people became transformed. With this, western values, Christian doctrines, Arabic culture and language replaced Gambian culture, traditions, norms and values. However, the Africanization of the Islamic religion made its acceptance faster and possible. The outcome was a hybrid of Western and Islamic culture with the Gambian culture, which alienated its indigenous people.

Islam has long been known as a religion of great synthesis that has interacted with local cultures; enriching them and as well as been enriched. Indeed, Islamic faith has the capacity to win over and assimilate ethnic elements of the most diverse origins, fusing them into a single cultural and religious community. This framework involves the theories of acculturation, enculturation and inculturation. The ‘*Africanization*’ of Islam has made its acceptance possible. Although, the two religions have had some frictions such as through the *Jihad*, which took away political power from some of the indigenous people, yet they have generally co-existed as some African chiefs either became Muslims or African Muslim have become chiefs and even sometimes made Islam a state religion, though unofficially. It can be adduced here that Islam and Gambian traditions have been friends and not foes. In fact, there has been such a deep mix that one at times finds it difficult, if not impossible to distinguish between the Islamic religious prerogatives and what is traditional to the Gambian people. Islam has little-by-little substituted The Gambian traditional values and values with Arab culture and values.

Although, a handful of Gambians, mostly from Aku (Creole) ethnic extraction accepted Christianity, it however played a significant role in diminishing Gambian cultural practices through the introduction of Western education. Christian Missionaries who were harbingers of western civilization and culture played

significant roles in diminishing and devaluing Gambian /African cultural identity. This, they did through condemning Gambian culture and values and replacing them with their own cultural values which were at variance and at cross purposes with theirs. Christian Missionaries started arriving in The Gambia in the 19th century, after explorers ventured into the interior of the country; thereby paving the way for them. Missionaries opened churches and schools, gradually spreading their religion, languages and literacy at the detriment of the native people formal and informal traditional education system. The outcome was a change from traditional values to western orientation.

Colonialism also played a significant role in the transformation of The Gambian people. For over 100 years The Gambia was coerced into foreign or European rule. As colonialism was imposed against the will of the people it changed the face of the traditional society. For instance, exploitative trade system increased, thereby bringing the indigenous people closer to the white man. As a result, the colonists' language and culture were imposed on The Gambian peoples so much so that it became the official language of their official expression. The Gambian culture therefore became a hybrid of local and foreign influences, with a new class of beneficiaries. Cities and towns grew, and a new urban class became distinct from their pastoral and filial ancestors. Gambians, very much joined the 'modern world' in many ways, though very much in its own peculiar ways.

Colonialism disrupted not only the political organization and economic production of the many Gambian political entities; it also brought forms of cultural alienation, invasion, and disorientation. Consequently, Gambian culture was destroyed, undervalued, undermined, and distorted. It disrupted not only the political organization and economic production of the many Gambian political entities, it also brought forms of cultural alienation, invasion, and disorientation. In this way, the country's culture was destroyed, undervalued, undermined, and distorted.

Tourists' infiltration into The Gambia greatly assisted in playing down on the cultural heritage of the people of the country. Being a cultural melting port and tourists' hub of many European and American countries, they bowed down to foreign cultures and norms. What we see today in The Gambia is a mix of Gambian and western values and culture. Indigenous peoples of The Gambia are paying a high price for tourism. In their drive to benefit from the offers of tourism, it has overwhelmed their lives and changed their life styles; mode of dressing, cuisines, western accent of speaking English language, inter marriages between Gambians and white men and women, keeping of dreadlocks, craze for western oriented products etc. On the basis of the infiltration of these foreign elements, undoubtedly the much-cherished African cultures as represented in The Gambia had gradually faded and disappearing with each passing day. The Gambian society has been made more vulnerable by tourism, migration, and other global activities. These have made most Gambian youths to see nothing good in the country, hence their avowed and massive influx to Europe in search of greener pastures. The outcome has been that most Gambian youth have died (drowned) on the high seas in their bid to reach the Eldorado - Europe (the fabled heaven on earth).

The ease and frequency with which people move around the world, and improvements in communications and the global marketing of styles, places and images lead to a cultural supermarket effect. People are no longer confined to developing identity based upon the place in which they live, but can choose from a wide range of different identities. They now adopt clothes, ways of speaking, values, and lifestyles of any group of their choice. Adherence to the pristine purity and unadulterated cultural traits, values and virtues of peoples and places are not the same. It is rapidly constant in the urban setups, while the plague of cultural values erosion is somewhat vehemently resisted, and the values consciously internalized in purely rural areas. However, this does not suggest that there are no communities that are paired by urbanism and ruralism.

Basic institutions perform function for the society; thus, these basic institutions are dynamic and adaptive to changes. It should be noted that the environment of social structure requires certain amount of persistence in some of their features in order to perform that expected function. But observations portray that society and indeed components of social structure change continuously though often imperceptibly. Social change could either bring about progress for the members of a society or visit them with retrogression. As human beings collectively adapt themselves to their environment, they bring about changes to their ways of life. The socio-political and economic interactions of most Gambians outside of their country have exposed them to multifarious cultures, which in turn have seen them behaviour in ways that are foreign and alienated.

Cultural loss is described as a loss of a person's culture, usually due to a change in environment. Such a change may be due to immigration and exposure to other cultures other than theirs. When an individual attempts to merge many different cultures into one, the individual ends up with no culture at all. In this regard, the three main causes of the loss of cultural identity in The Gambia are immigration, industrialization, and globalization. When people migrate to a new country, they often have to assimilate to the new culture. They strive to fit in to the host culture, and then they start to lose their own culture. Most Gambians travel abroad to the United States, United Kingdom and other Western countries and on return exhibit Whiteman's culture, which they believe is superior to theirs. The Gambian overseas returnees are aptly described as 'Semesters' due to the fact that they exhibit Western - life styles. This can be reflected in their consumption patterns and culture evolving over time in the livelihoods of the people. Not surprisingly, therefore, the poorest countries are faced with great difficulties in upholding their cultural identities as their heritage has so far been undermined by the western cultural identity.

Although it could be disputed here that western values are superior to non-western values because no culture is superior to another. However, it is a known fact that their creativity, disciplined political leadership and strong democratic institutions contributed significantly to their

development. Therefore, no culture is superior to another culture development wise. What matters most is the ability of the people of any nation-state to transform their culture to trigger off development in order to meet their immediate and future needs. But that is not to say that the developing countries did not contribute to such development.

As regards to loss of identity, globalization has contributed to the alienation of individuals from their traditions. Identity here is all about cultural identity; what distinguishes one culture from another. It can be seen as the traits, characteristics, qualities, beliefs that make a group stand out among many. Ogugua 2007 in Ogugua & Oduah (2007: p. 5) submitted that "culture is a mark of identity; it separates man from the animals and at the same time divides societies ... globalization distorts cultures, changing people's pattern of dressing, talking, and even cuisines etc."

Capturing this was Dukor who poignantly asserted that, "... in globalization, the identity of minority ethnic groups among nations is as important as the identity question of races among races ... In a globalized world, ethnic identity is mostly one unique element that is usually under threat and The Gambia under study is not an exception.

This article does not present globalization as monstrous. Rather, we wanted to point out that globalization, which ideally is meant to give people options and ideas to update their culture, has turned to be the fall of many cultures. This is because of the inequality in power structure among the global players. A country like The Gambia and other African countries now found themselves at the receiving end, where they are forced to join "them" since they cannot beat "them". The situation is worsened by the quantity of foreign cultural products consumed by the people; thereby further weakening their resolve sending the original cultures of the people into oblivion and extinction.

Considering the above-reviewed literature on the seeable reasons why The Gambia lost its cultural values and identity, it is pertinent to point out that the major cultural

challenge for the African religion has been that of conflict arising from living in the interface of religious culture which has been identified as heavily influenced by Western and Arab cultures and his/her African worldview. In this regard, the African religious encounters the dilemmas of allowing his/her cultural values to be dominated, leading to struggles and compromises as she faces the challenge of losing her cultural identity. This kind of conflict calls for attention of religious leaders towards making inculturation a reality for religious life as lived in Africa. The adoption of Western and Arabian values hook line and sinker has been the bane of indigenous African cultures.

We have seen how over time Gambians have lost their cultural identity and heritage advertently and inadvertently through the infiltration of alien culture and traditions occasioned by the established of Christianity, Islam and modernity which they adopted hook line and sinker. This loss of cultural identity has much impact on The Gambian people which have continued to resonate, even in the present. It is tellingly so when examines the trajectory of their aggregate positive behaviour towards anything western.

The Impact of the loss of Cultural Identity in The Gambia

No doubt, the loss of cultural identity in The Gambia has far-reaching effects on the country. This paper has found out in the course of this research that Christianity with its associated Western values and Islam with Arab influence have put many Gambians in conflicting situation over what constitutes their real cultural identity. This was because since many of them were led to believe that their culture was inferior to that of the Europeans and the Arabs, they abandoned their culture to assume foreign cultures. The result was the Gambian who is neither wholly indigenous nor totally foreign. He is now a split personality and a hybrid.

The loss of cultural identity in The Gambia has led to acculturation. Acculturation is the coming into contact of different cultures. It is the process by which cultural

elements pass over from one culture to another and which gives rise to new cultural traits in the cultures that meet. The coming into contact of European and Arab cultural values with traditional Gambian cultures during the evangelization era, for example, had led to the emergence of new cultural behaviour in The Gambia. Acculturation, or cultural pluralism, cultivates a global vision without losing sight of local differences or complexities. It holds that global thought and local action as well as local thought and global action can be harmonized giving rise to the local assimilation of global trends (Madison, 1998a:75). Acculturation is further interpreted to mean inter-cultural association or cross-cultural penetration. It is a marriage of distinct cultures. Proponents of acculturation see it as an elixir for global peace and unity, since it is capable of “leveling cultural differences” (Madison, 1998b:63).

While traditional Gambian cultures, for instance, emphasize such values as communalism (being brother's keeper), the dignity of the human person, respect for elders, hospitality and brotherly love, Gambians are being made to come into strong confrontation with values that are in conflict with their own way of lives. That is why Gambia is now being cajoled and blackmailed by the countries of Europe and other foreign cultures kicking against gay or same sex marriage, which many Gambians consider abnormality.

Nevertheless, today, the Gambian is a different person. He is made to appreciate and imbibe the values and norms of the European and Arabs - his individualism, moral depravity and cut-throat competition in business and many other cultural positions introduced by Westerners. The posting of pictures of half-clad women on the social media, in newspapers, and on television screens, has led to an increase in social vices such as prostitution, rape, cultism, ritual killings etc. These have created conflicting situations, which trespasses on cultures undermining acculturation and human relations.

Today many Gambians who claim to profess Christianity and Islam also resort to some traditional methods of worship and consultations. While some of them may

attend Church and Mosque services on Sunday and Friday respectively, they will go in the night, or send their relations, to consult with native doctors or oracles to know their fate, fortune or misfortune on issues. For instances, many Gambians wear amulets or charms for their spiritual protection from evil.

With The Gambia subjugated and dominated, the Western culture and European mode of civilisation began to thrive and outgrow the country's cultural heritage. Traditional Gambian cultural practices paved the way for foreign way of doing things as Gambians became fully 'westernised' and 'Arabized'. Western culture now is regarded as frontline civilisation and pace setter. Gambian ways of doing things became primitive, archaic primordial and regrettably unacceptable in public domain. Not only were certain aspects of the material culture in The Gambia lost or destroyed, the country also lost the power and sense of cultural continuity, such that it became practically impossible to recover the ability to strive for cultural progress on their own term.

Undoubtedly, the loss of cultural identity has impacted on The Gambian people. A new breed of people in The Gambia whose orientations and perceptions of the world greatly transcends his or her indigenous culture is developing from the complex of social, political, economic, and educational interactions of our contemporary time. Various conceptions have been used to describe a white-washed Gambian man. He is "international," "transcultural," "multicultural or intercultural" individuals have each been used with varying degrees of explanations. Basically, they define someone whose horizon extends profoundly beyond his or her own culture. An international person, for instance, has aptly been defined as a person who trusts other nations, is willing to cooperate with other countries, perceives international agencies as potential deterrents to war, and who considers international tensions reducible by mediation (Lutzker, 1960).

Traditional methods of worship and consultations. To live on the edge of Christianity, Islam and modernism have produced a multicultural person in The Gambia.

Most Gambians outlook and views to traditional issues have changed drastically. Christianity, Islam and traditional religions have become syncretic. Once Islam has established its control in West Africa, they sought to reinforce the 'local' as opposed to the global identity of Islam that was encouraged by pilgrimage. They encouraged a local pilgrimage, tomb 'or ceremony, or facilitated the *ziara* or collection tour of a well-known cleric. This fitted, of course within the conception of "*Islam noir*, or *Islam maure*." Many Africans have not abandoned their traditional shrines in favour of Islam or Christianity. In fact, they keep both. As an example, many Gambian Christians and Muslims wear local amulets and charms, pour libations, perform sacrifices at road junctions to appease their gods and goddesses, and, at the same time, attend mosques and churches on Fridays and Sundays respectively. This brings to mind the concept of syncretism; Syncretism is actually a component of the paraphernalia of responses to transformation.

To many Gambians, Christianity, Islam and traditional religions are in a symbiotic relationship where each benefits the other. It is argued that the Africanization of Islam has made its acceptance possible by African traditional worshippers. For example, Islam, just like African traditional religion permits the marriage of many wives. Suffice me to add here even though, that, most educated Gambians (both men and women) prefer marrying only one wife. This may be obviously due to economic hard times and social exposures.

The introduction of the two foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) had led to the loss of traditional languages. Many Gambians today speak both the English and Arab language, especially in the urban areas. Gambians are sentenced through foreign languages in his own country by a foreigner who does not see the indigenous language as befitting to be used in public life. From this period onwards, the necessity to learn and master the English language became so pressing that the indigenous languages began to suffer neglect. This situation impacted negatively on the identity of the citizens, up to the present generation. Even now, for example many Gambians would rather have their children learn English

to the detriment of their own indigenous languages. Moreso, when The Gambia itself has English as its national / official language. It has been insinuated that in the near future, most native languages spoken in The Gambia will go into extinction, thereby becoming endangered languages. This is what Mbaefo aptly refers to as the “Cruellest legacy... that brought a confused sense of identity”. The African assumes a dual personality and that is why July says that the modern African is a product of “uneasy union of two alien civilizations”

At this point it is pertinent to point out that Christianity and Islam also coexist with each other peacefully in The Gambia. Many Christians and Muslims in the country describe members of the other faith as tolerant and honest. In the country there is relatively no evidence of widespread anti-Muslim or anti-Christian hostility, and on the whole, they give their governments’ high marks for treating both religious groups fairly. This may be relatively due to in-breeding (inter-marriage among relations) and also Gambians inter-marry across religious lines.

The interaction between religion, culture, and dress is fascinating. Dress can be a window into the social world, which is bound by a tacit set of rules, customs, conventions, and rituals that guide face-to-face interaction. To many religious organizations, clothing is an important symbol of religious identification. The ambivalence mentioned above is a characteristic of the modern Gambian person as he is caught between the webs of the two worlds: The traditional and the modern. In other words: between a rock and a hard place. For instance, one has only to look at the way people dress in the streets of towns and cities like Banjul, Serekunda etc. where some wear traditional Gambians garbs and *boubous* while others wear western jeans, suits, coats and ties (even amidst hot and sunny weather) and others still wear oriental *djellabous* and veils for women. Both individual and group identity is projected through dress because people use self-presentation and self-promotion to visually present identity that is congruent with their belief systems in the country.

The main challenge and the current debate bear on the modernization process of Quranic Schools, the *daara*. The main disadvantage of this type of school is that the child learns only Arabic and the Islamic religious tenets, hence a theological orientation given to the educational system. Thus, it is difficult for children who go exclusively to Quranic School to fit into the demanding modern world because they are not equipped with the necessary and adequate tools such as the command of modern languages like English for instance, as well as the mastery of relevant subjects such as mathematics, geography. History, physics, chemistry, biology, agricultural science, government, computer science, etc. It short, the aim of modernizing the *daara* is to have a type of school that is grounded in Islamic values yet open to the modern world.

In their article bearing on the concept of syncretism, Stewart and Shaw posit that “syncretism is very slippery, but it is precisely its capacity to contain paradox, contradiction and polyphony which makes syncretism such a powerful symbolic process.” The process of syncretism is a two-pronged concept: First, we have the religious sphere; in effect, the process here entails the mixing of elements hailing from the old African traditions, on the one hand, and the Islamic tenets, on the other. As an example, one has the wearing of charms. These amulets are meant to ward off evil, attract luck, protect the person against the evil eye and tongue, etc. Properly speaking, we are in the realm of the pathology in which case, when one strongly believes in a phenomenon, the latter is bound to happen, even if it is a coincidence or a case of pure happen stance. Very often, charms contain Quranic verses written in Arabic on a piece of paper and, then sewn in a leather pouch. At other times, the charms and amulets are strictly traditional as they may contain animal body parts, cowry shells, bird feathers, dried cola nuts, etc. Yet it goes without saying that these traditional elements have nothing whatsoever to do with the Quran; yet people manage to have both coexisted in a harmonious fashion. This is sort of the Africanization of Islam, which made its adoption possible.

Another impact of religious syncretism relates to names for many people have both Christian/Muslim and African names like Lamin Stephens or James Mohammed) or Christian/Western and African names Philip Gassama, Rose Ceesay etc. Examples of syncretism can also be found in the linguistic realm with code-switching whereby a speaker in an occasion goes from English to Wolof and Wolof to English respectively; thus, the speaker alternates Wolof and English sentences. In our contemporary Gambian society, most English lexicon found expression in Wolof language. It is common to notice that most educated Gambians cannot speak English without mixing it with Wolof (local language spoken in The Gambia) and vice versa. In the music industry there is a noticeable mix of traditional music, for example 'Ndaga' in Wolof language, hip- up and or disco. Although, at traditional ceremonies both local and English music are played to grace occasions but it has been observed that Gambian youths prefer western styled music to local ones. The danger of this dislike for traditional music is that in the near future it may go into extinction and this is a cause for concern.

Conclusion

This paper has examined contemporary Gambian society where an adopted and adapted form of Islamic education co-existed alongside western model of education and traditionalism. In the process, one notices a paradigm

shift, to the extent that a new breed of people has emerged in the country. This new breed of people is neither truly religious nor totally secular; applying traditionalism whenever it serves their purposes and interest. Therefore, in the presence of western and Arab values and ideologies. The strength of Islamic practices, the survival of Gambian traditional beliefs, norms and values, new forms of thought, outlook and modes of being are being threatened. This new breed of people is not consciously aware that they are now unmarked white washed beings; who have lost touch with their original, unique cultural and filial identity. This changing identity therefore necessarily brings forth the advent of new forms of representations, of identities and of new modes of being. The changes brought on in our time have invoked revitalized needs for the preservation of collective, cultural identities. The author argues in this study that although, a good number of native Gambian people were converts to foreign religions (Christianity and Islam alike), however, it is still the traditional beliefs and values which, mainly, serve as the mediation for their religious and cultural expressions. The author submits herein that today's world of development and globalization; The Gambian native people have aligned themselves with a mix of foreign and traditional values which have produced a new set of beings in the country. The authors finally submit that the rediscovery of Gambian identity is pertinent and paramount for a holistic emancipation of the country.

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