The Impact of Mass Media on the Posterity of African Cultures: A Mozambican Case Study

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Key Terms: *impact, mass media, posterity, Africa, Mozambique, culture.*

Abstract

Culture is a central aspect of any human society. Once affected, positively or otherwise, the society's way of living changes. Like other Southern African cultures, Mozambican culture is facing a new set of challenges, coupled with classic hindrances as it joins the global community. One of these challenges is the uncertain trajectory of mass media, particularly television, which has both positive and negative impacts on culture. This paper constitutes a philosophical examination of the impact of mass media on African cultures and adopts Mozambique as a case study. I was intrigued by this subject given the dramatic changes in the Mozambican culture as the tide of globalization in terms of mass media sweeps across the country. My philosophical argument is that for Mozambican culture to thrive these challenges must be discussed, addressed and mitigated against. Otherwise, the Mozambican culture will soon become history to its own people. The key conclusion from the paper is that the future of Mozambican culture, and by extension African cultures, will ultimately reside in its ability to address a number of theoretical, political and socio-cultural questions which confront the present and the next generation. To this end, a

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framework is presented for studying socio-cultural issues that impact on how knowledge, ideas and values should be transmitted and developed from one generation to another for the good and posterity of the African cultures.

Introduction

Africa has a heterogeneous society that offers many opportunities for cross-cultural research. Whilst authors on culture and mass media generally agree that people are identified by their cultures and that mass media affect culture in one way or another, there is patchy literature by Africans and Mozambican authors in particular, on the impact of mass media on African cultures. In the light of this observation, it is apparent that there is need for comprehensive research on Africa in this twilight zone especially in Mozambique where mass media is having a dramatic effect on culture.

Mozambican culture is communal rather than individualistic; traditionally, it is focused on relationships rather than being task oriented like the European culture. When asking for directions or upon meeting someone, it is polite to first greet the person and ask how they are doing and then go about business. Personal boundaries are practically non-existent. However due to mass media, acculturation is fast gaining ground. Culture in Mozambique thus is taking a new direction.

The impact of mass media on Mozambican culture however varies from province to province. Whilst culture and traditional ways of life are still well preserved from the central to the northern provinces of the country, the opposite is true in the southern provinces and in towns and cities. The Makonde people, from Cabo Delgado Province in the north-east, for example, are known for their traditional fearlessness and initiation rituals. They are also accomplished craftsmen, producing fine hardwood mainly mahogany, ebony or ironwood-and ivory carvings which often depict the stories of earlier generations. Music is also part

of the Mozambican culture and is very important to the Niassa people who live in the sparsely populated north-western region. The agility of the Nhau dancers of Tete Province is much admired. To the sound of resounding drum beats, they dance holding huge and frightening wooden masks. For the Chopi people of Inhambane Province (in the Central), the '*timbila*' is both the name of a local xylophone and a wonderful dance. They also play '*mbira*', made of strips of metal attached to a hollow box and plucked with the fingers. Besides, visual art is also important in the Mozambican culture. The Macua women, from Nampula Province are known for their art and craftsmanship. They paint their faces with '*muciro*', a white, root extract. They also make straw baskets, mats and sculptures from ebony and clay. The traditional, spicy cooking of Zambezia is highly regarded. Zambezia chicken, grilled with palm oil, is a particular delicacy. All this is a testimony that the traditional culture of Mozambique as is still preserved in central and northern regions is rich and admirable.

Nevertheless, mass media and acculturation have resulted in most of the elements of the Mozambican culture and traditional ways of life fast disappearing. In towns and cities as with the southern provinces, the impact of mass media and cultural diffusion is more visible than in the countryside and other provinces. This paper examines the impact of mass media, particularly television, on the Mozambican culture. More importantly, the paper argues that though mass media has some positive impact on development, it has to be used with care and caution. This argument is borne from the observation that the impact of mass media in any culture is critical and will substantively affect the future in ways too numerous to mention. In this light, the paper philosophizes that in the face of mass media the future of Mozambican culture will only reside in its ability to address a number of theoretical, political and socio-cultural questions which confront the present and the next generation. Put differently, for Mozambican culture to thrive the issue of mass media must be discussed, addressed and mitigated against. Otherwise, Mozambican

culture is threatened and consequently facing a 'slow death'. One day it might disappear the dinosaurs' way if no immediate action is taken.

Understanding Culture and Mass Media

The terms culture and mass media do not always mean the same thing to everybody. For reasons of clarity and precision, the terms shall be discussed separately.

Culture

Culture derives from the Latin word *cultura* stemming from *colere* meaning 'to cultivate' (Bastian, 2009). However, the concept and definition of culture have been well documented in the literature, and scholars have provided a number of interpretations to the term. The complexity of coming up with a universally agreed definition of culture is predicted by the fact that social problems differ from society to society and this tend to define the role that culture has to play in society as well as the expectations of society on how and to what extent culture should help solving economic and socio-political problems. Yet the absence of a specific and widely agreed definition makes culture vulnerable to confliction interpretation by scholars. This has led Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) to compile a list of 164 definitions of culture. Since then, several authors have formulated a broad definition for culture describing it with different terms such as basic assumptions, feelings, values, behavior, and so forth (Benedict, 1959; Sapir, 1991; Hall, 1992; Schein, 1992; Trampenaars, 1994). Benedict (1959), for instance, defines culture as the canons of choice. Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (1961) introduce the concept of value orientations to explain the phenomenon of culture. Sapir (1977) suggests that culture is a silent language because different cultures present dissimilar perceptions about time, space, ownership, friendship and agreements. And, for Schein(1992:97), culture is a pattern of shared assumptions that a group of people learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be

considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and fell in relation to those problems. Trompenaars (1994) proposes that culture directs people's actions. He observes that culture is man-made, confirmed by others, conventionalized and passed on for younger people or new comers to learn (ibid). This connotes that for Trompenaars culture provides people with a meaningful context in which to meet, to think about themselves and to face the outer world. Van der Walt holds almost a similar understanding of culture. For him (1997:8), 'culture is not only something alive'. It is rich and complex as it includes habits, customs and social organization, technology, language, norms, values, beliefs and much more. However, though the concept of culture has been interpreted differently throughout history, as has been shown in this study, what cuts across a number of definitions that scholars have provided on the concept is the general belief that the concept is most commonly used in three basic senses:

1) An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning.

2) The shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group.

3) Excellence of taste in the fine arts and humanities, also known as high culture.

The precise definition of culture is elusive. The three basic senses seem to be captured in different definitions of culture discussed in the preceding paragraphs. In view of the three senses and for purposes of this work, culture shall be understood as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs, behavior, values, attitudes, goals and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group of people. The fundamental idea of culture thus is that it reflects both the

social imperatives and the social consequences of human behavior (in a given society) in their conduct with others.

Mass Media
Until recently, mass media was clearly defined as 'any medium used to transmit mass communication comprising of the eight mass media industries; books, newspapers, magazines, recordings, radio, movies, television and the Internet' (Lane, 2007). It has been understood as the transmission and reception of 'messages' on a very large scale. However, the term mass media is no longer easy to define due to constant creation of new digital communication technology that is now abundant. Historically, the term mass media was coined in the 1920s with the advent of nationwide radio networks, mass-circulation newspapers and magazines (Bastian, 2009). It should be noted however that some forms of mass media such as drama, books and manuscripts had already been in the use centuries before. The term denotes 'a section of the media specifically designed to reach a very large audience such as the population of a nation state' (ibid). This now includes mobile phones and the eight media industries mentioned above.

The term public media has a similar meaning: 'it is the sum of the public mass distributors of news and entertainment across media such as newspapers, television, radio and broadcasting' (ibid). The purposes of mass media include advocacy (advertising, marketing, propaganda, public relation and political communication), entertainment (music, acting, sports, reading, video, computer games) and public service announcements. There are a rich theoretical discussions on the subject of mass media, and I will not engage this voluminous literature; instead, l will illuminate the benefits and challenges posed by television media vis-à-vis the current and future of Mozambican culture. Thus for purposes of this work, the term mass media shall be used to refer to television mass media industry. This is because the impact of television on Mozambican culture is greater than any other mass media industry existing in the country so far.

Background to the Mozambican Culture

Mozambican culture is one of the oldest cultures in Africa yet it is so diverse as to be impossible to pin down and define. This is because the South, Central and the Northern regions have their own distinct cultures and every ethnic group have carved its own cultural niche. However, there are some cultural elements that were traditionally respected and valued across all dialectical groups in the country. These elements together with the shared history of colonization and the following struggle for independence from the Portuguese are a common thread that bound Mozambicans as a people with a common identity. Even today, culture and its preservation matters a great deal to Mozambicans, at least in rhetoric. The government of Mozambique with the initiative of UNESCO has even formulated a 'Cultural Policy' which lays as its objectives protection and preservation of cultural heritage of the country, inculcating Mozambican art consciousness amongst Mozambicans and promoting high standards in creative and performing arts.

Unfortunately, the advent of mass media has made the cultural policy largely redundant as traditional forms of arts seem to have virtually disappeared or rather on the slow death. Traditionally, Mozambican culture is not only limited to material manifestations such as monuments and objects that were preserved over time. It also includes living expressions and the traditions; intangible heritage that Mozambican communities have inherited from their ancestors and transmit to their descendants, in most cases orally.

In terms of tangible heritage, clothing is one important aspect of the Mozambican culture. Traditionally the Mozambican women are decently dressed in long clothes that hide knees inside. Married women normally cover their hair and wore wrapping clothes on top of the long dress. Likewise, men are dressed in long trousers and shirts which cover almost all body parts. Visual art is another key aspect of the Mozambican culture. The Macua women, from the north-eastern Nampula Province are known for their art and craftsmanship in straw

baskets, mats and sculptures from ebony and clay. The traditional, spicy cooking of Zambezia is highly regarded. Zambezia chicken, grilled with palm oil, is a particular delicacy. The Island of Mozambique and Mozambique museum are other significant tangible cultural features of the country.

Mozambique also traditionally regards its intangible heritage as a matter of active concern. The Chopi's *Timbila*, a traditional musical expression, for example, was declared a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of humanity in Mozambique in 2005 (UNESCO Report, 2005). The *Makonde,* from Cabo Delgado Province in the north-east, for example, are known for their fearlessness and initiation rituals. The *Makonde* are also accomplished craftsmen, producing fine hardwood mainly mahogany, ebony or ironwood-and ivory carvings which often depict the stories of earlier generations. Music is also part of the Mozambican culture and is very important to the Niassa people who live in the sparsely populated north-western region. The agility of the *Nhau* dancers of Tete Province is much admired. To the sound of resounding drum beats, they dance holding huge and frightening wooden masks.

The other important aspect of Mozambican culture is language. As given by the German romanticists of the 19th century such as Herder, Wondt and Humbolt, language is not just acting as one cultural trait among many but rather as the direct expression of a people's national character and as such as culture in a kind of condensed form. Herder (1744-1803), for example, suggests, 'since every people is a People, it has its own national culture expressed through its own language'. In the same line of thought, Franz Boas (1920) argues 'the fact that intellectual culture of a people is largely constructed, shared and maintained through the use of language means it is unimaginable to study the culture of a foreign people without also becoming acquainted with their language'. In Mozambique, the official language is Portuguese but each ethnic group has its own vernacular language that defines it as a group. Another important part of the Mozambican culture is its focus on

relationships rather than being task oriented like the European culture. When asking for directions or upon meeting someone, it is polite to first greet the person and ask how they are doing and then go about business. Personal boundaries are practically non-existent. In fact, the traditional life of Mozambicans is communal rather than individualistic.

Mass Media and How It Has Impacted the Mozambican Culture
It is beyond question that media plays many different and possibly incompatible roles. For the audiences, it is a source of entertainment and information while for media workers media is an industry that offers jobs and therefore income, prestige and professional identity. For the owners, media is not only a source of profit but a source of power. For society at large, the media can be a way to transmit information and values. Thus depending on whose perspective and which role we focus on we might see a different picture of mass media. Likewise, the impact of mass media depends on whose perspective and on the role we focus. And for this reason, mass media in many societies has invited and incited serious debates as it can be viewed from both positive and negative perspectives. As such, mass media has impacted the Mozambican culture in ways too numerous to mention. On one hand, it has brought many positive changes in the Mozambican culture. And on the other hand, a number of negative impacts can be pointed out especially from African traditionalist and moralistic view points.

The advent of mass media has effected a number of changes in Mozambican traditions, customs and values. Although it is a well known fact that culture is dynamic and never static, the impact of mass media on Mozambican culture is so tremendous that it becomes imperative for the issue to be discussed, addressed and mitigated against before it is too late. It is worth noting however that the impact of mass media on Mozambican culture varies from one area to another. In the southern provinces of the country, cities and towns, for example, mass media has had more impact – both positive and negative - than in

the countryside. The ensuing paragraphs discuss how mass media has impacted the Mozambican culture.

The Positive Impact of Mass Media on the Mozambican culture

The advent of mass media in Mozambique like in any other society has brought about a number of positive changes. As means of communication, mass media is playing an important role in Mozambique. Unlike in the old days when messages took months to reach their destined audiences, through mass media such as TVs they are now fast reaching the designated recipients/masses in all corners of the country. In the war against HIV/AIDS, for example, mass media is helping a great deal in sending the message to the public to change the risky sexual behavior and promote awareness of the pandemic in youth and the public in general. Agha (2003) confirms that the exposure to mass media messages concerning HIV/AIDS reduces personal risks and promotes condom use as an attractive lifestyle choice thereby contributing to development of perceptions that are conducive to the adoption of condom use and HIV/AIDS prevention.

With Mozambique's low literacy rate, mass media has also become a powerful socializing agent (Graber, 1980) and a facilitator in knowledge polination. School subjects such as English, Geography, and Mathematics are learnt on television. With the same objective, mass media generates interesting debates on socio-economic and political issues. The STV and *Mira Mar* channels, for example, sometimes discuss political issues to do with justice, human rights and democracy. This is positive as politicians and academics rely heavily on media to communicate their messages. In more or less the same way, the general members of the public are affected by mass media on how they learn about their world and interact with others inside and outside the world of politics. In Mozambique, media thus is helping in transmitting knowledge, sensitizing people of their rights and in reducing the illiteracy rate which is currently 43% (Ali, September 2009)**.** Thus mass media has a significant role in disseminating knowledge and in promoting academic excellence.

Besides, it is now a reality that in Mozambique mass media otherwise seconded by soccer has become a leading entertainer for most families. During spare time, people can entertain themselves watching sports, films and other entertaining programs such as soap opera (*Novela)* like *Poderes Paralelos* (Parallel powers), *show de talento* (Talent show), among others that are often shown on Mozambican channels. However, not all that mass media brings to the Mozambicans is beneficial when considering its culture. In fact, it seems more harm than good is being done to the Mozambican culture through mass media. The next section of this paper therefore examines the negative impact of mass media on the Mozambican culture.

Mass Media and Culture: A Closer Look at the Negative Impact of Mass Media on Mozambican Culture
There is a visible negative impact of mass media on the personality development of adolescents (Puri, 2006) in most if not all cultures. Concern from parents, professionals and the populace at large about the impact of mass media on children and adolescents has grown steadily over recent years. It is therefore imperative to examine and understand the role of media exposure on children and adolescents in Mozambique in order to diagnose and treat behavioral problems as well as to prevent further tragedies and disorders on culture and in the personality of the adolescents.

For some Mozambicans, mass media has resulted in enculturation**.** According to Random House Unabridged Dictionary (1997), enculturation is a process where individuals learn their group cultures by experience, observation and instruction. Mass media thus does assimilation, and though advancing into new technology may seem very exciting and futuristic, this may not necessarily be a good thing. This is chiefly because with mass communication devices people are sending the 'wrong message' to different cultures and especially the youth. In Mozambique, music, drama and literature have all changed

with time due to the advent of mass media communication system. In towns, cities and generally the southern provinces, the impact is even on the rise due to the increase of foreign channels owners who are capitalizing on the channel. Mozambique being one of the poorest countries in the world, its economy is controlled by the rich western countries. So are some of its television channels. The channels are dominated by the Portuguese (R.T.P Africa) and the Brazilian (*Mira Mar)* television channels. The Brazilian Universal church sponsored television channel, *Mira Mar* has too much sex and talk shows which stretch too far if we are to consider the Mozambican culture where the channel exists. In fact, it presents a plethora of programs with sexual overtones. *Vai dar namoro* literally mean (Go and make love), *Gugu* and *Tudo é possivel* (Everything is possible) are cases in point. So is the STV program called '*Music box'*. These programs present naked (both men and women with only painted bodies) and semi-naked people (with bras and pants only) especially women dancing and sometimes making love- fondling each other or sleeping together- in the public. This is a taboo in the Mozambican culture and by extension the African traditional culture.

It is even surprising to hear that the channel is sponsored by a church – the Brazilian Universal Church of God - given its contents. From an African traditional view, such programs are irritating especially when watching with one's in-laws, daughters or mothers, among other family members. The dangers are not just in the content, but more importantly, in volume. If one sees something once, s/he can dismiss it as aberrant; if sees it continuously, however, at some point, one is left with a sense of being out of step with mainstream beliefs and values (Frick, 2008). The sexual overtones that the channel frequently presents have resulted in many interpreting it as a promoter of prostitution and cultural decadence amongst the Mozambican youths. Many young people are no longer dressing in a 'decent African way' imitating the way actors in these channels dress. It is now a common thing to see young girls walking around the city with just small tight skirts (mini-skirts) or with tight shorts. Young people can now make

love in the open, even in the road; a thing that was unheard of or rather 'a taboo' in the past in Mozambique. They now think that culture is the 'western culture' forgetting their own 'roots'. In cities and towns, it is no longer a taboo to see people of opposite sexes urinating side by side in the public where pedestrians are passing by. The law doesn't even disallow this although in some other African countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe, such people would be charged with public indecency and are therefore liable to fine or a 3 month jail term. This is because sexual organs are offensive in the African traditional culture and should not be exposed in the public. The change of behavior and attitude by Mozambicans especially the young people is therefore negative and worrying not only to the Mozambican culture, but to the African culture as a whole. This change of behavior and attitude has invoked traditionalists and moralists in the country to argue for the banning of the programs or rather the channels themselves even though this might raise a number of questions from an economic perspective. Economically, Mozambique depends largely on Brazil and Portugal besides China.

In addition, other traditional social structures, customs and values are fast disappearing from the scene. Communication which often took a wonderful musical tone especially in the communication of literature, political and socio-economic works is dying away. The religious and epistemological roles of the traditional folktales have been down-played while their didactic and moral aspects have been, however, overtaken by mass media. Folktales were passed down generations verbally by a storyteller who usually was an old man or an old woman past child bearing age. Mozambican traditional culture upholds these octogerians as custodians of wisdom and knowledge. The advent of television however has made this rather obsolete. The traditions of village theatre and dance, folklore and story telling thus are now history in the Mozambican culture. These were used as forms of entertainment and education (to impact good moral values that would prepare them for adult ritualistic society) in the youth. These traditions also offered a curriculum that prepared the children for their

present and adult life, a curriculum that so far has been seconded and imitated by none. Thus due to mass media, folklore and story telling have lost their following and thereby changing the traditional social structures of the Mozambican people. Instead of the youth gathering around a story teller who was an accredited and experienced old person in the community, they now gather around televisions watching films and other programs. And since 'no child is born with a culture' (Barker, 1994: 4), but learn that in which they are born in, young people are picking up the negative aspects presented by the above stated cultures to the next generation.

Mozambique has a socially oriented culture (Bower, 2007). It is focused on relationships rather than being task oriented like the American culture (ibid). When asking for directions or upon meeting someone, for example, it is polite to first greet the person and ask how they are doing and then go about business. Life is communal rather than individualistic. If a child were to steal from a neighbor, it would be the neighbor's responsibility to spank the child rather than the parent. Likewise, if one were to yell, 'thief!' in a market, the crowd would gang up and beat the thief. All this is because justice is carried out communally in the traditional Mozambican culture. However, since the advent of mass media all these social and communal values of the Mozambican culture are fast loosing favor to the individualistic western values. The Brazilian *Mira Mar* channel has many programs such as operas *(poderes paralelos)* which emphasize that one's life is a private business and no one should bother another person's life. Today, if one yells, 'thief!' in *Chipamanine* market in Maputo, no one would even turn eyes to the thief. If a child steals from a neighbor and the neighbor disciplines the child, beware! The next day the neighbor would receive a summon from police.

Also, it is now a common thing in Mozambique that people enter into business without formally greeting one another first,-which is alien to the African culture. In fact, entering into business before formal

greetings is considered inhumane and morally wrong in the African traditional culture.

It can also be noted that the content of music by Mozambican musicians has changed significantly due mass media with most of the musicians concentrating much on beat/rhythm and not on message. Some of the songs famous in the music fraternity today are full of sexual overtones and innuendos. Manuel Mazoi's (whose trade name is Oliver Style) *Tira ropa* (put off your clothes) and Mr Roger and Ziqo's Dog Style are good examples. The former song whose genre is known as *Marabenta* is sung as:

> *Vocal: Tira ropa* (x4) *(Put off your clothes)*
> *Chorus: Tira (x4) (Put off)*
> *Vocal: Timila xifambo (Put off your shoes)*
> *Chorus: Timila (Put off)*
> *Vocal: Timila buluku (Put off your trouser/short)*
> *Chorus: Timila (Put off)*
> *Vocal: Tsalingeni kei? (x4) (What about the underwear?)*
> *Chorus: Timila (x4) (Put off).*

The content of this song has been argued by moralists and traditionalists to be promoting prostitution, immorality and social disorder in the traditional Mozambican culture. In many occasions, it has been reported that in some public drinking occasions like beer parties people dance this song putting off their clothes one by one as the song commands until they are naked. The content of this song is greatly influenced by loss of direction on the cultural values by the artists. Because of what they normally see happening on television, it is no longer a taboo for them to talk about putting off clothes in the public. With similar sexual innuendos is DJ Aridilas' *Ainda por cima voĉe jinca* (even in bed on top of me you still complain). As is the case of Oliver Style's *Tira ropa*, one can read the immoral tone of Aridilas' song right from its title.

Some controversial programs offered by the *Mira Mar* television channel are the *Show internacional blue man* and *Jogos com as Circo Pindorama os menores artistas do Brazil*. In these two programs, one person is asked to stand still in front of a data board with legs apart. Another person stands on the opposite side with five extremely sharp knives. He will then start throwing the knives fiercely one by one, one just on top of the head of the person in front. The other two are thrown on sides at waist height. The forth one is thrown exactly between the legs and the last one on either side of the leg but at knee height. The person in front should be courageous enough not to move an inch. Otherwise, s/he will be finished. The game is not only frightening but life risking. It shows images of violence and aggression. If one of the knives is misdirected and get into the flesh of that in front s/he is dead. In the Mozambican traditional culture, such games are considered devilish and unacceptable. Besides, children may imitate such games. Given the natural experimenting habit of children and that the game requires a high degree of expertise, these games can be argued to promote social delinquencies that may result in lose of lives or fatal injuries among children.

Another critical issue that mass media is seriously aggravating is that of names. I understand a name as 'a label for a noun, normally used to distinguish one from another' (Wikipedia, 2007). Names can identify a class or category of things, or a single thing, either uniquely, or within a given context. A personal name identifies a specific unique and identifiable individual person, but in 'a given context'. As such, Mozambican names identify Mozambicans in their context from people of other contexts. However, this is appearing otherwise in Mozambique as traditional names been shunned since colonial period. Surprisingly, this seems to worsen even years after independence. Part of the reason for this is that the content in mass media is largely Western and names of participants (presenters, actors/artists) in these media channels are foreign, mainly Portuguese. Presented with such a scenario time and again in *novellas*-operas and other TV programs, most children and even adults in Mozambique tend to do what Shakespeare portrays in his

What's in a name? That we call a rose, where 'Romeo out of passion for Juliet, rejects his family name and vows, as Juliet asks, to 'deny (his) father' and instead be 'new baptized' as Juliet's lover' (eNotes-Shakespeare, 2010). Most Mozambicans thus have shunned their traditional names in favor of the Portuguese ones. As of now, one can hardly encounter a single Mozambican of the contemporary generation with a traditional name. Actually, if a child/person identifies himelf/herself with a traditional name at school or anywhere else in the country s/he will be laughed at or rather mocked. This hatred of one's own culture is grievous and shameful that it can not go unchallenged especially in the African context where traditional names are literal and carry meaning to one's own life, family or society.

The same is true even in the Western tradition. Blake (2009) confirms that 'names can reveal much about your family history' since sources from which names are derived include nicknames, physical attributes, place of origin, trades, heraldic charges, and almost every object known to mankind that is related to the person in a way. Blake's conception identifies with Stallman who rightly notes that 'names convey meanings; our choice of names determines the meaning of what we say. An inappropriate name gives people the wrong idea' (Stallman, 2009). For him and indeed so, a rose by any other name would smell as sweet—but if you call it a pen, people will be rather disappointed when they try to write with it. And if you call pens 'roses', people may not realize what they are good for. This serves to mean that 'names really matter for our communities because people who forget history are often condemned to repeat them' (ibid). In fact the situations and problems that led Mozambicans develop traditional names are not completely eradicated, and they threaten to come back. It therefore remains paramount for Mozambicans to maintain their traditional names as they are 'custodians' and 'sources' of history to themselves and future generations. But to gain this revolutionary future, a better future different from the deplorable present, this must be a quick move-before foreign culture in Mozambique regains its composure and eliminates dissent and efforts as those demonstrated in this present work.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that whilst it is acceptable that the Mozambican culture should progress together with the 'global village', Mozambicans should take a critical look at the role and impact of mass media in their society. The following questions should be seriously considered before Mozambique 'grabs' on everything that foreign cultures bring through mass media:

1. Who owns the media?

2. Why are some images and ideas so prevalent in the mass media while others especially the local ones are marginalized?

3. Whose voices are represented and whose are not heard?

4. What impact do mass media have on culture? and

5. How people use and interpret the mass media?

It is through critical analysis through these questions that Mozambique could realise how important it is to respect and preserve its own 'customs and traditional values' and ensure that these are carried on into the next generation. This analysis is critical because the mass media in Mozambique like elsewhere in Africa has, until today, systematically failed to act as the critical 'fourth state' that they pretended to be. Instead, mass media have consistently represented the interests of, and functioned as an integral component of the elites controlling society and determining policy and events. Yet it is the traditional values and customs shun by most television channels in the country that distinguish Mozambicans from people of other countries.

It is apparent that more harm than good is being done to the Mozambican culture. Besides dress, many other Mozambican cultural aspects have been sacrificed in favor of Western values brought to the Mozambican society mainly through mass media. The tradition of story

telling has taken a back seat in the Mozambican culture due to cassette playbacks of discourses. So is folk music. It has given way to cassettes and CDs. Drama and theatre have suffered the same consequences. They have diminished in importance under the stiff competition brought forth by mass media.

More importantly, it has been argued that due to mass media many traditional values in Mozambique and by extension Africa are now considered as 'outdated' and 'out of fashion'. Person to person interaction between strangers, for example, has nearly disappeared in towns and cities as information is now relayed through media channels: televisions, mobile phones, radios, books, newspapers and magazines. African identity thus is being given away to mass media yet in Africa a person is identified not only by 'rationality', but by culture. As such, Mozambique should preserve and safeguard its culture from decadence so as to ensure that its customs and values are passed on to the next generation undiluted. Programs that mass media bring to Mozambican masses should therefore culturally censored before they are presented for public consumption. This would at least ensure that the youth are not 'mentally corrupted' and made to unconsciously forget or despise their customs and values.

It should be understood that although some programs might be educative to audiences of high intellectual levels- the educated elites- the same programs may yield opposite results when presented to uneducated masses and to people of a different culture. This is the case with the Brazilian Soap operas called *Novela-Poderes Paralelos* (parallel powers), *Tudo é posivel* (everything is possible) that are presented on *STV* and *Mira Mar* channels that are widely watched across the country. In most cases, the message is understood and interpreted literally as it is presented due to the low literate level in Mozambique. And today, a lot of young women can afford walking around the city semi-naked or in very tight mini-skirts as they normally see in the operas. They are forgetting that in traditional Mozambique and by extension African traditional culture, thighs are offensive.

In the light of all these observations, the paper concludes that the issue of mass media is urgent and calls for immediate action by the government and the public in general. Otherwise, Mozambican culture would continually experience a 'slow death' and one day disappears the 'dinosaurs' way'.

Recommendations

Media often acts as the bridge between our personal/private lives and the public world. We see ourselves and our place through mass media. Given this nexus, there is need to pay special attention to mass media lest we are manipulated by it. As argued by Reuss and Hiebert (1985) and indeed so, while mass media can be manipulated by the public, it is the former that normally manipulates the latter. In view of the dramatic effects of mass media in Mozambique, it is apparent that if nothing urgent is done to most of the programs presented in the Mozambican channels, substantive cultural decadence would continue taking its toll.

I suggest that the Mozambican government should set a separate ministry called 'Ministry of Culture and Communication'. This ministry would culturally sensor all programs that have to do with culture before they are presented on television for public consumption. If a program is likely to cause discord on Mozambican culture then it would be replaced by that which deserves. The proposed ministry would also send its agents around the country gathering all information and promoting the Mozambican culture by presenting programs with more local cultural content. It would be also imperative that the Ministry works hand in gloves with the Ministry of Education and Culture so that even in schools, emphasis on culture is more pronounced. Competitions on traditional dances, music, theater and drama can be promoted right from school to national levels. This would catch the Mozambicans when they are still 'young' that they grow up conscious of their own culture. This would be a firm step to bring back the daunting Mozambican culture back on track. But to gain this revolutionary future, a better future different from the deplorable

present, this must be a quick move. Otherwise, Mozambican culture will soon be a history to its own people.

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