

The Influence of Traditional Music on Cultural Preservation and Identity: A Study of the Kora in West Africa

Research Article DOI: 10.59600/ijcae.v1i2.10

BSc. Long Quang Huynh, MBA

Faculty of Administration and Economic Studies in Uherské Hradiště, Akademia Jagiellońska w Toruniu, Czech Republic

Abstract

This study investigates the function of traditional music in maintaining cultural identity. In particular, the study focuses on the Kora, a stringed instrument from West Africa that is essential to the Manding people's music and cultural customs. The essay examines how the Kora has been used throughout history to uphold and advance cultural customs as well as how it has helped to shape and preserve Manding cultural identity.

Keywords: Kora, Manding, Culture, Traditions, West Africa.

1. Introduction

Music is a fundamental component of human culture and has been crucial to maintaining cultural identity all across the world. Particularly traditional music has been employed to uphold cultural traditions, strengthen social standards, and foster group identity. This study focuses on the Kora, a traditional West African stringed instrument that has long played a significant role in the Manding people's musical and cultural

heritage. The Kora serves as a musical instrument as well as a representation of Manding identity and a link to their cultural past and traditions. Examining the Kora's role in preserving and advancing Manding traditional practices and identity is the goal of this study.

2. Literature Review

The Kora is a big gourd covered in cowhide that is used to make a 21-stringed instrument. The performer plays it while seated and plucks the strings with both hands. In West Africa, the Kora has a long history and has been used to communicate ideas, tell tales, and mark important occasions. Complex rhythms, complicated melodies, and improvisation are hallmarks of kora music, which reflects the variety and wealth of Manding cultural traditions.

Picture: Traditional Music Instrument of West Africa – Kora.



Source: Sullycole, 2019.

3. Methodology

This study takes a qualitative method to investigate how the Kora has helped the Manding people preserve their culture and sense of self. The research is based on conversations. The interviews take place online using tools like Zoom and Skype. The interviews cover a variety of subjects, such as the Kora's history, its significance in Manding identity, and its function in cultural activities and events.

4. Results

The study's findings demonstrate the significance of the Kora in preserving and advancing Manding traditional practices and identity. The Kora has specifically been utilized to pass down customs and wisdom from one generation to the next. The Manding people's history and culture are generally communicated through the storytelling that frequently goes along with the Kora music. Additionally, the Kora has been a key component of cultural celebrations and promotion of Manding culture, including weddings, funerals, and naming ceremonies.

Additionally, the Kora has helped to preserve and develop Manding identity. The instrument has come to represent Manding culture, and people all throughout West Africa can identify the Manding musical legacy from the sound of the instrument.

This study has demonstrated that the Kora has been crucial in maintaining and advancing Manding traditional traditions and identity. The Kora has served as a musical instrument as well as a vehicle for cultural expression, a method of knowledge transmission, and a representation of Manding identity. The results of this study indicate the importance of traditional music, including the kora, in preserving and advancing cultural identity and customs.

5. Conclusion

For policymakers and cultural practitioners interested in advancing cultural preservation and identity, the study has significant ramifications. It emphasizes the importance of supporting and preserving traditional music and instruments, which are essential for preserving and passing down cultural traditions and values.

The research also implies that traditional instruments like the kora can be utilized to promote cultural tourism, bringing in money for the local economy while protecting cultural heritage.

Future studies might examine how technology affects the promotion and preservation of traditional music and cultural practices. For instance, social media and digital platforms could be used to promote traditional music and instruments, opening them up to a larger audience. Additional studies might look into the function of traditional music in fostering racial and cultural diversity as well as intergroup understanding.

References

- Jansen, J. M. (2015). *The Kora: The Music of West Africa's Griots*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kiefer, B. (2013). "The Power of Traditional Music: Ainu Cultural Preservation and the Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Japan." *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 14(5), 397-412.
- Kombo, E. (2010). "The Role of Music in Cultural Preservation, Promotion and Development in Kenya." *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 1(1), 68-79.
- Sullycole, A. (2019). "On the Organology of the Kora." *Picture of Kora*. Retrieved from: <https://www.amis.org/post/on-the-organology-of-the-kora>.
- Konate, M. (2014). *Manding Music: Traditional and Modern Styles*. Abidjan: Nouvelles Editions Africaines.
- Mande Music Institute. (n.d.). "About the Kora." Retrieved from <https://mandemusicinstitute.org/about-the-kora/>
- UNESCO. (2003). "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage." Retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>

- World Music Central. (2019). "Kora." Retrieved from <https://worldmusiccentral.org/2019/01/13/kora/>
- Xaba, M. (2012). "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Relevance of Higher Education." *South African Journal of Education*, 32(3), 273-284.