

Kinship of two cultures

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“ Culture is a shared, learned, symbolic system of values, beliefs and attitudes that shapes and influences perception and behavior”(). Culture influences people and it shapes people in manifesting a particular identity. Every individual is greatly influence by his culture. When people see a man and the way he is living his life, he can easily be identified as part of a particular culture. People from a particular place are always intertwined with a particular culture as seen in their pattern of actions and beliefs and way of life in general.

It is of an inevitable reality that cultures differ around the world. Every place and context has their own unique set of norms, beliefs and practices. These set of norms, beliefs and practices make up the identity of a culture. These make up the whole of their system. A particular culture produces a pattern of actions that a group of people will manifest as they live in this world. Because of the diversity of cultures of people from different places around the world, there exist conflicts due to differences if one culture is imposing its will to the other.

In this paper, we will dwell on two rich cultures- the Dinkas and Amhara People. We will try to show their similarities and as well as differences. The two cultures that are the subject of this paper will be thoroughly examined. Therefore, without further delay, let us begin our discussion.

The Dinkas are found In Southern Sudan. It is the largest ethnic group region in the Nile Basin. The Dinkas have the population of 3-4 million people that comprises approximately 45% of the population of the whole country. The Dinkas are known to have beautiful women in their tribe and known to even grow up to seven feet tall. One of their famous tribe members is the former

National basketball Association (NBA) player Manute Bol who stood for 7'7". This tribe at the Nile River is also known to maintain a culture of marrying people within their communities and even families.

“ Most of Dinkas beliefs that keeping cultures in our modern societies is beneficial enough to keep generations move successfully. The Dinkas believed that maintaining their culture amidst the changing world is the road to the next generation's success”(http://www. madingbor. com/page/page/2064097. htm). This is the reason why even in the influences of many diverse cultures, the Dinkas still maintained and treasured the richness of their culture.

Men in having their own families in the Dinka tribe, they must at least be eighteen years old and above. This age bracket is perceived by Dinkas as an age that can already be capable of providing for a family and considered as persons who can live with their own. The Dinkas live a pastoral life, relying mainly on livestock. In a Dinka family, the husband is the provider in the family. He brings something to eat for the family. The wife is the one who cooks for the family, the one in charge for preparing food for the whole house and in taking care of the children in the family. The wives in the Dinka communities are obedient and respectful women for their husbands. Despite the growing influences of other cultures in women empowerment, they remain in this family devotion of women.

In cases of the death of the husband or absence for a long time, the wife is asked to remarry. Remarrying for the wife would mean marrying the brothers of his husband. If there is no brother available, the first cousins of her husband are the second option. This remarrying scheme is for the <https://assignbuster.com/kinship-of-two-cultures/>

purpose of bearing a child that would be named after the deceased person. The culture believes that in doing such practice, they are maintaining the dignity of their generations from their fore-fathers to the grand children. The act is called “ lahot” or entering the hut. The Dinkas give emphasis on the purity of their culture that is manifested in their practices of remarriages.

THE AMHARA CULTURE OF ETHIOPIA

The Amhara people of Ethiopia are one of the most dominant cultural and political group in Africa. Their population is at 15, 000, 000. These people live in the highlands of Ethiopia. The Amhara people are mostly farmers. The tribe can be traced back from Menelik I who is a child born of the King Solomon and Queen Sheba. “ The Amhara appear to be descended from the same people group as the Tigray-Tigrinya people. Their Sabaean ancestors came to the highlands of what is now Eritrea and Ethiopia from the Arabian Peninsula”

The general situation in the Amhara farming society is very hard. They live in terrains and mountains because of wanting their place to be easily defended but at the same time making it hard for them to travel and move. They have the advantage in defense but also have the disadvantage in mobility. The location of their community is hard to reach by foreigners because of rugged mountain terrains.

The people in Amhara believe that children must be breast feed in two years. No hard discipline is imposed to the children until the age of four. On the fortieth day after birth, the boys in the family will be baptized and the girls are on the eightieth day. As early as the age of five and six, the children are

trained to watch their family animals such as sheep and goats. The boys are in charge in watching over the animals and the girls are in charge in accompanying their mother in gathering firewood to use in cooking. Girls of the tribe are allowed to get married in an average age of 14. The boys to be grooms are normally 3-5 years older of the bride.

“ Most marriages are negotiated by the two families, with a civil ceremony sealing the contract. A priest may be present. Divorce is allowed and must also be negotiated. There is also a " temporary marriage," by oral contract before witnesses. The woman is paid housekeeper's wages, and is not eligible for inheritance, but children of the marriage are legally recognized and qualify for inheritance. Priests may marry but not eligible for divorce or remarriage” (<http://www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/amhara.htm>).

Women also bear the attitude of respect and to their husbands. Priests are only allowed to get married once. There is variety of religions present in the Amhara culture but the most dominant religion is the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The Amhara people are not fond of trusting people coming from other places. They are people who are cautious in their relation to foreign people and things.

The two cultures highlighted in this paper (Dinka and Amhara) are two great cultures who have rich traditions. In looking at the two cultures, there are noticeable similarities and as well as differences.

The Dinkas lived in the Basin of the Nile while the Amhara people are from high terrains and mountains. It is harder for the Amhara people to be

accessed by foreign people and even for them to travel. The two cultures rely more on farming and animal raising as the source of their subsistence but it was harder for the Amhara people to farm because of the location of their inhabited places while it is also harder for the Dinkas to defend themselves from foreign enemies because also of the location of their homes.

The Dinkas however, are more conservative in their view of marriage. Though in both cultures, remarrying is allowed, the Dinkas only allow remarrying if the husband has already died or absent for a long time. In Amhara tribe, divorce is allowed and is done by negotiation. In the Dinka tribe, they are more giving emphasis to family dignity that is why they only allow women to get married again if she marries the brother or the cousin of the former husband. The Amhara tribe on the other hand, allows their priests to get married.

The two tribes have the same view on the women in their families. Women are there to prepare food for the whole family and to take care of their children. Women have respect for their husbands in both of the tribes. The marrying age for men however differs for the two tribes. The Amhara tribe allows a lower marrying age at approximately at least 16 years old while the Dinka tribe allows men to get married at 18 years old.

There are a lot of different cultures around the world. No culture is exactly the same with another. It is of great reality that culture is different coming from different contexts. In the case of the two cultures examined and discussed in this paper, there are differences found and as well as similarities. This presupposes the richness of one's culture. We cannot really limit the

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innovativeness of people's minds. The only certain in this world is the constant development of cultures in their beliefs and practices and there is a constant change in it. The conception of people regarding families also evolves through time and differs in different cultures.

May this paper remind us how rich people's cultures and how they evolve and grow over time. Cultures are true manifestations of man's richness in his mind and in his being because cultures are created from people's discovery and thinking. The cultures of today may not be present tomorrow but it is of great significance in building tomorrow's cultures.