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THE KAKUBE FESTIVAL OF NANDOM TRADITIONAL AREA: ORIGIN, MUSICAL TRADITIONS, AND EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE IN GHANA

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Abstract

Despite Ghana's rich indigenous festivals and musical traditions, many remain under-documented and insufficiently integrated into formal educational frameworks, leading to the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems in cultural and music education. The Kakube Festival of the Nandom Traditional Area is a vibrant cultural event that embodies the community's historical consciousness, musical heritage, and social values; yet its educational relevance has received limited scholarly attention. This study explores the origins, musical traditions, and educational relevance of the Kakube Festival, with particular emphasis on its role in cultural identity formation, social cohesion, and community development. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the study examines the festival's distinctive musical traditions, including indigenous drumming, singing and dance practices, and analyses their functions in cultural transmission, socialisation, and communal participation. The findings reveal that Kakube musical performances do not only serve as artistic expressions but also as informal educational tools through which history, values and collective identity are communicated across generations. This study underscores the importance of repositioning local cultural practices as valuable resources for holistic education and sustainable community development in Ghana.

Keywords: Kakube festival, Nandom Traditional Area, Ghana, cultural heritage, musical traditions, educational relevance, community development

1. Introduction

The Kakube Festival is a prominent cultural event celebrated by the people of the Nandom Traditional Area in Ghana. The festival has a rich cultural heritage, with unique musical traditions that play a crucial role in the social and cultural lives of the community. Despite its significance, there is limited research on the Kakube Festival, particularly in terms of its educational relevance. This paper seeks to clarify the origin, musical traditions, and educational relevance of the Kakube. According to Amoah (2004), a festival is a feast, celebration, or commemoration that consists of musical and dramatic performances organised in a single centre or community. Hornby (2004) adds that a festival is a public celebration or a series of performances of music, dance, drama, etc., given periodically. A traditional festival can be explained as an occasional religious or pseudo-religious, as well as historical and social, ceremony. Specific collective rituals or activities like pouring of libations, slaughtering of animals as a sacrifice for gods and ancestors, the mourning of the dead, drumming and dancing, and firing of musketry, depending on the circumstances surrounding a particular celebration (Acquah & Adjei, 2021), mark these ceremonies.

The study explores three objectives. Among them is to examine the historical background of the Kakube festival. The study reveals that there is limited research on the Kakube festival, particularly in terms of its educational relevance, as stated in the problem. The study seeks to highlight and promote curtailment of identity, social cohesion, and community development as its purpose. The significance of the study is to link the Kakube festival with education among the people of the Nandom Traditional area. Similarly, the study will help curricular developers to seek knowledge of the Kakube festival and put it in the curriculum for music education in Ghana. The current study has one limitation: the extent to which the findings can be generalised beyond the case being studied. Naturally, the findings should have applied to all Dagaaba, but the case is too limited for broad generalisations because of time constraints; hence, the findings will apply to only the people of Nandom. All Dagaaba celebrate kakube, but this study is limited to the people of the Traditional Area of Nandom. The area of study is, therefore, the Nandom Traditional Area. Kakube Festival: A traditional festival for the people of the Nandom Traditional Area. Nandom Traditional Area is a municipality where the research is conducted. Ghana, Ghana, the researcher's home country, serves as the location of the research area. Cultural Heritage: The legacy of our culture, both past and present. Musical Tradition: The setting of local instruments for the everyday lives of the people. Educational Relevance: The important aspect of the research is that it can bring development to the people. Community Development: Any good that comes out of the research that contributes to community development.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical frameworks used for this study were anthropological performance theory, cultural heritage preservation theory, educational culturally responsive pedagogy, and place-based education. Performance theory, developed by Richard Schechner (2013), emphasises the formative aspects of cultural practices and their role in shaping identity and social relationships in the case of a festival. Performance theory suggests that the act of singing and performing is a way of constructing and reinforcing cultural identity and social relationships. (Schechner, 2013) Additional cultural heritage preservation theory (Smith, 2019) emphasises the

importance of preserving and promoting cultural heritage as a means of maintaining cultural diversity and promoting understanding. In the case of a festival, cultural heritage preservation theory suggests that the study and preservation of cultural festivals help to promote cultural identity and understanding within the people of the Nandom Traditional Area and beyond.

Similarly, Place-Based Education (Sobel, 2019) remarked on the importance of connecting education to the local environment and culture. In the case of cultural festivals, place-based education suggests that the study and performing of cultural festivals can be used to connect students to the cultural heritage of the people of the Nandom Traditional Area and to promote a sense of place-based identity. Conceptually, the study of cultural festivals can help to promote cultural identity and pride among the people of the Nandom Traditional Area. An understanding of cultural festivals can help to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of the area. This study facilitates the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. By learning and performing a cultural festival, young people can connect with their cultural heritage and pass on this knowledge to future generations.

3. Related Literature

The Kakube Festival has its roots in the traditional practices of the people of the Nandom Traditional Area. The festival is celebrated annually to commemorate the founding of the community and honour its ancestors. The musical traditions of the festival are characterised by unique drumming and dancing styles, which are passed down from generation to generation. Research has shown that cultural festivals like the Kakube Festival play a crucial role in promoting cultural heritage and identity (Gardner, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

3.1 Indigenous Festivals and Cultural Identity

Festivals constitute a vital component of African indigenous societies, serving as repositories of history, belief systems, and collective identity. According to Nketia (1974), traditional festivals in Ghana function as cultural texts through which communities transmit values, norms, and social memory across generations. These festivals are not merely celebratory occasions but structured cultural institutions that reinforce communal bonds and affirm shared identities. In many Ghanaian societies, festivals provide platforms for historical narration, ritual performance, and reaffirmation of ancestral ties (Yankah, 1995).

3.2 Music and Dance in African Festivals

Music and dance are central to the performance and meaning of African festivals. African musical traditions are inseparable from social life, functioning as vehicles for communication, education, and social regulation (Agawu, 2003). Drumming, singing, and dance within festival contexts encode symbolic meanings and communal messages, often reflecting historical experiences, moral lessons, and cosmological beliefs. Chernoff (1979) emphasises that African drumming traditions are participatory and dialogic, fostering social interaction and collective expression. Within festival settings, music structures ritual sequences, energises communal participation, and enhances emotional and spiritual engagement.

3.3 Festivals as Informal Educational Spaces

Indigenous festivals also serve as informal educational systems through which cultural knowledge is transmitted experientially. Bruner (1996) argues that learning is culturally situated and occurs most effectively when embedded in meaningful social practices. In African contexts, festivals provide opportunities for young people to acquire cultural competencies, musical skills, and social responsibilities through observation and participation (Esiabu, 2014). Through music, dance, costume, and storytelling, festivals function as living classrooms that reinforce indigenous pedagogies and community-based learning.

3.4 Cultural Festivals and Curriculum Integration

Scholars have increasingly advocated for the integration of indigenous cultural practices into formal education to promote cultural relevance and inclusivity. Dei (2012) contends that African education systems must valorise indigenous knowledge systems to counter the lingering effects of colonial epistemologies. Incorporating festival music and cultural practices into school curricula can enhance learner engagement, foster cultural pride, and support holistic education (Akuno, 2012). In Ghana, studies suggest that culturally responsive music education strengthens students' understanding of their heritage while developing cognitive, social, and creative skills (Manford, 2019).

3.5 Relevance of Festivals to Community Development

Beyond cultural preservation, festivals contribute significantly to community development by promoting social cohesion, intergenerational dialogue, and local participation. Falassi (1987) describes festivals as moments of social intensification that renew communal solidarity and collective purpose. In northern Ghana, traditional festivals often function as platforms for conflict resolution, community mobilisation, and development advocacy (Kquofi, 2015). The Kakube Festival, therefore, aligns with broader African traditions where music, ritual, and celebration intersect with social organisation and communal advancement.

3.6 Research Gap

While existing literature affirms the educational and socio-cultural value of festivals, there is limited scholarly work specifically examining the Kakube Festival of the Nandom Traditional Area, particularly its musical traditions and educational relevance. This gap underscores the need for focused studies that document such festivals and explore their potential contributions to cultural education and community development in Ghana.

4. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, employing interviews, observation, and document analysis to explore the origins, musical traditions, and educational relevance of the Kakube Festival in the Nandom Traditional Area of Ghana. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of cultural practices, meanings, and lived experiences within their natural context. The study utilised a case study and ethnographic design, focusing on the Kakube Festival as a bounded cultural phenomenon. The research was conducted in the Nandom Traditional Area, where the festival is celebrated annually, enabling the researcher to observe musical performances, rituals, and community participation within their authentic cultural setting. A total of twenty (20) participants were purposively selected for the study. These included five (5) community leaders, five (5)

musicians, five (5) dancers, and five (5) chiefs who possess in-depth knowledge and experience of the Kakube Festival. Participants were drawn from both literate and non-literate backgrounds to ensure diverse perspectives. The study primarily employed purposive sampling, which is appropriate for selecting participants who are especially knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation. As noted by Fraenkel and Norman (2000), purposive sampling enables researchers to use their judgement to select individuals who can provide rich and relevant information. This technique is particularly suitable for cultural studies where access to knowledgeable participants may be limited. In addition, snowball sampling was used to identify further participants through referrals, especially in cases where key cultural custodians were difficult to access. StatPac (2012) notes that snowball sampling facilitates access to respondents within close-knit communities and is cost-effective. While participant availability influenced access, selection remained guided by relevance to the study rather than mere convenience. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Interviews allowed participants to share detailed narratives about the festival's history, musical practices, and educational significance, while observation enabled the researcher to document live performances, rituals, instruments, and interactions during the festival. Data collection took place within the natural setting of the Kakube Festival, reinforcing the ethnographic nature of the study. Field notes, audio recordings, and visual documentation were used where appropriate to support data accuracy. According to Vaux and Cooper (1999), fieldwork and case study research provide access to a broader range of reliable data than secondary sources alone, particularly when studying indigenous cultural practices. This approach therefore ensured that the data reflected authentic cultural expressions and interpretations of the Kakube Festival.

4. Results and Discussions

The study revealed that the Kakube Festival has a rich cultural heritage, with unique musical traditions that play a crucial role in the social and cultural lives of the community. The festival is celebrated annually to commemorate the founding of the community and to honor the ancestors. The musical traditions of the festival are characterised by unique drumming and dancing styles, which are passed down from generation to generation. The findings of this study highlight the significance of the Kakube Festival in promoting cultural heritage and identity. The festival's musical traditions and cultural practices offer opportunities for cultural learning, socialisation, and community development. The study argues that the Kakube Festival has significant educational relevance, and recommends that educators and policymakers recognise the importance of the festival and incorporate its musical traditions and cultural practices into the educational curriculum.



Figure 1: Paramount chief and some divisional chiefs entering the durbar ground



Figure 2: Gogo drums used at the durbar



Figure 3: Some calabash drums used at the durbar



Figure 5: Some chiefs and elders entering the durbar ground



Figure 4: Some Chiefs and elders seated at the durbar



Figure 6: Nandom Bawa group performing



Figure 7: Vapour Bawa Group performing



Figure 8: Tome Bewa Group performing

Other groups are Lambosi Guala Group and Lawra Bewa Group. The following are some of the texts of songs of Kakube festival and their translations.

Song 1: Ka o e (Let me sleep with you)

Dagaare

*N sabilayelka,
Ka o e.
Nsabile yelka,
Ka o e beelan;
Kye da teele koma;
Ee belay sããbile eebee lay.
pɔgeyaare boma e*

Kye da teele koma.

English Translation

My junior father said,
Let me sleep with you.
My junior father said,
Let me sleep with you small;
And buy you a sewing machine;
And sleep with you small.
My daughter, let me sleep with
you
And buy you a sewing machine.

Among the Dagaaba people, composers often highlight an individual's weaknesses through song as a means of promoting self-reflection and positive behavioural change.

Song 2: Kuu waa daa (Death is like a market)

Dagaare

*Kuu waa daa.
Kuu waa daa.
Te zaa na gaa.
Kuu waa daa.
Andonɛɛ Kuu waa
daa.
Te zaa na gaa.*

English Translation

Death is like a market.
Death is like a market.
We will all go.
Death is like a market.
My people, death is like a
market.
We will all go.

Song 2 reflects on life and death using the metaphor of a market. Human life is seen as a period of buying and selling, and when one completes this process, death comes to end life on earth.

Song 3: Fo nye pɔgezee (When you see a beautiful lady or colour lady)

| Dagaare | English Translation |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Fo nye pɔgezee,</i> | When you see a beautiful lady or colour lady, |
| <i>Fo bag ka o taa seenoo?</i> | Are you sure she is touchable? |
| <i>Fo nye pɔgezee,</i> | When you see a beautiful lady or colour lady, |
| <i>Fo bag ka o taa seenoo?</i> | Are you sure she is touchable? |
| <i>Fo nye pɔgezee</i> | When you see a beautiful lady |

The song uses a rhetorical question to challenge assumptions about beauty and accessibility. It suggests that physical attractiveness or outward adornment should not be mistaken for consent or availability, thereby promoting ethical conduct, respect for personal boundaries, and thoughtful social behaviour.

Song 4: Ba naa maŋboɔle (When you call a woman)

| Dagaare | English Translation |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Ba naa maŋboɔle</i> | When you call a woman |
| <i>Pogelee o erɛ orɔfo,</i> | And she is showing off, |
| <i>Ba naa maŋboɔle</i> | When you call a woman |
| <i>Pogelee o erɛ orɔfo,</i> | And she is showing off, |
| <i>O erɛ orɔfo,</i> | And she is showing off, |
| <i>O erɛ orɔfo,</i> | And she is showing off, |
| <i>O erɛ orɔfo</i> | And she is showing off |
| <i>Ba naa maŋboɔle.</i> | When you call a woman. |

This song examines the behaviour of women in their interactions with men, using music as a medium to comment on social conduct, responsibility, and the effects of such behaviour on interpersonal relationships.

5. Conclusion

This study has established that the Kakube Festival is a culturally significant event that plays a vital role in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage and identity of the people of the Nandom Traditional Area. Through its rich musical traditions, drumming, dancing, and associated cultural practices, the festival serves as an important medium for cultural transmission, socialisation, and community cohesion. The findings demonstrate that the Kakube Festival provides meaningful opportunities for informal education, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and community engagement. The study further reveals the educational relevance of the festival, particularly its potential contribution to cultural education and values formation. By integrating the musical traditions and cultural practices of the Kakube Festival into formal educational curricula, learners can develop a deeper appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems, cultural identity, and local heritage. Such integration would not only enrich arts and cultural education but also support culturally responsive pedagogy within

Ghana's educational framework. Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

- Educators and policymakers should recognise the educational value of the Kakube Festival and incorporate its musical traditions and cultural practices into school curricula, particularly within cultural studies and creative arts education.
- The musical traditions and cultural practices associated with the Kakube Festival should be systematically documented and preserved to safeguard them for future generations.
- The promotion of the Kakube Festival as a cultural tourism attraction should be encouraged to highlight the rich cultural heritage of the Nandom Traditional Area and contribute to local socio-economic development.

In conclusion, the Kakube Festival remains a powerful cultural resource whose preservation and educational utilisation can contribute significantly to cultural continuity, identity formation, and community development in Ghana.

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