

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Environmental and Cultural Sustainability Dimensions of *Kukɔɔ* Festival of Nimoro Division, Ghana

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## Abstract

Cultural festivals continue to receive diverse scholarly documentation in Ghana. Many of such studies tend to concentrate on the historical, social, cultural, aesthetic, artistic, tourism, educational, and political aspects of Ghanaian festivals with little attention paid to their environmental sustainability dimension. Situated within qualitative ethnographic design, the current study examined the *Kukɔɔ* festival of Nimoro Division in the Buwa Kingdom of the Upper West Region of Ghana to reveal its environmental and cultural sustainability dimensions. Thematic analysis of interview and field photographic data elicited from twenty (20) participants showed that the revival of the *Kukɔɔ* (forest) festival on May 18, 2024, rejuvenated the environmental sustainability consciousness of the people of Nimoro Division. Additionally, the festival provided an opportunity for social cohesion, and exhibition of diverse indigenous Sisaala cultural heritage of Nimoro Division, thereby promoting cultural education and preservation. Since the festival has a bifocal significance of rejuvenating the environmental sustainability consciousness of the Nimoro Division and preserving their cultural heritage, the study concludes that its revival in this predatory era of globalisation is a step in the right direction. To further enhance environmental sustainability and cultural preservation in Nimoro Division, it is recommended that the *Kukɔɔ* festival be held annually. This will continue to raise ecological awareness and sustain the rich Sisaala cultural heritage of the Nimoro Division, ensuring both are maintained and strengthened in the face of globalisation.

## Introduction

Cultural festivals are entrenched aspects of human lifestyles increasingly perpetuated globally. According to Zhang, Fong, Li and Ly (2019), the primary reason for the increase in cultural festivals worldwide is their importance in commemorating and promoting communal values, identities, ideologies, heritage and continuity. In Africa to be specific, studies corroborate that cultural festivals are recurrent events through which the cultural heritage, identity, values, and communal spirit of ethnic societies are promoted and preserved (Ossai-Uloku & Anyanwu, 2024; Ejikemeuwa, 2022; Navei, 2021; Ogbenika, 2020; Omotoso & Ogundiran, 2016). This reiterates the importance of cultural festivals in Africa.

With reference to Ghana, a plethora of scholarly documentation has delved into cultural festivals highlighting their sociocultural perspectives and relevance. Cole's (1975) study of the art of festivals in Ghana found that Ghanaian festivals are total works of art exhibiting Ghanaians' rich visual and performing arts. Nortey's (2009) doctoral dissertation, which focused on the artistic and cultural elements of *Hɔmɔwɔ* in Ghana, affirms that a great deal of arts are actively and inseparably interwoven in the festival. Also, documentation on Builsa's Feok festival in Ghana has revealed the historical evolution, sociocultural symbolism, and security implications of the costume art of the festival (Agaasa & Ampa-Korsah, 2016; Duut, 2014). An ethnographic study of the costume regalia of *Paari-gbielle*, a postharvest festival of the Sisaala people of Tumu enclave in northern Ghana, was also chronicled by Navei (2021). In that study, Navei discussed the historical development and significance of the *Paari-gbielle* Festival and decoded the cultural symbolism of hunting, war, and chieftaincy costumes deployed during the celebration of *Paari-gbielle*. Additionally, Brako and Dennis's (2023) study focused on aesthetising the prop elements associated with the *Edina Bakatue* celebration by the Elmina people in the central region of Ghana. According to Brako and Dennis, props such as the Paramount chief's umbrella and palanquin; the *Asafo company flag*; sceptre; leaves; canoes and others play significant sociocultural roles in alleviating the *Benya* deity and cleansing the people of Elmina during the celebration of the *Edina Bakatue* festival for bounteous fishing harvests in the ensuing year. Also, the role of cultural celebrations in Ghana's contemporary political economy was examined by Clarke-Ekong (1997). Clarke-Ekong reported that Ghanaian festivals projects host communities nationally and provide convenient public platforms for government officials to make policy declarations, handover newly completed projects, and introduce new ones among others. Although the aforementioned studies do not exhaust the diverse perspectives of documentation on traditional festivals in Ghana, they provide in-depth knowledge of the history, artistic, aesthetics, sociocultural, tourism, educational, political, and other underpinnings of cultural festivals in Ghana.

Amidst the plethora of diverse studies on Ghanaian cultural festivals as herein discussed, an area that appears not to have received adequate scholarly attention is the environmental sustainability aspects of Ghanaian festivals. Although Adom's (2017), phenomenological study of three traditional festivals (Opemso, Papa Nantwi & Apoo) in Ghana established that

such cultural festivals are good platforms for achieving environmental sustainability, corroborative documentation is scarce in the wider context of Ghana. The existing scholarship on Ghanaian festivals (Brako & Dennis, 2023; Navei, 2021; Agaasa & Ampa-Korsah, 2016; Duut, 2014; Nortey, 2009; Cole, 1975) tends to concentrate more on only cultural and artistic symbolisms as herein discussed. Meanwhile, in the case of Hungary, India, Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and other nations, studies focusing on cultural and environmental sustainability dimensions of festivals, greatly abound. A typical example is Mondal and Pandey's (2024) study, which contextualised the importance of cultural celebrations such as *Baha*, *Sarhul*, and *'Kunde Habba* in strengthening India's climate resilience. The Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden contexts have also been studied (Skogvang, 2021), just as the case of Hungary (Lőrincz, Ernszt & Csapó, 2022). The inadequacy of similar studies on cultural and environmental sustainability dimensions of traditional festivals from the Ghanaian context presents contextual and knowledge gaps. In an attempt to fill the prevailing gaps from the Ghanaian context, and to contribute to the stock of scientific knowledge regarding cultural and environmental sustainability dimensions of festivals, the current study examined the *Kukɔɔ* Festival of the indigenes of the Nimoro Division in the Sissala West District in the Upper West Region of northern Ghana. Specifically, the environmental sustainability consciousness associated with the *Kukɔɔ* festival is discussed just as its cultural iconography.

## Review of Related Literature

### Theoretical Model

The need for environmental sustainability is urgent due to the recent worrying revelation that the average sea level increased by 20 cm globally between 1900 and 2018; fossil fuel emissions of carbon dioxide have hit all-time highs; heatwaves, forest fires, and air pollution have also increased significantly; major greenhouse gas concentrations have also witnessed high increases, and the global mean surface temperature for the 2017-2021 period is among the highest of record (Guinot, Barghouti & Chiva, 2022). Not only that, the frequency and intensity of extreme weather and climate changes continue to increase in all regions of the world (Guinot, Barghouti & Chiva, 2022). These worrying developments are in sharp contrast with the letter and spirit of the 1987 novel report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which create global awareness of the detrimental effects of humans' socioeconomic activities on the natural surroundings and their implications for human survival (UN, 2015; WCED, 1987). As the issue of environmental degradation persists globally, environmentalists have coined similar theoretical models such as eco-innovation, sustainable innovation, green innovation, and environmental innovation to foster environmental sustainability in all human endeavours (Guinot, Barghouti & Chiva, 2022; Çetiner & Yenilmez, 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Loach, Rowley & Griffiths, 2017; Pansera, 2011; Andersen & Foxon, 2009). The current study, which sought to explore the *Kukɔɔ* festival within the ambit of cultural and environmental sustainability, aligns with the theoretical thoughts of Opoku's (2015) four-dimension sustainability model

which places a premium on the instrumentality of human social, cultural, and economic activities on environmental sustainability as observed in Figure 1.

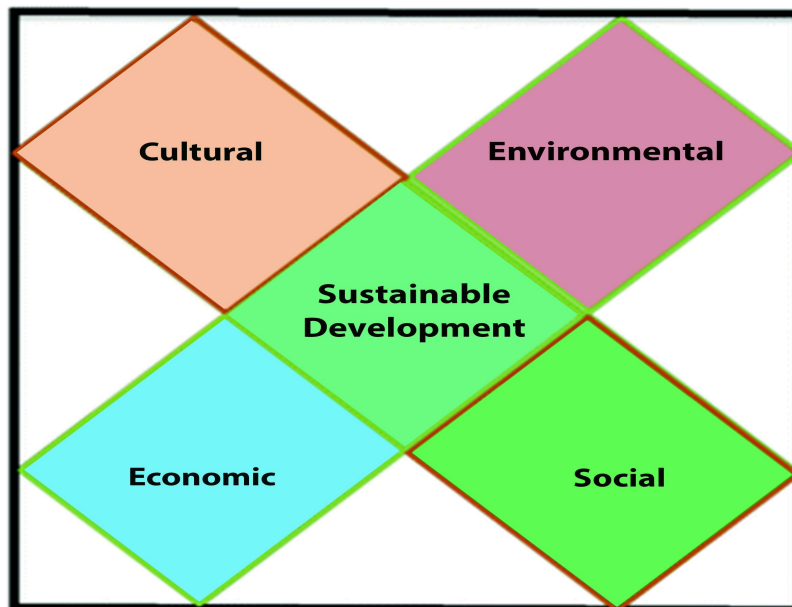


Figure 1: Four Dimensions Sustainability Model  
(Source: Opoku, 2015).

According to Opoku, as corroborated by Çetiner and Yenilmez (2021), the four-dimension sustainability model (Figure 1) highlights the inseparable connection between culture and environmental sustainability, in that the cultural practices of a people could promote or undermine environmental sustainability. Opoku further adds that since culture defines a society's awareness and attitude towards natural resources, it is essential in promoting sustainable development. It is for this reason that Soini and Dessein (2014) call for the integration of culture into sustainability discourse, as human actions, behaviours, and accounts, which are culturally embedded, are what play a crucial role in reaching sustainability objectives. While the environmental element of Opoku's model (Figure 1) centres on the natural resources of a community and how they are utilised, the social aspect of the model centres on the daily interactive relationship between and among people living in a community and how that affect their natural environment. The economic aspect of the model also focuses on the income-generating activities of the locals and their effect on nature. Also, the cultural element of Opoku's model equally relates to the cultural practices (festivals and others) of a community and their impact on the environment, the social and economic lives of such a community. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, all of these dimensions should be strategically prioritised and sustained (Opoku, 2015). Since the current study sought to examine the environmental and cultural sustainability dimensions of the *Kukɔɔ* festival of the Nimoro Division of Ghana, it succinctly aligns with Opoku's (2015) sustainability model. Particularly the fact that Opoku's theoretical model strategically prioritises the interplay between and among social sustainability, economic sustainability,

environmental sustainability, and cultural sustainability in achieving sustainable development, guided the current study to contextualise the *Kukuro* festival focusing on its environmental and cultural sustainability dimensions in the Nimoro Division of Ghana.

### **The Role of Cultural Festivals in Environmental and Cultural Sustainability**

Cultural festivals play cross-sectorial roles. Perry, Ager and Sitas, (2019) affirm that rather than narrowly viewing cultural festivals as a discrete sphere of activity, they integrate cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. The authors clarify that certain festivals seem to fall under certain categories: those that highlight cultural diversity and social cohesiveness; those that seem to be a part of an agenda for economic place-based tourism; those that celebrate specific artistic and cultural expressions, and those that serve as messengers for more general environmental or political messages. Ásványi and Jászberényi (2017) corroborate that the benefits of festivals transcend their sociocultural impacts to include social sustainability, economic sustainability and environmental sustainability of host communities. On social sustainability, Ásványi and Jászberényi argue that during cultural festivals, social relationships are strengthened when family and community members reunite with their internal and external relatives and friends. Also, yearly recurrent festival events congregate many people including visitors which not only promote socialisation but can lead to the generation of additional income through sales of cultural relics, hospitality inflows and others, which impact the economic sustainability of the host community (Ásványi & Jászberényi, 2017). Festivals equally provide a good opportunity for the organisers to cultivate favourable thoughts in the participants about environmental sustainability (Ásványi & Jászberényi, 2017). In Hungary to be specific, Lőrincz, Ernszt and Csapó (2022) found that there is already the emergence of festivals mediating the elements of sustainability, and that Hungary is increasingly adopting sustainable practices in festival organisation, setting a positive example for non-sustainable events. In terms of sociocultural sustainability, Hungarian cultural festivals are perhaps the strongest link with the locals, where the local culture is prominently presented and embraced through the exhibition of various cultural artefacts, (Lőrincz, Ernszt & Csapó, 2022). Also, Skogvang's (2021) study of the cultural and environmental underpinnings of selected indigenous festivals in Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway, reports that, in addition to teaching children and teenagers to respect and enjoy nature, participants gained a greater understanding of culture through such indigenous festivals which helped them to become more conscious of climate change and environmental issues. In India, a study conducted on cultural festivals such as *Kunde Habba*, *Baha*, and *Sarhula*, reveals that the rituals, dances, and arts showcased during the festivals act as stimulants for sustainable practices, community resilient, and biodiversity protection (Mondal & Pandey, 2024).

In Ghana, a plethora of studies corroborate that cultural festivals significantly contribute to cultural sustainability as the identity, cultural heritage and values of Ghanaians are variously showcased across the country through traditional festivals (Brako & Dennis, 2023; Navei, 2021; Agaasa & Ampa-Korsah, 2016; Duut, 2014; Nortey, 2009; Cole, 1975; Adom, 2017).

Although there appears to be a scarcity of literature on the impact of cultural festivals on environmental sustainability in Ghana, Adom's (2017) investigation into how Ghanaian cultural celebrations such as Opemso, Papa Nantwi and Apoo could be appropriate platforms to achieve ecological sustainability, is worthy of note. Adom reports that sacred groves play a part in the celebration of Opemso, Papa Nantwi, and the Apoo cultural festivals. Such important sacred grooves are sustained by some communal taboos and customs that prohibit people from entering or destroying them (Adom, 2017). This aligns with the general context of African societies where sacred forests are traditionally protected with various cultural beliefs and taboos for their spirituality, food, herbal and other benefits (Adjeketa, Shireku and Obado (2024; Sanga, 2021; Daniel, Udeagha & Jacob, 2016; Ray, Chandran & Ramachandra, 2014; Ikeke, 2013). Drawing inferences from the Opemso, Papa Nantwi, and Apoo celebrations, Adom concludes that cultural festivals are good platforms for achieving environmental sustainability in Ghana. To achieve this, host communities and the ecological agencies in Ghana need to collaborate in adapting strategies such as environmental education and awareness creation to enhance and stimulate the principles of biodiversity conservation and sustainability in the participants. This will go a long way to minimising the high level of environmental degradation and its attendant severe consequences of climate change currently being felt in various ways across the globe, and Ghana is no exception.

## Methodology

### Research Paradigm and Design

The research paradigm chosen for a study guides scientific discovery and helps illuminate the quality of findings as sound evidence for scientific consumption (Park, Konge & Artino, 2020). Given that, the current study adopted the interpretivism's paradigmatic mythology to reconstruct the subjective experiences (realities) of the Chiefs and people of the Nimoro Division of the Zini (Buwa) Traditional Area in the Sissala West District (Figure 2) of northern Ghana on the environmental and cultural sustainability dimensions of their annual *Kukɔɔ* festival using the lenses of qualitative ethnographic design. The adoption of interpretivism, within the confines of ethnographic design, was premised on the argument that truth, knowledge and realities are subjective, as well as historically and culturally situated, based on the lived experiences of people and their contextual interpretations (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022; Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021; Ryan, 2018). Also, the researcher is an indigene of Nimoro Division and quite understands the ethnographic dynamics of the study area thereby situating the study within an emic ethnographic perspective (Morris, Leung, Ames & Lickel, (1999). However, the personal ethnographic experience of the researcher did not biasedly influence the outcome of the study.

### Population, Sampling and Sample Size

The Sisaala indigenes of the Nimoro Division constitute the population of the study. Since the study focuses on environmental and cultural sustainability dimensions of the *Kukɔɔ* festival, the eligible respondents were cultural custodians and people with a repository of knowledge or experience in *Kukɔɔ* festival. Among the Sisaala indigenes of the Nimoro Division, Chiefs

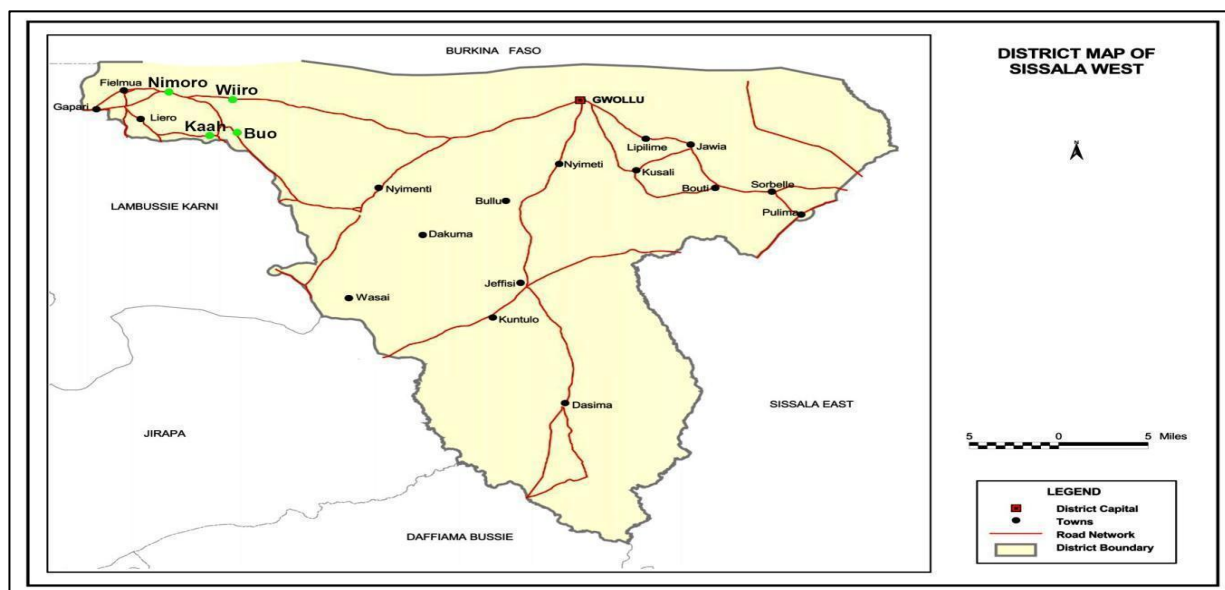
are the keepers of culture. Therefore, four (4) Chiefs in-charge of the four communities (Nimoro, Kaah, Buo & Wiiro) that constituted the Nimoro Division were automatically sampled using the census sampling technique. Also, three (3) experienced elderly indigenes of not less than seventy (70) years of age were purposively sampled from each of the four communities in the Nimoro Division based on their homogeneous repositories of indigenous cultural knowledge about the traditions, festivals and customs of the Nimoro Division. Since the activities of the youth are critical in ensuring environmental and cultural sustainability, the Youth Leaders of all four communities in the Nimoro Division were sampled using homogeneous purposive sampling technique. In all, twenty (20) participants constituted the total sample size.

### Data Collection and Analytical Approach

In terms of research instruments, participant observation, semi-structured personal interviews, and photography tools were used in the form of triangulation to gather qualitative data, which affirm the authenticity and trustworthiness of the study’s findings as Lincoln and Guba (1985) have recommended. With the triangulated data set, the study followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analytical approach comprising data familiarisation; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing the themes; defining and naming themes, and lastly, producing the final report, which empirically highlight the environmental and cultural sustainability dimensions of *Kvkrɔ* festivals.

### Ethical Considerations

The study also complied with the ethical considerations required of interpretivists by obtaining the written informed consent of the respondents to voluntarily participate in the study. Pseudonyms were also used in place of the real names of the participants to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. However, unedited photographic scenes were incorporated into the study under the express permission of the participants.



**Figure 2:** District Map of the Study Area (Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

## Results and Discussion

This section of the study contains a brief description of the Nimoro Division. It also thematically presents a bifocal discursive analysis of the key findings of the environmental and cultural sustainability dimensions of the *Kukɔɔ* festival of the indigenes of the Nimoro Division of northern Ghana.

### **Ethnographic Background of the People of Nimoro Division**

The people of Nimoro Division trace their ethnographic roots to the Buwa clan situated in the Sissala West District in the Upper West Region of Ghana. They pride themselves as Buwaala (Buwa people) who share a common cultural and historical lineage as consensually asserted by the Chiefs and elderly indigenes interviewed in Nimoro Division. As a result of their Buwa historical lineage, the people of Nimoro Division share common indigenous customs and traditions concerning birth rites, puberty rites, marriage customs, funeral rites, worship, allodial land lordship, chieftaincy system, and family headship among others. If even differences exist out of migration; inter and cross-ethnic marriages, and distance, those differences are marginal else any major deviation from Buwaala sociocultural lifestyles could be occasioned by globalisation, the influence of foreign religions and their attendant negative acculturation effects on Buwa people, as corroborated by all the respondents. According to the Chiefs and elderly respondents, the aforementioned multifaceted factors have contributed to the marginal variations of the Buwaali dialect of the Sisaali language. The Chiefs and elderly indigenes interviewed in the Nimoro Division consensually asserted that they speak Buwaali (a variant of Sisaali language), which they hold in high esteem. They opined that language (dialect) is the lubricant of culture with what it takes to either entrench or adulterate the cultural ideals of a people.

Regarding the influence of marriage on the dialectical variations of the Buwaali dialect of Sisaali, it was reported that some of their wives were married from non-Bawaali-speaking communities with different dialectical variations. Since mothers, in bringing up their wards first acculturate them linguistically with their primary dialects due to their frequent interaction with their children, it tends to influence the spoken language of the people in general. Many such instances exist in Buwa and Nimoro Division is no exception and, therefore, contributes to the dialectical variations in and between communities in Nimoro Division and Buwa in general, as argued by the Chiefs and elderly respondents.

Also, it was revealed that the Nimoro Divisional Area, and Buwa in general, is heavily patronised by migrant farmers from Burkina Faso. Some of such immigrant stranger-settlers in Buwa including their orphans, due to hunger and out of hospitality, have been assimilated into some indigenous Buwala homes. Although the elderly indigenes are much aware of some of the immigrant-turned-Sisaala people living with them, disclosure of their identities remains customarily confidential, as asserted by the Chiefs and Elders of Nimoro Division. A respondent (Personal communication, June 23, 2024) further added that:

...More on the issue of migration is the case that some of the Trans-Sahara traders who came from different parts of Africa around 1749 passing through Nimoro Division to southern Ghana, remained and have also become assimilated Sisaala people of the area. ... So, no matter how some of such strangers including orphans and the Trans-Sahara traders who were assimilated over the years into our homes attempt to speak our indigenous Buwaali dialect of Sisaali, there will be noticeable variations due to their ascent among other reasons contributing to the dialectical variations in Nimoro Division and Buwa in general. ...Another critical aspect of migration is the massive drifting of Buwa indigenes to southern Ghana for non-existing greener pastures. Many of such people have always returned home with borrowed Akan, Hausa and other alien words some of them, whether advertently or inadvertently, have found their way into the nowadays Buwaali dialect of Sisaali.

Also, distance was identified as a factor that has gradually influenced the current marginal linguistic variations in and between communities in the Nimoro Division and Buwa in general, because the communities are far apart, and so, the people do not interact daily. Notwithstanding the intra and inter-dialectical variations in and between Buwa communities, the Chiefs and elderly respondents variously corroborated that those marginal dialectical differences are minimal and hardly noticeable to dismember any of the Buwa communities from their mother Buwaali linguistic origin. It, therefore, came as a huge surprise to the Chiefs and Elders of Nimoro Division the linguistic basis of Luri's (2023, p. a790) attempt to dismember Nimoro, Kaah, Buo and Wiuro from their Buwaali linguistic origin and misclassified as "merj, ele and e speaking communities" under Bosillu dialect of Bosie community in the Lambussie Traditional Area in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The wordlist provided in Table 1 formed the basis of Luri's misclassification.

**Table 1:** Luri's Sisaali dialectical classification Attempt

SIN	DIALECT								GLOSS
	BOSILLU	BUWAALI	GBIENI	GELBAGLI	KPATOLIE	PASALI	TUMULUD	KASEM	
1	<i>be:</i>	<i>be:</i>	<i>beki:</i>	<i>beki:</i>	<i>be:</i>	<i>be:</i>	<i>be:</i>	<i>be</i>	What
2	<i>muri</i>	<i>mu:ri</i>	<i>mú:ri</i>	<i>Muro</i>	<i>Muro</i>	<i>Muro</i>	<i>mu:ro</i>	<i>balanya</i>	Small
3	<i>halla</i>	<i>haal</i>	<i>haalv</i>	<i>há:rv</i>	<i>Haŋ</i>	<i>Haŋ</i>	<i>há:la</i>	<i>ka:ni</i>	Woman
4	<i>balla</i>	<i>baal</i>	<i>baalv</i>	<i>ba:rv</i>	<i>ba:l</i>	<i>ba:l</i>	<i>ba:la</i>	<i>ba:rv</i>	Man
5	<i>nennɔ</i>	<i>nɛŋ</i>	<i>naraŋ</i>	<i>nɔ:</i>	<i>Nal</i>	<i>Nal</i>	<i>nɔ:</i>	<i>nɔ:nɔ</i>	Person
6	<i>va:</i>	<i>va:</i>	<i>vaha</i>	<i>Vaha</i>	<i>Vaha</i>	<i>Vaha</i>	<i>Vaha</i>	<i>kukura</i>	Dog
7	<i>tu:wo</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>da:ŋ</i>	<i>tya</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>tieo</i>	Tree
8	<i>bi:</i>	<i>bi:/du</i> <i>o</i>	<i>bi:/do</i> <i>ho</i>	<i>bi:</i>	<i>bi:</i>	<i>Biye</i>	<i>bi:ŋ/do</i> <i>ho</i>	<i>tieobu</i>	Seed
9	<i>duo</i>	<i>doŋ</i>	<i>Doŋ</i>	<i>Do</i>	<i>do:</i>	<i>do:</i>	<i>Doŋ</i>	<i>do:</i>	Sleep
10	<i>suwɛ</i>	<i>suwɛ</i>	<i>su:</i>	<i>suwa</i>	<i>suwa</i>	<i>suwa</i>	<i>su:</i>	<i>tu:</i>	Die

Source: Luri (2023).

The Chiefs and elders stressed that there exists no shred of mutual perspicuity between the dialect of Nimoro, Kaah, Buo and Wiuro of the Nimoro Division with specific reference to the cognates of word list selectively provided by Luri in Table 1 as the basis of his Bosillu dialectical misclassification. Instead, the word list provided by Luri under Buwaali much more aligns with the Nimoro, Kaah, Buo and Wiuro dialects of the Nimoro Division as corroborated by all the respondents. Therefore, the Chiefs and elderly indigenes of Nimoro Division, stressed that Luri's generalised misclassification of Nimoro, Kaah, Wiuro and Buo as *men, ele* and *e* speaking communities under Bosillu dialect is extremely skewed, misleading, and bears no semblance with any linguistic dialectical classification required of dialectologists. However, the Chiefs and elderly respondents attributed Luri's dialectical misclassification to his concession that his attempt which resulted in seven Sisaali dialectical classifications, was based on the cognates of wordlist (Table 1) gathered across rural and urban areas of Sisaala communities "irrespective of internal variations such as gender, age and social factors" (Luri, p. a784). Since critical variables like age, gender and other social factors were not considered by Luri, it suggests that anybody within his study area was eligible for sampling and data elicitation including women and children. Per the context of the people of Buwa (Nimoro Division), as herein discussed, gathering cognates from women (wives) whose primary dialect might be different from that of their Buwa communities of marriage, as well as children who cannot speak their dialects correctly tend to yield unempirical and misleading results particularly when generalised conclusions are drawn by Luri. Also, if Luri indeed used the variationist approach of intense fieldwork to validate his wordlist, how come the Chiefs and elderly indigenes of Nimoro Division, who are bearers of indigenous knowledge and authentic dialectical repositories of their communities, were not contacted for empirical data elicitation, as questioned by the respondents.

The argument of the respondents aligns with traditional dialectological research methods that contend that in the study of the dialect of a people, older (mostly male) speakers who lived all of their lives in the community in which they were born should be contacted (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980) because they have "the 'purest, most vernacular' speech" (Starks & McRobbie-Utasi, 2001, p.81). This reiterates the fact that researchers who have an interest in conducting research should endeavour to contact the eligible respondents or sources for data elicitation to promote the scientific admittance of their findings. Particularly, the case that critical elements such as research approach or paradigm, sampling techniques and criteria, sample size, data collection instruments, and others, which are critically required of traditional dialectological and sociolinguistics research (Alshangiti, 2022; Hernández-Campoy, 2014; Schleeff & Meyerhoff, 2010; Starks & McRobbie-Utasi, 2001; Labov, 1981; 1972), are either conspicuously missing or contextually undefined in Luri's methodology, create serious scientific inquiry deficits in his attempted study. Therefore, with such methodological gaps, the credibility, validity, authenticity, or trustworthiness of the findings of Luri's (2023) publication falls flat in the face of the scientific inquiry threshold.

## Historical Foundation and Relevance of *Kukɔɔ* Festival

The study found that in the time past, the Sisaala people of the Nimoro Divisional Area celebrated many festivals annually. Notable among these festivals included the *First Fruits Festival* (celebrated at the harvest of early beans, yam & maize), the *Thanksgiving Harvest Festival* (celebrated after the harvest of main crops), and the *Land Conservation Festival* otherwise known as *Kukɔɔ* Festival (celebrated before the start of the next cropping season). These valuable traditional cultural practices conserved the natural environment for the forebears of the Nimoro Division whose legacies are still beneficial to the current generation of the division. In a speech delivered by the Nimoro Divisional Chief (Personal communication, May 18, 2024) during the 2024 *Kukɔɔ* festival, it was revealed that:

...During the era of our [the] forebears [of Nimoro Division], we were not allowed to just go stand somewhere and start felling trees and starting a farm. We practised shifting cultivation in order to conserve the land. And it was the Elders who together decided which places should be cropped and which places should be kept fallow. Above all, each Sisaala community kept and maintained a permanent forested area or traditional grove on their lands. In my divisional area, each indigenous community has a traditional grove known as *Kukɔɔ*.

The accounts of the Divisional Chief of Nimoro Division on the traditional cultural practices adopted by their forebears to conserve the natural environment of Nimoro Division were unanimously corroborated by all the respondents of the various respective communities. It was ascertained that the siting of new farms was done with the express permission of the elders as a measure of conserving the lands. Also, felling of trees for charcoal burning was uncommon. If charcoal had to be burnt, it was strictly done from dead and dried trees at approved sites. Even, women were not allowed to gather firewood indiscriminately except from dead or dried plants and trees around the precincts of farms. Concerning the existence of ancient traditional groves in communities within the Nimoro Divisional area, the study found at the western precincts of the Nimoro community the existence of *Vizene* (Figure 3A), which the Nimoro respondents concurrently referred to as an ancient sacred forest revered for its enormous spiritual protection and other traditional functionalities. The respondents in the Kaah community equally pointed to Kaah *Kukɔɔ* (Figure 3B), a sacred forest that stretches along the eastern part of the community, known for its time-tested spirituality and protection of the Kaah people. Figure 4A and Figure 4B respectively display traditionally conserved grooves at Buo and Wiiro communities.



A. Nimoro *Vizene*



B. Kaah *Kukɔɔ*

**Figure 3:** Aerial View of Nimoro and Kaah Traditional Grooves (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



A. Conserved Groove at Buo



B. Conserved Groove at Wiiro

**Figure 4(A&B):** Aerial View of Buo and Wiiro Traditional Grooves (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

One key finding that emerged from the accounts of all the respondents is that the ancient sacred forest reserves in Nimoro Division are custodians of diversely robust spiritual prowess and potent herbal plants. This is consistent with available literature that asserts that forests were sacredly conserved in precolonial African societies for spiritual, herbal and other purposes (Adjeketa et al., 2024; Sanga, 2021; Adom, 2017; Daniel et al., 2016; Ray et al., 2014; Ikeke, 2013). On the management and protection of the sacred forest reserves in the Nimoro Division, all the respondents unanimously mentioned that some ancient customary taboos and beliefs governed the sacred forest (*Kukɔɔ*) reserves which aligns with the findings of previous studies on how sacred forests are generally managed in ancient Africa (Sanga, 2021; Daniel et al., 2016; Ray et al., 2014; Ikeke, 2013). For instance, cutting trees either in full or in parts is strictly forbidden in the sacred forest. Also, entry into the sacred forests is forbidden. However, it was explained that the only rare instance the sacred forest is entered by a select few in the Nimoro Division is when herbs are to be ritually sourced or when the forest deity is to be worshipped. According to the respondents, the customary taboos governing the sacred forest, land use in general, and the dire consequences of breaking any of the taboos and beliefs are known by every member of the community.

However, all the respondents bemoaned that these time-honoured traditional practices that conserved the natural environment have waned partly due to the ravages of modernity, the

confusion between indigenous culture and the fervour of new religious practices in the area which have led to a new craze of indiscipline and disrespect for the authority in the area. In light of this, the Nimoro Divisional Chief, in his speech during the revived *Kukɔɔ* festival, impressed on the Chiefs and people of the area to take steps to ensure that the new craze of indiscipline and disrespect for the authority does not lead to the dissipation of the time-honoured traditional practices and environmental sustainability practices that were bequeathed to them by their forebears. One such step is the revival of the *Kukɔɔ* festival.

### ***Kukɔɔ* Festival as a Rejuvenator of Environmental Sustainability Consciousness in Nimoro Division**

*Kukɔɔ* is a Sisaali term which means forest. *Gberu* in Sisaali also contextually means celebration or festival. Therefore, *Kukɔɔ gberu*, as the people of Nimoro Division termed it, literally translates to the celebration of the forest underscoring the profound cultural and spiritual connection between the people of Nimoro Division and their natural environment. According to the respondents, the *Kukɔɔ* festival is celebrated in honour of the forebears of Nimoro Division who had preserved the land through their foresight and traditional ingenuities. The Nimoro Divisional Chief referred to available archival records that showed that as long ago as 1749, the Trans-Saharan trading route passed through the Nimoro Division using the Nimoro community as a rest stop. "The traders who rode on camels and donkeys found Nimoro and its people to be hospitable, and its well-conserved land full of food to feed themselves and their camels and donkeys" (Nimoro Divisional Chief, 2024). However, the Chiefs, and Elders observed with despondency the recent environmental crisis bedevilling all the communities within the Nimoro Division with the looming risk of losing their forest ecology including economic trees like Shea (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) and *Dawadawa* (African locus bean tree) as well as the potent herbal plants of the area. The respondents corroborated that the Shea trees provided nutritious fruits with their nuts used to produce organic butter for cooking, herbal, and cosmetic products for skin and hair care as affirmed by Maanikuu and Peker (2017). On the other hand, the *Dawadawa* seeds are processed into a delicious soup ingredient locally called *chuo*, which is of high nutritional value with the possibility of naturally curing many health conditions as affirmed by the findings of Ham's (2017) study. It was also revealed that the women of the division majorly relied on these trees economically. In the past, it was therefore sacred to destroy these trees because of their economic, herbal and other values as the respondents variously asserted.

However, the Nimoro Divisional Chief lamented that the traditional knowledge and herbal medicinal prowess of the people of Nimoro Division are at risk of extinction due to the ongoing destruction of the vegetation through practices like bush burning and indiscriminate tree cutting for commercial charcoal production. The Chiefs consensually expressed their frustrations over their limited legal authority to combat deforestation and other environmental crimes effectively in the Nimoro Division.

... Many Ghanaian Chiefs have bemoaned the lack of empowerment of the Chiefs to handle more adequately persons who commit environmental offences including the deforestation of our land. Such empowerment and equipment has to come from the Parliament of Ghana, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies together with their principal, the Executive. These governmental institutions, for electoral advantages, are unwilling to act where offenders are members of their political parties. But the Chiefs do not need anybody's vote and will act to protect our land if properly equipped.

In the absence of such legal authority of the Chiefs to curb environmental degradation, the Chiefs and Elders of Nimoro Division were left with no option but to retrospectively revive their time-honoured traditional means of environmental sustainability. *Kukɔɔ gberu* (Forest festival), was therefore revived on May 18, 2024, to rejuvenate and instill in the current generation of Nimoro Division the same consciousness and dedication to environmental conservation that their forebears had. The festival underscores the critical role that the natural environment plays, not only in providing fruits and food but also in offering herbal plants essential for treating various critical ailments such as fibroid, breast cancer, infertility, and others that are difficult to cure through conventional means. "For example this [Nimoro] community can boast of treating and curing breast cancer using herbs with 99.9% success rate, whilst our hospitals will simply cut off the breast" (Nimoro Divisional Chief, 2024).

Per the aforementioned significance of the forest ecology in the Nimoro Division, the respondents concurred that the revival of the *Kukɔɔ* festival tends to rejuvenate their consciousness about the diverse worth of the forest and the natural environment in general. Particularly, naming the festival, *Kukɔɔ*, which literary means forest, was a deliberate strategy to always remind, and retune their mindset to the diverse importance of the forest in their lives and the need for them to collectively sustain it for their posterity, as variously asserted by all the respondents. The Youth Leaders interviewed pledged their support to rally the entirety of the youth in their respective communities to achieve the objective of the *Kukɔɔ* festival of averting environmental degradation in the area since they were duly involved in the processes leading to the revival of the festival. According to all the respondents, the sustained success of the *Kukɔɔ* festival will honour the legacy of their forebears, preserve their natural and cultural heritage, and ensure a sustainable future for the prosperity of the current and future generations. The respondents further argued that the massive attendance by the Chiefs, Elders, women, and the youth of Nimoro Division, guests, political actors and local district authorities demonstrate high interest in the festival. It was also found that well-tailored environmental sensitisation speeches were delivered by key personalities during the festival to rejuvenate the environmental sustainability consciousness of the people of Nimoro Division. A respondent stated that:

The environmental sensitisation speeches delivered during the *Kukɔɔ* festival were adequate to retune or psyche the mindset of the attendees to revert to the time-honoured traditional norms of our forebears that conserved afforested lands [Figure

4A&B] in each of the four communities of Nimoro Division. We now have the willful motivation to engage in afforestation while minimising if not preventing acts of environmental degradation for our collective good (Youth Leader One, Personal communication, June 24, 2024).

The foregoing discussion indicates that the maiden *Kukɔɔ* festival witnessed the congregation of all who matter (the chiefs, elders, women and the youth) in the Nimoro Division, thereby providing a convenient platform for environmental education. Therefore, the sustenance of the festival and its patronage will go a long way in consolidating the environmental sustainability consciousness of Nimoro Division where they will willingly embrace afforestation and/or environmental sustainability practices for their survival and the posterity of their future generations.

### **Cultural Nuances of *Kukɔɔ* Festival**

The maiden celebration of the *Kukɔɔ* Festival at Nimoro on May 18, 2024, witnessed massive attendance by the Chiefs, Elders Women and sons and daughters of the Nimoro Division, guests from neighbouring districts of the Upper West Region, and Burkina Faso. The overlord of the Zini (Buwa) traditional area and his royal entourage were also present. With such massive attendance, the diversely undiluted indigenous Sisaala cultural and artistic heritage was showcased. These included colourful displays of smock regalia that revealed royalty, social status, and the Sisaala typical dress cultural identity of northern Ghana. The wearing of smock regalia for traditional festivals as the indigenous dress fashion of the Sisaala and northern people of Ghana is affirmed by a plethora of previous studies (Navei, 2024; 2023a; 2023b; 2021; Acquah, et al., 2017; Essel & Amisah, 2015; Duut, 2014). Therefore, it is noteworthy that the massive adornment of smocks during the *Kukɔɔ* festival as generally observed from Figure 5 to 15 tends to promote and preserve the smock as the indigenous Sisaala dress identity of Nimoro Division. Also, the festival showcased both male (Figures 12 & 13) and female (Figure 14) traditional dances using local instruments (Figure 11). The use of a pot and calabash for the performance of the opening libation (Figure 9) before the official commencement of the festival tends to teach many of the youth and some novices how traditional Sisaala libation is performed. The Youth Leaders admitted that the current generation of youth in their respective communities in the Nimoro Division is missing out on the rich cultural ideals of the area due to modernity and the influence of foreign religions. They therefore saw the celebration of the *Kukɔɔ* Festival, which witnessed massive participation of the youth, as a leeway to the restoration of the fast-dying cultural heritage of Nimoro Division. Some of the key indigenous cultural and artistic heritage of Nimoro Division displayed during the 2024 *Kukɔɔ* Festival are herein pictorially revealed.



**Figure 5 (A&B):** The Arrival and Procession of the Zini (Buwa) Paramount Chief to the Festival Venue (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

Heavily costumed in three-piece indigenous Sisaala royal smock regalia (Figure 5), the Zini (Buwa) Paramount Chief graced the festival. The golden intricately designed smock regalia of the Paramount Chief (Figure 5B) had an innerwear, a pair of trousers and a voluminous top all made of several yards of the smock fabric defining him as a noble, royal, and high-class personality. Studies affirmed that such a style of indigenous dressing is symptomatic of eminent Chiefs and a few nobles of northern Ghana (Navei, 2023a; Acquaaah, Amissah & deGraft-Yankson, 2017). The hat of the paramount Chief, which uniquely aligned with his dress, was heavily appli- qued with rectangular leather-cased accessories of multiple ochres. The leather-cased appliques on the Chief’s hat (Figure 5B) may not be ordinary accessories but spiritually fortified amulets with magical potency to repel evil forces and neutralise gunshots as reported by studies (Navei, 2023; 2021; Fusheini, 2020; Fusheini & Adu-Agyem, 2019; Agaasa et al., 2018; Ademin, 2016). Be that the case, it suggests that the Paramount Chief of Zini (Buwa) Traditional Area graced the 2024 *Kukɔɔ* Festival not only royally dressed but spiritually fortified against malevolent attacks if any.



**Figure 6:** Zini (Buwa) Paramount Chief (Right) Exchanging Pleasantries with Nimoro Divisional Chief (left) (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

Figure 6 displays the Paramount Chief of Zini (Buwa) Traditional Area (right) and the Nimoro Divisional Chief (left) in front view having a tête-à-tête during exchanges of pleasantries. This clearly illustrates the cordial relationship, respect, and unity required of the two eminent Chiefs to champion the progressive development of the Nimoro Divisional Area and the Buwa Traditional Area in particular. Therefore, the 2024 *Kukɔɔ* Festival provided the interface for such a renewed social cohesion between the eminent Chiefs for development.



**Figure 7:** Nimoro Divisional Chief (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



**Figure 8:** Chiefs (front row) and Elders (back row) of Nimoro Divisional Area (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

In Figure 7, the distinguished Chief of the Nimoro Divisional Area is depicted wearing a white pointed hat. Both the colour and shape of his hat carry symbolic meanings. The white colour signifies his cheerful mood, while the pointed shape symbolises his superiority over his sub-chiefs within the Nimoro Division. A comparison of the chief's hat with those worn by his sub-chiefs as observed in Figure 8, clearly illustrates this distinction. The distinction is affirmed by the findings of previous studies, which reveal that when local hats are worn in erect position during public gatherings in northern Ghana, they symbolise the supremacy of higher Chiefs over lower Chiefs (Navei, 2021; Acquah, Amissah & Yankson, 2017; Essel & Amissah, 2015). Another key cultural emblem observed during the 2024 *Kukɔɔ* festival was the use of walking sticks by Chiefs only (Figures 7 & 8). Seeking clarification from the Chiefs and elderly respondents, the study ascertained that in the Sisaala chieftaincy traditions of Nimoro Division, the walking stick of a chief symbolises his authority as similarly observed in the case of Tumu Traditional Area (Navei, 2021). For this symbolism, the public holding of walking sticks by the Nimoro Divisional Chief (Figure 7), his sub-chiefs (Figure 8) and the Paramount Chief of Zini (Buwa) Traditional Area (Figure 5B) during *Kukɔɔ* festival, defines them as eminent Chiefs. However, noble elders (age-wise) may also use walking sticks as supports to aid their movements.



**Figure 9:** Performance of Libation during *Kukɔɔ* Festival  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

One significant component of the indigenous culture of the indigenes of Nimoro Division that was showcased during the festival was the performance of libation by *Dazuuna-tina*. Per the Sisaala culture of the Nimoro Division, calabash-ladle is indigenously used in libation performance. *Dazuuna-tina*, therefore, derives its nomenclature from that context. *Dazuuna*, in Sisaala, means ladle but with specific reference to indigenous calabash-ladle whereas *tina* means owner. So, *Dazuuna-tina* contextually translates into the person responsible for performing libation in a community. He is one of the most important personalities of the community otherwise known as the spiritualist because his word, at the instance of libation performance, officially summons both the ancestors and the time-honoured deities of the community to actions for communal good. Since the festival was held in the Nimoro community, customs required that the opening prayer (performance of libation) was done by the Nimoro *Dazuuna-tina*. In the company of a few Elders, Nimoro *Dazuuna-tina* performed the libation by inviting the presence and guidance of God Almighty, the ancestors and time-honoured deities of the area to ensure a successful festivity. Using a calabash-ladle to draw water from a pot (Figure 9), the *Dazuuna-tina* performed the libation by intermittently dropping the water to Mother Earth amidst audible incantations. This reveals the instrumentality of artefacts such as calabash-ladle and pot for the performance of libation among the indigenous culture of the Sisaala people of Nimoro Division which was publicly showcased during *Kukɔɔ* festival. The fact that Ghanaian youth have nowadays alarmingly assimilated and promoted foreign religions and cultures to the extent that they look down on their very own indigenous cultural practices (Navei, 2023a; 2021; Ofori et al., 2021; Dennis, 2018), exhibiting the libation traditions of the people of Nimoro Division during the *Kukɔɔ* festival tends to promote and preserve the practice for posterity, as corroborated by all the respondents.



**Figure 10:** *Gɔkɛɛ* (Praise-singers) Displaying their Creativity at the *Kukɔɔ* festival (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

As a typical Sisaala festival, the *Kukɔɔ* celebration witnessed the presence and fascinating creativity of Sisaala praise singers (Figure 10). It was explained that *gɔkɔ* refers to a single praise-singer while *gɔkɛɛ* is the plural form, thus praise-singers. According to the Chiefs and elderly respondents, *gɔkɛɛ* (Figure 10) are a group of creatives whose carefully crafted oral appellations, lubricated by a harmonious striking melody of local instruments (hoe-blades and rings), innately inspire both the dead (ancestors) and the living to rise to action. The study further found that in the Sisaala culture of the Nimoro Division, praise singers are essential in the keeping of oral traditions due to their creative use of lyrical narratology, which hinges on the history, values, and accomplishments of a community, to honour and immortalise the present and past heroes of such a community. It was typified that *gɔkɛɛ* have the creative ability to dig deep into the history and lineage of important persons and use same to compose a piece of music which arouses pleasurable actions in the audience. The Chiefs and Elderly respondents consensually asserted that the creativity of *gɔkɛɛ* is primarily brought to the fore during traditional funeral celebrations, as Tengan (1990) affirms, but not excluding indigenous festivals, durbar of Chiefs and any other important sociocultural celebration. Therefore, the cultural manifestations of the lyrical narratological works of *gɔkɛɛ*, their honouring words of appellation of the titles and dignity of the Chiefs, and the participants in entirety at the full glare of the youth of the area, tend to preserve and promote the Sisaala *gɔkɛɛ* traditions of Nimoro Division as asserted by the Youth Leaders (Figure 10).



A. Fourteen-Key Xylophone with Its Beaters Atop



B. Youth Xylophonists at Work

**Figure 11 (A & B):** The Indigenous Sisaala Xylophone of Nimoro Division  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

Figure 11(A & B) displays the indigenous Sisaala musical instrument known locally as *Zensi* (xylophone). The study found that *Zensi* is a valuable cultural artefact inevitably used during the performance of typical Sisaala funerals, and other communal celebrations preserving and promoting the cultural heritage as well as enhancing social cohesion between and among the people of the Nimoro Divisional area. The Chiefs and elderly respondents corroborated that *Zensi* is made of a purposefully designed sloppy wooden armature with graduated sizes of keys made of rosewood resting atop varied sizes of resonant gourds (Figure 11A & B). According to the respondents, rosewood is chosen for the keys due to its durability and ability to produce the desired melodious sound. According to the Chiefs and elderly respondents, though xylophones nowadays come with varied sizes and number of keys, a standard Sisaala xylophone has 17 keys. The keys of *Zensi* simultaneously and exponentially correlate with the resonant gourds, and when played by a xylophonist, convey sequential and rhythmic notes of melody of *kle* (high), *buyieme* (mid) and *zenyu* (bass). The study further established that xylophonists are well respected in the Nimoro Division because of their inevitable customary roles of playing ritual xylophonic rhythms during traditional funerals to usher the dead to the ancestral world as well as skillfully producing indigenous Sisaala

xylophonic entertainment melodies for varied joyous performances. It was stressed that though creativity plays a part, the melody of the xylophone is largely determined by *zein-nala* (innate gift or the might of the xylophone spirit/deity) which comes in grades. Therefore, xylophonists accord reverence to supremacy and seniority between and among themselves. However, colonialism, modernity and or foreign religions, which have introduced restrictions and misconceptions about the xylophone, have negatively affected its cultural use as bemoaned by the Chiefs and elderly respondents of the Nimoro Division. The majority of the people of the Nimoro Division are Christian and Islamic converts who not only have their prescribed ways of performing funerals, and other celebrations but have demonised many Sisaala cultural practices including the use of xylophones for funerals and other celebrations as affirmed by all the respondents.

The alarming decline in indigenous Sisaala cultural practices is not only limited to the Nimoro Division but is similarly found in the case of the Tumu in the Sissala East Municipality where foreign faith-based stigmatisation of Sisaala cultural activities is prevalent (Navei, 2023a). Navei admits that though there exists an intersection between religion and culture, the two must not be misconstrued to be the same. Religion, which bothers on faith, is a subset of culture, whereas, culture generally hinges on identity construction (Navei, 2023a). Owing to the uncontested close relation between religion and culture, Navei calls for a harmoniously fair assimilation of both religion and culture to ensure social progress since religious fanatics without a culture have no identity (Navei, 2023; Sibani, 2018). Therefore, the deployment of xylophones, for diverse cultural performances during the 2024 *Kukɔɔ* festival, which was massively patronised by the Chiefs and Elders (Figure 12), youth (Figure 13), women (Figure 14), and children (Figure 15) of Nimoro Division, tend to promote and preserve the use of xylophones as an indigenous musical instrument and its associated diverse indigenous Sisaala cultural songs, music and dances. A good development observed is that all the xylophonists at the festival (Figure 11) were young people, suggesting the sustenance of the art in the area.



**Figure 12:** Chiefs and Elders of Nimoro Division Performing Indigenous Sisaala Xylophonic *Zencho* Dance with Cheers of Ululations from Women (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



**Figure 13** Youth of Nimoro Division Performing Indigenous Sisaala Xylophonic *Zencho* Dance (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



**Figure 14:** Women of Nimoro Division Performing Indigenous Sisaala Women Xylophonic *Zencho* Dance (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).



**Figure 15:** Youngsters of Nimoro Division Being Led by Adults to Learn Indigenous Sisaala Xylophonic *Zencho* Dance (Source: Fieldwork, 2024).

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The study adopted bifocal lenses to document the environmental sustainability and cultural dimensions of the *Kukɔɔ* festival of Nimoro Division. In tracing the ethnographic background of the people of the Nimoro Division, it was found that they belong to the Buwa clan in the Sissala West District in the Upper West Region of northern Ghana. As a result, the people of the Nimoro Division have shared customs, cultural traditions, an allodial land ownership system, and the Sisaali dialect with the other Buwaala communities. However, marginal varieties abound in how each of the communities speak the Buwaali dialect due to inter and cross-ethnic marriages, migration, trade and distance. It equally emerged that the forebears of Nimoro Division once relied on traditional practices including shifting cultivation, controlled tree felling, and maintaining sacred forest reserves, which helped sustain the natural environment. Such forested lands are believed to house some of the powerful deities while providing potent herbal medicines to the people. However, the study notes a decline in these practices due to modernity, the influence of foreign religions, and the Chiefs' limited legal authority leading to alarming environmental degradation in the area. The study found

that the *Kukɔɔ* Festival was, therefore, revived to rejuvenate the environmental sustainability consciousness of the people of the Nimoro Divisional area to avert the alarming rate at which the natural environment is being dissipated. Its maiden celebration on May 18, 2024, witnessed a massive attendance by Chiefs, Elders, Women, the youth of Nimoro Division, guests, political actors and local district authorities with the delivery of environmental conservation sensitisation speeches. Also, unadulterated indigenous cultural performances were intermittently showcased to punctuate the festival. With such massive attendance, delivery of environmental sustainability speeches, cultural performances and youth involvement, the study concludes that the sustenance of the *Kukɔɔ* festival can contribute to environmental sustainability consciousness of the people of Nimoro Division while preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Therefore, it is recommended that the Chiefs, Elders and Youth Leaders of the various communities of Nimoro Division should commit themselves to keeping the celebration of the *Kukɔɔ* festival annually during which occasion opportunity will be given to the leadership of each community to update all and sundry about their initiatives toward the sustainability and preservation of their natural environment and cultural heritage. Additionally, they should collaborate with the Sissala West District Assembly for the enactment of environmental conservation by-laws for passage, gazette, and implementation to augment the *Kukɔɔ* Festival to holistically instil a sense of responsibility to ensure environmental sustainability in the Nimoro Division. By so doing, the Nimoro Division would have honoured the legacy of their forebears, preserved their natural and cultural heritage, and ensured a sustainable future for the prosperity of the current and future generations. Since the current study concentrated on the environmental sustainability and general cultural overview of the *Kukɔɔ* festival, future research could specifically focus on documenting each of the various art forms (performing and visual) deployed during the celebration of the festival to reveal their detailed cultural symbolisms and manifestations.

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## Author Bio note

**Nyamawero Navei** is a PhD (Arts & Culture) candidate of University of Education, Winneba - Ghana. Primarily, Navei research interest centres on Pottery/Ceramic Art traditions. His research also focuses on art education, and arts and culture. The fact that environmental sustainability has become a critical matter of global concern, it has further pluralised Navei's

research interest to include the study of the roles of art and traditional cultural festivals in environmental sustainability. Intrinsically, Nyamawero Navei is research-minded yielding him a considerable number of local and international peer-reviewed journal publications, just as he is a regular reviewer for many journals including topnotch publishers such as Cogent Arts & Humanities of Taylor & Francis, SAGE Journal of Asian and African Studies, among several others. He is a registered researcher with ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4133-3712>

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