

Oral Literature and Globalization: The Case of Mbum Land

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Abstract

In Cameroonian societies like elsewhere in Africa, people narrate their history of origin linked to myths and legends. Mbum history of ancestry have been written using oral tradition as the memories of the past are embedded in the songs, folktales and proverbs of the people. The work explores the multi-faceted relationship between oral literature and globalization, examining how globalization impacts the preservation, adaptation and cross-cultural exchange of the Mbum oral tradition. While Globalization poses challenges to the authenticity and continuity of the Wimbun oral literature, it also presents opportunities for revitalization and wider dissemination, and it is built around the contention that, while oral literature is rooted in the people's cultural practices, its only medium of transmission is by word of mouth. Ethno-criticism and cultural materialism have been used in understanding and navigating the complex dynamics between oral literature and globalization. The intersection of oral literature and globalization in Wimbun land presents both challenges and opportunities for the preservation and promotion of Wimbun cultural heritage, thus the questions: What challenges does oral literature face in the era of globalization? How can oral literature be preserved so as to continue to serve in the globalized era? How effective are folklore in the face of these global threats? What strategies can be put in place for survival of Mbum Oral tradition? These researchers went to the field, collected and analyzed the effectiveness of some folklore elements (folktales, proverbs, and folksongs) as communicative tools. The findings revealed that, the continuity of the

performance of Mbum oral literature has changed and its aesthetic qualities have been innovated due to the effects of globalization.

Keywords: Globalization, Oral Literature, communicative tools, cultural practices, and oral tradition

Introduction

Oral literature is a form of communication which uses words in speech in a highly stylized artistic way. The distinction between this artistic use of words and ordinary or scientific usage is not always clear-cut. In the long history of human kind, there were many historical eras when the society was exposed to various radical changes. Nevertheless, none can be compared with this present dispensation with regard to the extent, depth, and impacts of such changes. Like other forms of intangible cultural heritage, oral traditions are threatened by rapid urbanization.

Globalization is not a new concept to Africa. Scholars believe that there have been three major phases of globalization: 1870 -1914, 1945 - 1980, and from 1980 till now (Ajayi, 2003). However, the concept of globalization depends on how one defines it. Africa's contact with other parts of the world, especially America and Europe, started in the 15th Century through trade especially the trans-Atlantic slave trade. During this period, western merchants bought from African slave traders Africa's most valuable resources (able-bodied men, women, and children). Africa never remained the same from this point. It significantly altered the course of Africa historically, culturally, and politico-economically. Compared with the devastating experience of the trans-Atlantic slave trade which considerably depopulated the Africa, colonialism represents a higher and more disastrous form of slavery. With the exploitation of the colonized as its main objective, colonialism was nothing other than a suppressive form of territorial cultural slavery. Therefore, like any other form of slavery, it was a blighted system that was notably as dehumanizing as it was highly oppressive. This accounts for the perjuring effect of its horribly debilitating experience, which has continued to surface as a terrible nightmare of inferiority on the cultural psyche of the colonized (Precious 2010:p.3).

Methods

Methodologically, the target of this study was to collect a number of Mbum folksongs, proverbs, and folktales. Information on how these folklore elements came to being and how they are performed is equally its target. In the end, 3 Mbum folksongs, 5 proverbs and 2 folktales were utilized in the study. Two theories built up this research, namely, cultural materialism and ethno- criticism. Cultural Materialism, as a literary theory is relevant in the

analyses of the oral literature of the Mbum because it studies the interaction between social life and material conditions. Cultural Materialism is a scientific research strategy that prioritizes material, behavioral and etic (observation of phenomenon via scientific method) processes in the explanation of the evolution of human socio-cultural systems. It was first introduced by Marvin Harris in *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968). Harris is the originator of, and has remained the main figure in, Cultural Materialism. He insists that the primary task of anthropology is to give causal explanations for the differences and similarities in the thoughts and behaviors of human groups. In the preface to his book, *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* Harris said that:

Cultural Materialism is the strategy I have found to be most effective in my attempt to understand the causes of differences and similarities among societies and cultures. It is based on the simple premise that human social life is a response to the practical problems of earthly existence. I hope to show in this book that cultural materialism leads to better scientific theories about the causes of sociocultural phenomena than any of the rival strategies that are currently available. I do not claim that it is a perfect strategy but merely that it is more effective than the alternatives...Although I did not invent "cultural materialism," I am responsible for giving it its name (*The Rise of Anthropological Theory*) ... The task of cultural materialism is to create a pan-human science of society whose findings can be accepted on logical and evidentiary grounds by the pan-human community. (1979:p.21)

Cultural Materialism received wide publicity and was popularized by frontline proponents like Raymond Williams, Martin F. Murphy, Allen Johnson, Timothy Earle, Marxine L. Margolis, and Brain R. Fergusson, each of them having their contribution to the development of the theory.

Ethno-criticism is an interdisciplinary research approach rooted in the disciplines of anthropology and literary studies. It combines ethnography, or the study of cultures through observation and participation, with criticism, or the interpretation and evaluation of cultural expressions like literature, film, and music. An ethno-critic engages with narratives, stories, myths, and proverbs, among other cultural expressions. The approach involves analyzing the data within its cultural context, understanding it as a part of the cultural discourse, and subsequently drawing conclusions about the society or culture that produced it. Arnold Klupat is the main propounder of this theory. An ethno-critic might look at the traditional architecture of the Wimbun to understand how the community's societal structure, beliefs, and environmental adaptations are reflected in their built environment. They might study the intricate beadwork of the Bamenda people to understand how these crafts carry cultural symbolism and contribute to identity formation. Furthermore, ethno-criticism is instrumental in challenging

stereotypes and biased interpretations. By centering the voices of cultural insiders and seeking to understand cultural expressions within their context, it can contest dominant or misconstrued narratives. For instance, it can challenge simplistic or eroticized representations of African cultures that often permeate mainstream media and literature. This is particularly relevant for cultural studies as it allows for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of one's culture. It can help dismantle harmful cultural stereotypes and foster a sense of cultural pride and identity. It also equips one with the tools to engage critically with cultural content, enabling an active participation in the creation, interpretation, and dissemination of cultural narratives. Thus, ethno-criticism stands as a vital approach in the multidisciplinary study of culture, literature, and society.

Results

Orality and Globalization

Globalization can have an especially damaging effect on oral traditions and expressions, since we live in a global village today where cultures across the globe influence and reshape one another. Modern mass media may significantly alter or replace traditional forms of oral expression. As Juan Goytisolo (2001:p.10) states, all cultures are based on the language, that is, on a set of spoken and heard sounds. Communication, which also includes numerous kinesthetic or physical elements, has experienced a series of changes over the centuries. These modifications depend on the contacts with other forms of communication transmitted at the beginning due to the existence of writing. The Cameroonian government and the elite have failed to invest enough resources in the development of their linguistic, cultural, and human potentials that can enhance the projection of a unique identity for Cameroon with the two official languages in the country being French and English and they being the only ones thought in schools. In this respect, it is important to recall the so-call shift from orality to literacy, and the studies on oral elements in written text. The development of this potential is as well consequent upon a reliance on the creative imagination which comes from an awareness of one's environment and the potential for democratic development and growth, it follows naturally that an awareness of their environment can only come from knowledge of the culture, customs and knowledge systems which are immensely found in the oral literatures of a people. These oral narratives provide the proper milieu for the release of creative energy necessary for the development of a sense of cultural belonging that sustains the foundations of a common identity making Kimani Njogu (2010) to assert that orality has been an important method of self-understanding, creating relationships and establishing equilibrium between body, soul and the environment. Through oral narratives communities have

been able to pass on values, attitudes, knowledge and modes of practice for generations (p.94).

Globalization has gradually influenced the mentality of the rhapsody of some Wimbun orators. For many millennia, the only instrument of rhythmic words known in any part of the world was the tongue men were born with, and for any way any knowledge could survive from one generation to another was through oral tradition. Rhythmic speech was the world's first great medium of communication for complex ideas and there were certainly media men of astonishing skills long before anyone on earth knew how to write. Prior to the invention of writing which is a very recent phenomenon in the history of Africa, oral tradition served as the sole means of communication available for forming and maintaining societies and their institution. It is convincing that cultures, and as such people, behave and evolve as open systems. An open system is anyone who interacts and communicates with the social environment. As a first consequence, to survive and develop, they must adapt continuously in a social changing environment. The human being is an open biological system which is innovative in nature. In the course of evolution, it has continually adapted to changes in the environment.

Since globalization is certainly a political and social matter, Webster and Kroskrity (2013:p.72) have also very strongly argued that literature emphasizes socio-linguistic constructs which serve as empowerment indices to traditional communities in modern day power play and the politics of globalization. To them, literature presents a community with tacit forms of power which tries to reposition and restore power and importance to those speakers of language groups who, through consistent marginalization, have tended to be obliterated in terms of the global power play, characteristic of the modern-day literacy dominated world.

The rest of the world requires development and since we cannot shut Cameroon out of the globalizing trends as Chomsky (2000), has observed, we must either look inwards and focus on domestic development which entails building up our own resources or look for ways to moderate the globalizing machine to its standards which is beyond our capabilities. What the Wimbun people have is a very strong and dynamic culture. Given that African oral literature in a globalized context is a response to the social, economic, political and moral concerns of the modern setting, it can be used to address social concerns to enhance development by restoring dignity in a morally dwindling society. Oral literature exists in all communities in Africa. Nkem Okoh (2008), has clarified that:

We are no longer delimiting or elucidating the phenomenon call oral literature; rather we are concerned with its application, to demonstrate that it has great relevance today for our country in particular, especially if we can

tap its resources, potentialities...oral literature deals with certain serious issues about life, man, his relationships with his environment and with other human beings, all of which are question that are highly pertinent in the African society today. (pp. 235-236)

In this case, human history is the story of all our innovations, from the smallest to a fundamental milestone that have drastically changed our way of living which are all tied down to globalization. We could then distinguish between radical or incremental innovations. African oral literature by foreign scholars started more than a century ago. Sociologists, ethnologists, and anthropologists collected a vast body of oral literature and studied the corpus from the perspectives of their various disciplines and perspectives. As a result, many of their earlier approaches to the study of oral literature in Africa have been inadequate in the sense that they have obscured certain points of interest and also given birth to several unexamined assumptions about the nature and role of oral literature. For example, Allan Merriam and James Vaughan, both professors of Anthropology, declare that "although Africans may have something which is similar in certain aspects to what is known in the West as literature, they do not appear to have their own qualitative criteria for evaluating it" (quoted in Tala 1999).

According to these writers, it is difficult to find depositories of an oral tradition absolutely "uncontaminated" by writing and its technological and visual support in today's world. (Goytisol,2001). In the struggle for the conservation of indigenous orality as an inherent part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Cameroonians, it is vital to promote indigenous culture and encourage native speakers to use their languages actively in everyday situations. The natural and frequent use of vulnerable indigenous languages spoken by all generations in a particular community is the only effective prevention of the danger of their extinction. The starting point for demarcation, of course, is the conceptualization of linguistic forms by the members of the culture. The more stylized speech form in cultures is usually differentiated by linguistic labels. These are the labeled verbal genres which the analyst typically glosses as "myth", "folktale", "legends", "songs", and "proverbs". In this uneasy process, the academia can contribute with its own means on one hand by encouraging the native speakers to use their language and on the other hand by making the indigenous cultural heritage accessible to the majority of society. In other words, globalization increase exposure and this is the first step that can help to increase the respect and appreciation for indigenous languages and cultures.

Oral literature also has the potential to give credence and coherent shape to the meaning of societal life and experience thus serving as a means for the interpretation of ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic antecedents of a people. This, in turn, authenticates life and roots a people within their

environment of existence. However, over the past several decades, the Wimbun culture has undergone significant changes due to a variety of factors. One of the main drivers of change has been the process of globalization, which has brought increased contact with outside cultures and new technologies. This has led to changes in the way the Wimbun people live, work, and interact with each other and with the wider world. With modernization and increasing rural exodus, Wimbun youth have seemingly been caught up in the age of globalization and information technology, forgetting their rich cultural values and heritage imbued in traditional folktales, legends, myths, riddles, rites, rituals, songs and proverbs. Today, much efforts are being made to promote these values, through the study and practice of their indigenous language and facts about their social life, beliefs, traditional medicines and healing, exorcism and practices as a way to preserve this heritage practised by their forefathers, which today, seem to be dying out if nothing is done fast. In effect, if authentic data on these different modes of life is not collected, described, well documented, and preserved, the quintessence of this knowledge will be lost forever. An area where the Wimbun culture has been affected by globalization is in the realm of education. The more the younger people from the Wimbun community gain access to formal education, the more they are exposed to new ideas and ways of thinking that may not be consistent with traditional Wimbun values and practices. This has catapulted tensions between the older and younger generation, generational conflict, as well as a potential loss of traditional knowledge and skills.

Wimbun oral literature is a rich and diverse tradition of storytelling, poetry, proverbs, myths, legends, and songs that have been passed down orally through generations within the Wimbun community, which is predominantly found in the Donga-Mantung Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Their oral literature is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of the community, reflecting their history, beliefs, values, and social structures. It serves as a means of preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. While Wimbun oral literature has faced challenges in the face of modernization and globalization, efforts are being made to document, preserve, and revitalize these traditions, recognizing their importance in maintaining cultural heritage and fostering a sense of identity among the Wimbun people.

Globalization, therefore, gives the impression that the whole world is turning towards a homogenous culture and Western culture is presented as the standard by which all cultures should be measured. For this reason, cultures, such as open systems formed by people are adaptive and innovative in nature.

In *African Oral Literature for School*, Jane Nandwa and Austin Bukenya define oral literature as “those utterances whether spoken recited or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciated degree the artistic character of accurate observation, vivid imagination and indigenous expression (1983:p.1). Finnegan’s *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970) defines oral literature as a verbal art of traditional cultures which is transmitted by word of mouth (p.10). With writing being unknown, verbal communication had been the only means of transmission of information from one person to another. Simon Gikandi in *Encyclopedia of African Literature* writes that, “oral tradition is something passed on through the spoken word, and because it is based on the spoken language, it comes to life only in a living community” (2010:580). The implication here is that where community life is absent oral tradition is absent. The oral medium served the people as a bank for the preservation of their ancient experiences and beliefs. Much of the evidence that related to the past of the Africans, therefore, could be found in oral traditions.

Frank Ikeji’s *African Oral Literature and the Challenges of the 21st Century* (2010) said, Oral literature can be defined as a kind of literature that is composed and transmitted orally from generation to generation. This oral transmission has played and continues to play a role in education, in the development and preservation of tons upon tons of knowledge and ethics of the African society and in the maintenance of a cultural identity that is authentically African. No one today would look down on this form of literature, branding it as a primitive form of literature confined only to non-literate or semi-literate societies. Africa owes much to it, even if it is only for the reason that she has developed her own written literature form from it.

According to Ki-Zerbo, J. (1990), Oral literature is a spoken imaginative communication that is not written but transmitted through the word of mouth for entertainment and sometimes edification of the audience. (p.23) Oral literature, therefore, means literature that is not written but presented orally, preserved, and transmitted from one generation to the other in that form. Also, oral literature is defined as the communication of an artistic character that is transmitted orally or delivered by word of mouth, or any form of verbal art that is in the form of an utterance or song. Nandwa and Bukenya (1983) define oral literature as those utterances, whether spoken, sung or recited, whose composition and performance exhibit an appreciable artistic character of accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expression. Examples of forms of oral literature are riddles, proverbs, folktales, oral poetry, word games, myths, curative chants, spells as well as tongue twisters (p.32).

According to Precious (2010), globalization is a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world’s countries and

people facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of cultural values, systems and practices.(p.2) He adds that globalization is not a value free, innocent, self-determining process. It is an international, socio-politico-economic and cultural permeation process facilitated by policies of government, private corporations, international agencies and civil society organizations. This process has linked regions of Cameroon which is facilitated by information flow (communication) inducing changes in the pre-existing socio-cultural, political, economic etc., structures and systems of people.

Akindele et al (2002) define globalization as a process of the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international borders. It is a term that can be seen as an evolution which systematically restructures interactive phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and several other fields. Systematic power relations are seen to characterize globalization and they are always realized locally. These power relations are collectively developed and advanced by the United Nations, a central body governing authorities of its member states. Similarly, Rothenberg (2003) defines globalization as the acceleration and intensification of interactions and integration among people, companies and governments of different nations. He avers that this process has effects on human well-being, environment, culture and the economic development and prosperity of societies across the world. It is evident that globalization entails the free movement of companies, ideologies and lifestyles of people across international borders. The definition of globalization, being a systematic restructuring process of culture, communication etc., harmonizing different cultures and beliefs, thus seeing oral literature as a verbal art of traditional culture which is transmitted by word of mouth, is worthwhile adopting. Thus, Frank's (2010) and Precious' (2010) definitions are adopted for this study. This is because globalization increases the interaction among people and is facilitated by progressive technology. Oral literature, therefore, plays a vital role in the maintenance of cultural identity in the Wimbun community

Discussions

Effects of Globalization

Globalization or the trend of growing worldwide interconnectedness has been accompanied by several clashing notions of cultural difference. Globalization has begun to increasingly shrink communities, nation-states and regions in the world today. The world has become a small community interlinked by powerful forces and institutions such as information and communication technologies and multinational and supranational

organizations. Globalization is an established part of the modern world, so most of us do not realize the benefits it brings to our everyday lives, such as easy access to a variety of cuisines or new technologies developed by the different tribes in Cameroon and other countries half a world away. Globalization makes it easier than ever to access different cultures, including food, music, and art.

Entertainment

The major forms of Wimbun oral literature all serve as a form of entertainment. It is commonplace to see in a traditional Cameroonian setting, that after the days' hard work in farms and fishing in rivers, people gather in age groups and family settings to kill boredom. The people tell stories to entertain themselves, thus using such situations for relaxation. Traditional festivals are equally important because they enable people to socialize. In traditional settings where there is the absence of modern forms of entertainment such as radio, television, cinema etc., the various forms of oral literature are readily available and such serve as means of entertainment and relaxation. Streaming services, in particular, have revolutionized how content is consumed, making it accessible to a global audience instantaneously. The influx of global entertainment has influenced the development and evolution of Wimbun's local entertainment industry, as creators and producers incorporate elements from international trends and styles. This cross-pollination has led to the emergence of hybrid entertainment forms that blend traditional Wimbun cultural elements with global influences. This shift has not only challenged traditional distribution models but has also allowed Mbum oral literature to reach a global audience without the need for extensive theatrical releases.

Wimbun culture involves so many activities that portray the social life of the people. Some of these activities are birth, marriages, death, games, storytelling and dances like *Mndong*, *Tarraah*, *Njuh*, *Mbayah*, *Juda* etc.

Education

In traditional society where there was absence of books, printed materials, formal education, internet, etc. the various forms of oral literature served as the means of education. Here, oral artists, elderly men, and women were regarded as moving libraries and encyclopedias, custodians of knowledge on the history of the clans and records of achievement of our past heroes. Globalization has highlighted the significance of oral history as a means of transmitting knowledge and cultural heritage across generations. Educational institutions are recognizing the value of oral traditions in teaching history and cultural studies. Writing about the origin of proverbs, Emmanuel Obiechina (1975) posits that,

They derive from a detailed observation of the behavior of human beings, animals, plants, and natural phenomena, from folklore, beliefs, values, perceptions, attitude, emotions, and the entire system of thought and feeling.... They derive their effectiveness and force from the collective imagination which apprehends the underlying connection between a literal fact and its allusive amplification and which vivifies an experience by placing it beside another which bears the stamp of approval. (p. 156).

This is to say that, proverbs express the wisdom of the people and enable one to understand the ways of life of the Mbum community as lived by those of the past and the present. In the proverb, *ndzi yi te kwvya taku* (You can't climb a tree with one hand) emphasis is laid on the importance of using all available resources or applying sufficient effort to achieve a goal. It suggests that success requires full commitment and the utilization of all necessary tools or means if one has to succeed.

In the proverb: *kwva nyiin kpa buh, kwva kpa buh kwva nyiin*. (The mouse has many paths, but the trap has one) highlights on the vulnerability of the weaker party in a situation are stressed. It suggests that while there may be various options or approaches available for the weaker individual, the stronger party usually has a clear advantage or a predetermined course of action. Again in: *kpwa naa yiin, kpa nyiin kpwa*. (A good name is better than riches) the value of a good reputation and integrity over material wealth is primordial. The proverb suggests that having a positive reputation and being respected by others holds more significance and brings more long-term benefits than merely accumulating wealth. In: *mbong yiin naa, ya yiin naa*. (Your friend is your friend) emphasis is laid on the importance of loyalty and trust in friendships. It suggests that a true friend remains loyal and trustworthy regardless of circumstances or external factors. True friendship transcends material gains or personal interests.

Preservation of Culture

Oral literature serves as a repository of a community's cultural heritage, preserving historical events, ancestral wisdom, and traditional knowledge, transmitting the culture of the people from generation to generation. In many of the oral narratives, songs, proverbs and riddles are contained vital cultural information that are stored and transmitted from one generation to the other. By so doing, oral literature contributes meaningfully to the preservation and transmission of our cultural heritage. The answer to what happens to a succeeding generation when the preceding generation passes away lies in oral literature. "Globalization on its part has provided opportunities for the dissemination and recognition of oral traditions on a global scale, contributing to their preservation and revitalization" (Anasgainutdin 2023:p.2). For example the use of Proverb 6: *Nje ám ce yan*

mbor, e loti a du a rye Nyù e nɛ e bo fa ye yu gé fá yi ñù buu enɛe du bye. (A lazy hungry man went to see God whom he thinks has everything edible but he gave him seed to go and plant) upholds that we solve problems by teaching methods of acquiring solutions. The proverb focuses on sustainability, which entails meeting today's needs without compromising those of tomorrow. The advice in this proverb is that food should not be given to the hungry for it makes them economic units of consumption while "seed" transforms them into economic units of production through hard work. Proverbs are an essential part of Wimbun oral tradition and serve as a concise and memorable way to convey cultural wisdom, values, and beliefs. They encapsulate the collective knowledge and experiences of the community and are passed down through generations. It has enabled cultural exchange and collaboration between different communities. Through international conferences, festivals, workshops, and exchange programs, oral tradition practitioners have the opportunity to interact with and learn from individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, in the epoch of globalization, Wimbun people are experiencing an unprecedented exchange of ideas, goods, and services. This intricate network of connections has offered immense opportunities for their growth and intercultural understanding. However, this sweeping wave of globalization has also sparked conversations about cultural preservation, as concerns about cultural homogenization and the erosion of local cultures come to the fore. Globalization can serve as a platform for the propagation and appreciation of Mbum culture. It offers cultural artifacts, traditions, and cuisines an international audience, promoting cultural diversity and pluralism. Also, globalization, particularly Westernization, can pose a threat to their cultures. As Western values, languages, and lifestyle choices often dominate global media, local cultures, especially those with less representation or influence, may feel pressured to adapt or risk being overshadowed.

It is the tradition of the Mbum to be self-reliant. Proverb 5: *Wuon naa'awu, wuon yiin.* (The snake has its own venom) advises and cautions everyone to be self-reliant. The proverb suggests that one should not rely on others completely, as even those who appear innocent and harmless may have their own hidden agendas or harmful intentions. This proverb is synonymous to the one used by the Bakundu in the South West region of Cameroon that says: *Liso la wanyu osa nanganaka iyo* (You do not use another person's eye to dream a dream. The tradition of self-reliance is inculcated in the youth, also reminding elders of the repercussions that befall lazy and dependents.

Folktale is essentially a communal participatory experience although the artists take central stage. They can be seen in terms of the impact they

have on the lives of the Wimbun people, their community and their relationship with others. Alembong (2011) asserts that,

As art, tales entertain given that entertainment is the primary function of literature. The enjoyment derived from storytelling events is facilitated by the social organization of the participants. Story teller may be out to narrate tales that seek to explain the wonders in creation, express the worries and yearnings of man or the vicissitudes of life. Their tales will appeal the audience only when they are told in such a way that engages them in the artistic or creative experience and bring them to the level of aesthetic satisfaction (p.26).

This is to say that people need to belong to cultural groups. This is a way communities develop a collective identity. The cultural groups come together to help unite around communal myth and tales that help them understand their origin, are told, in which their history and present role in the world are discussed. Whether we are dealing with dramatic presentation, the Wimbun involve itinerant storytellers, therefore, the storytelling event is generally perceived by participants as a communal affair. It helped to promote a sense of belonging and community, a spirit of solidarity and the idea of a common origin and destiny. The tales of legends and myths plays a role in the formation of collective identity; whether communal, national, or religion.

Also, the oral participation of tales helps to instill discipline in the community, for during such events due respect is given such concern as status, gender and age.

Commenting on storytelling performance, Okumba Miruka (1997) says;

The narrative occasion instills discipline inductively. This is first because one goes to the occasion voluntarily and with a tacit agreement to adhere to the convention prevailing. One has to observe the procedure being followed and exercise both restraint and patience. One mark of the discipline is to let the narrator have the silence and the time to go through, however uninteresting the tale may be. If one feels bored, he waits for his turn to tell a livelier tale or hear one from another person. (p.183)

Respect is a core principle among the Wimbun people and there is always discipline in any participatory arts as follows:

Kirnanah, (chameleon) and *nwehbar* (lizard) were brothers from the same womb. Their father gave them wives when they were of marriageable age. They then left their fathers compound and build their own houses in the neighborhood, quite a distance from each other. Communication between them was by means of tam-tam. One day, *kirnanah* the older one died leaving behind a daughter. The problem then arose as to who will inherit his properties since he had no son. Many animals fought to inherit it although

they had no blood ties with the deceased. The property of a bag of kola nuts was passed on to *nwehbar* following the verdict passed by *kuptsikup* (Tortoise).

The above tale exhibits that in Mbum land; tales are told that reveals some aspects of their marriage custom, their kinship structure, and their consideration of inheritance, the way lineage is set up, and their traditional methods of communication.

Folktales help in the acquisition of language and communication skills and the building of other capacities. An oral artist is partly judged by his ability to have mastery of the language and communication skills, knowledge of the local language that is Limbum, the art of speech and the use of paralinguistic devices are important accomplishment. By telling tales, parents are also involved in the process of language teaching and by listening to the stories and actively participating in their rendition, children are involved in the process of language acquisition and capacity building in oratory. S. Kichamu Akivaga and A. Bole Odaga (1982:p.9) observed that children in their tales tend to imitate and to use techniques they have learnt from adult who are experienced story tellers... It provides a form of speech training for children so that when they grow up, they become good public speakers, people capable of using language effectively (p.9) thus, oral literature is generally an utterance and taking part in the performance enables participants to improve their skills in speaking logically, reciting, singing, listening, and thinking. These help in training the mind and in sharpening critical appreciation. Listeners or participants have to take in the message embodied in each narrative, evaluate it and give their reasoned opinion.

The tale of the pig and the tortoise which teaches a moral lesson on honesty, patience and disloyalty is told by the Mbum as follows:

Once upon a time there live two good friends in a community, *kuptikup* (the tortoise), and *nkunyam* (the pig). One day the tortoise borrowed money from the pig and promised to pay back on time. The date came and passed and tortoise did not keep to his promise so, the pig had to go to his friend's house and ask for his money. On arrival, the tortoise noticed and turned his back for his wife to use as grinding stone. When the pig entered the wife lied that her husband is not around and the pig left in anger. The next day the pig came and the same scenario happened. Upon coming the fourth time, he angrily threw the grinding stone behind the tortoise's house and left. The tortoise later repaid the loan and requested for his grinding stone back from the pig, the pig went behind and started digging in vain and is still digging till date in search for the stone.

According to above tale, patience is very important. This performance is used in Mbum oral community to encourage people to be patient. The tale is relevant to the lives and moral wellbeing of the people

from the background and understanding that impatience has negative effects on the individual and the community as a whole. Patience is an important tool in social cohesion. This proverb is said among the Mbum people to advise people especially the youth to journey through life at their pace.

In fact, it is often said that once an elderly person dies, it is a whole library that has been lost or got burned down. This is to say that; oral literature is an educational tool, transmitting practical knowledge, moral lessons, and societal norms. Folktales, proverbs, and myths often contain moral teachings and valuable life lessons, providing guidance and shaping behavior within the community.

Availability of Modern Forms of Entertainment

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, came the introduction of modern forms of entertainment such as radio, television, cinema, video etc., which tends to shift the consumption patterns of the traditional way of entertainment. The widespread adoption of digital entertainment, such as online streaming, mobile gaming, and social media-based content, has led to a shift in the consumption patterns of Mbum audiences, particularly among the younger generations. These modern gadgets appear to be more durable and attractive to both the old and the young in tend causes changes in the folktales. Many people no longer see it fashionable to gather around the fire place at night to tell stories. This has resulted in a decline in the popularity and participation in traditional cultural events, performances, and practices.

Furthermore, the accessibility and appeal of global digital entertainment have, in some cases, overshadowed and marginalized traditional cultural forms of the Mbum people. The convenience and novelty of digital entertainment options have made it increasingly difficult for local cultural practices to compete for the attention and engagement of audiences. According to Dibouloni et al., the commercialization of traditional cultural practices in Cameroon, driven by the demand for touristic and entertainment experiences has resulted in the erosion of the authenticity and cultural significance of these oral traditions. (2019) the demand for digital entertainment has led to the commercialization and commodification of certain traditional cultural practices in Mbum land. In some instances, these practices are packaged and presented in a way that prioritizes commercial viability over the preservation of cultural integrity and authenticity.

Survival Strategies

There are several ways and technologies today that can be used in preserving and accessing oral literature. Although these technologies are being used concurrently, they came into use in this consecutive order: written forms, audio renditions and visual images. We, therefore, have witnessed a

technological revolution in preserving and accessing oral literature because these technologies have made it more accessible. Since oral literature can be translated from its primary language into other languages, it has made oral literature accessible to people separated from its primary state by distance, time, or language.

Documentation and Archiving

Oral literature encompasses a wealth of human creativity and cultural expression. It is a living repository of knowledge, history, values, and beliefs that must be recognized, documented, and preserved. One crucial strategy to adopt as a survival strategy for Wimbun oral literature is to document and archive the Mbum oral tradition. Archiving not only preserves the tradition for future generations but also provides researchers and scholars with valuable resources for studying and understanding the Mbum culture. With regard to preserving and accessing oral literature, the significance of this written word becomes evident when a researcher uses a pen or a typewriter and paper to maintain a relatively permanent record while a reader decodes the primary language in which this record is transcribed. Once this record has been translated and transcribed into other languages, it becomes accessible to international audience. By preserving the actual performances of storytelling, songs, chants, or other oral forms, audio recordings maintain the integrity and cultural authenticity of the traditions. Similar to the pen or typewriter and paper used in written forms of oral literature, the hardware and the software used in audio renditions of oral literature are cheap, accessible and convenient. In this regard, a cassette recorder is portable and uses readily available dry cells while audio tapes and cassettes are robust as they are easy to label, store and access.

Cultural education encourages creativity and contemporary expressions within the traditions. Philosopher and educator Achille Mbembe has argued that the incorporation of local cultural knowledge and practices into school curriculums can help counter the homogenizing effects of globalization and ensure that young Cameroonians maintain a strong connection to their cultural heritage (Mbembe, 2001). This dynamic approach ensures that oral traditions remain relevant and adaptable to changing social, cultural, and artistic contexts while maintaining their essential essence. Active community engagement ensures that younger community members have opportunities to learn from the older generations who possess the knowledge and expertise. This can be achieved through storytelling sessions, community gatherings, or mentorship programs where experienced individuals share their wisdom and teach traditional practices to younger community members. The collective efforts of the community ensure the vitality and continuity of oral traditions in the face of

globalization or modern challenges and changing cultural landscapes. Jato is trying to achieve this through her songs as she sings them almost completely in Limbum. One of which is titled “Light your Fire” which goes thus;

Limbum

*Meh yeh ambo mbum chi kfuti
Manji mammir chi luuh meh gor-si
Kong n̄fur moh bam oh te tata nyu
Bo the a ndu si yaa mahchini sakka njep tang
Manchini sakka njep yaa
Co mini, leku Ntombi...*

Transl. Everybody just light your fire
Keep the fires burning, just light your fire (2x)

These community-driven initiatives and collaborative efforts demonstrate the resilience and determination of Wimbun people to safeguard their rich cultural heritage in the face of the homogenizing forces of globalization. By singing and sharing this song within the community, individuals strengthen their connection to their cultural roots and affirm their cultural heritage. The above song, while entertaining reignites community people to remain resilient to a course. This indictment is a glimmer of hope telling the Mbum people that all is not lost as long as they keep their fire burning. This sense of identity through resilience fosters a desire to preserve and transmit oral literature as a vital part of their cultural identity as hard working people.

Songs have the ability of being retained in the individual’s reservoir of knowledge. In this vein, when individuals are exposed to songs, what these songs represent is always applicable and significant at appropriate times. A good example is:

Limbum

*Leader: Tata a wir na ehh
mvur la kin eh te wir ning eh (2x)*

Respondent:

*Tata a wir na ehh
mvur la kin eh te wir ning eh (2x)*

Trans.

Our fon, here we are eh
Open the door for us ehh
Our fon, here we are eh
Open the door for us ehh

In every household, it is impossible to get in without receiving an invitation from the host, Wimbun household inclusive. The above song announces the visit of strangers/visitors for the host to welcome them. This is mostly sung in small parties where the invitees sing to the host with a little bit of dance to properly animate their entrance, thus entertainment.

Wimbun funeral songs sung in the antiphonal style and accompanied by drums and rattles possess a relatively fast and strict rhythm so as to maintain the performance live and render it more theatrical and captivating. The rhythmic stamping of the feet or the throb of the drums are capable of weeping up folks into a frenzy and thereby, showing the communal nature of Wimbun funeral songs. Although the instruments may be many, the soloists of Wimbun funeral songs often identify with the principal drum in order to maintain coordination of the entire performance. This highlights the role of the drum and the dance as significant non-verbal elements in Wimbun rhythm that by themselves alone can produce stirring theatrical effects. This is because any alternation of either the singing or drumming rhythm may disrupt the overall effect and hence, results in the total breakdown of the whole performance. In fact, the drumming and the dancing are important elements in Wimbun funeral songs.

Limbun

Leader:

Bong buu mbah

Turh ba yuh bir2x

Respondent:

Bong buu mbah

Turh ba yuh bir 2x

Transl.

Better to lack money

And have your people.

Better to lack money

And have your people.

In life, there are different choices we get to make. The above song advises us to choose our love ones over money because wealth can get finished but our love ones will always be with us till death we die. In summary, songs serve as an effective preservative strategy for oral literature in the face of globalization. They facilitate the transmission of oral traditions, foster cultural identity and pride, enable adaptation and revitalization, and promote global communication and awareness. By embracing and utilizing songs as a preservation tool, the Wimbun community can ensure the continued vitality and relevance of their oral literature in a changing world.

Conclusion

The impact of globalization on Wimbun oral literature is a complex and multifaceted issue. While globalization can bring opportunities for cultural exchange and the sharing of diverse traditions, it also poses challenges to the preservation and continuity of oral literature. The increasing influence of Western culture, language shift, changing communication patterns, migration, and the loss of elders all contribute to the potential erosion of Wimbun oral literature. These threats highlight the need for conscious efforts to safeguard and revitalize this rich cultural heritage. Recognizing the value of oral literature and its role in shaping cultural identity, it is important for the Wimbun community, scholars, cultural organizations, and educational institutions to collaborate in preserving and promoting oral traditions.

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Appendix

A. Proverbs

Proverb 1: *Ndzi yi te kwvya taku* (You can't climb a tree with one hand)

Proverb 2: *Kwva nyiin kpa buh, kwva kpa buh kwva nyiin.* (The mouse has many paths, but the trap has one.)

Proverb 3: *Kpwa naa yiin, kpa nyiin kpwa.* (A good name is better than riches.)

Proverb 4: *Mbong yiin naa, ya yiin naa.* (Your friend is your friend.)

Proverb 5: *Wuon naa'awu, wuon yiin.* (The snake has its own venom.)

Proverb 6: *Nje ám ce yaŋ mbor, e loti a du a ryɛ Nyù e nɛ e bo fa ye yu gé fa yi ñù buu enɛe du bye.* (A lazy hungry man went to see God whom he thinks has everything edible but he gave him seed to go and plant).

B. Songs:

1. Limbum

*Meh yeh ambo mbum chi kfuti:
Manji mammir chi luuh meh gor-si
Kong n̄fur moh bam oh te tata nyu
Bo the a ndu si yaa mahchini sakka njep tang
Manchini sakka njep yaa
Co mini, leku Ntombi...*

Translation

Everybody just light your fire.
Keep the fires burning. Just light your fire (2x)

Limbum

Leader: *Tata a wir na ehh
mvur la kin eh te wir ning eh (2x)*
Respondent: *Tata a wir na ehh
mvur la kin eh te wir ning eh (2x)*

Transl

Our fon here we are eh
Open the door for us ehh
Our fon here we are eh
Open the door for us ehh

C. Tales

Folktale 1

The Mbum tells a story about *kirnanah* (a chameleon) and *nwehbar* (a lizard) who were brothers from the same womb. Their father gave them wives when they were of marriageable age. They then left their fathers compound and build their own houses in the neighborhood, quite a distance from each other. Communication between them was by means of tam-tam. One day, *kirnanah* the older one died leaving behind a daughter. The problem then arose as to who will inherit his properties since he had no son. Many animals fought to inherit it although they had no blood ties with the deceased. The property of a bag of kola nuts was passed on to *nwehbar* following the verdict passed by *kuptsikup* (Tortoise).

Folktale 2

Once upon a time there live two good friends in a community, *kuptikup* (the tortoise), and *nkunyam* (the pig). One day the tortoise borrowed money from the pig and promised to pay back on time. The date came and passed and tortoise did not keep to his promise so, the pig had to go to his friend's house and ask for his money. On arrival, the tortoise noticed and turned his back for his wife to use as grinding stone. When the pig entered the wife lied that her husband is not around and the pig left in anger. The next day the pig came and the same scenario happened. Upon coming the fourth time, he angrily threw the grinding stone behind the tortoise's house and left. The tortoise later repaid the loan and requested for his grinding stone back from the pig, the pig went behind and started digging in vain and is still digging till date in search for the stone.