

THE SPACE OF INTERNET IN TRANSPOSING MWAGHAVUL ORATURE

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ABSTRACT

The ever-changing and widening arc of human society brings about innovation in the retrieval, production, transmission, and performance of cultural elements. The technological advancement in the 20th and 21st centuries has given new impetus to discourses on the African verbal art (with a particular interest in Mwaghavul Childlore). Thus, this work examines the role of the cyberspace in preserving and disseminating Mwaghavul oral culture as observed in their Childlore. Every district of Mwaghavul land abounds with a rich oral tradition of folktales, oral songs, riddles, jokes, and local myths and legends related to the local history, place, and nature formations. These oral traditions have been a source of value education as well as entertainment in the Mwaghavul African traditional rural societies, and they hold the essence of our unique culture and tradition. Sadly, is the fear that these invaluable oral traditions are in danger of extinction due to the sweeping forces of globalization, Christianity and commercial entertainment which have already flooded even the rural areas of Mwaghavul communities. With the help of examples limited to folktales, this paper provides a brief analysis of the traditional values transmitted by Mwaghavul folktales and the functions these tales serve in Mwaghavul society. Conclusively, this paper offers some practical

recommendations for collecting our folktales in the form of text, audio and video using the currently available digital technology to create the first comprehensive and dynamic 'Mwaghavul Folktales Online Database'. The ethnographic collection and expository of translated Mwaghavul folktales form the data and basis for explaining certain salient issues concerning children. The interpretation of the symbolic undertone of these folktales provides a basis for understanding the need to leverage technology and preserve the African Childlore in general and the Mwaghavul Childlore in particular in the digital world.

Keywords: *Internet, Ethnography, Childlore, Culture, Mwaghavul, Orature, Digital World, Cyberspace*

INTRODUCTION

The continent of Africa manifests a prodigious and diverse evidence of verbal arts that includes poetic genres such as praise poetry, sacred chants, songs, incantations, parables, riddles, idiomatic expressions, and proverbs. The narrative forms are a myth, legend, folktale, and epic traditions. Akintunde Akinyemi asserts that "Africa is home to about 1,500 of the (over) 6,000 languages spoken in the world today and many of these languages are used mostly in the oral unwritten form" (2). Given the plurality of languages in Africa and the primacy of oral communication, it is no surprise that the bulk of literary activity on the continent today occurs in oral media. Hence the concern of scholars and their deliberate effort is in preserving these literary activities due to the threat of Language Endangerment. Recent findings reveal that 3176 languages of the world's 6909 are endangered (46% of all languages). This 46% gives a near 50% scenario of languages expected to become extinct or doomed

by the century's end (Campbell et al 9). Consequently, the threat posed by the death or extinction of languages which is an essential tool for communicating emotions, values, knowledge, memories and ideas is an indisputable way to lose the major means of cultural expressions and intangible cultural heritage. This brings about the need for verbal arts documentation of the Mwaghavul people, which has come as a *stitch in time* to mitigate language endangerment.

The Mwaghavul people are one of the prominent ethnic groups domiciled within the Central Zone of present Plateau State of Nigeria and they are considered one of the large ethnic groups in the state; other large language groups in Plateau State include Berom, Ngas, and Gomei (Gowon 20). Historically, the Mwaghavul people were said to be among the former inhabitants of the Lake Chad area before their migration towards the south along with their kin, the Ngas, Tal, Mupun, Goemai, among other Chadic language groups. It is assumed that this migration occurred between 1100 and 1350 A.D. (Nyang, Bess, & Dawum 1). The Mwaghavul community had been mainly an oral society with written communication confined to the religious circles. Although, the Mwaghavul people, have rich oral traditions are still almost intact, these oral traditions are in danger of being wiped out as Umar H. D. Danfulani opines unless we are careful because many villages in the community are today making a direct transition from an oral society to the age of digital communication and entertainment.

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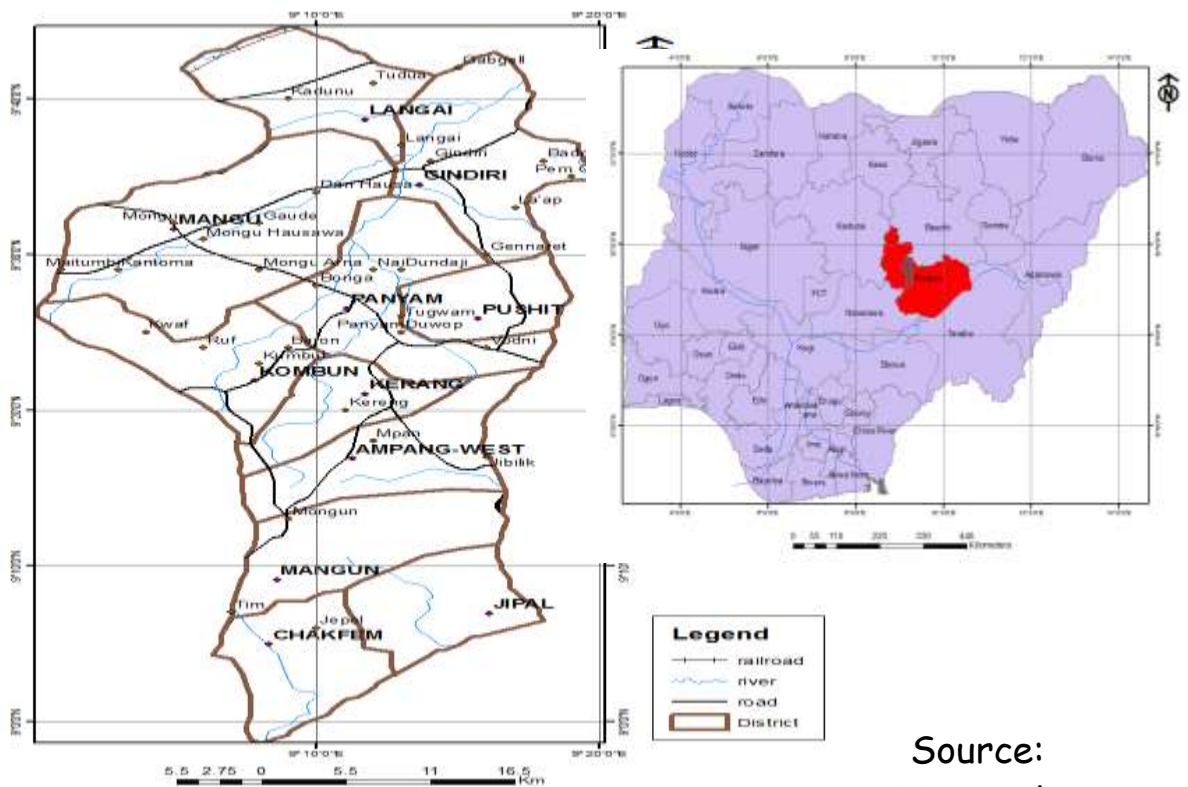
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Story-telling and burial dance performances in Bwonpe, Ampang West, Mangu L.G.A. Plateau State



Children enjoying story-telling performances in Bwor, Pushit, Mangu L.G.A. Plateau State



Source:
National

Centre for Remote Sensing Jos (NCRS) 19-01-2018
Figure 1: Showing the Study area

The Mwaghavul orature include folktales, local myths, and legends, songs, riddles etc. These oral traditions have been a source of value education as well as entertainment in the traditional rural societies, and they hold the essence of the unique culture and traditions. For the Mwaghavul people, a society which accords top priority to the preservation and promotion of culture through the enactment of the annual *Puskaat* festival, as one of the pillars of Mwaghavul Development Association, the importance of preserving and promoting the verbal art is no trivial matter. It is pertinent to state, however, the people's efforts so far at preserving and promoting these oral traditions have been less than laudable. Discussing the fate of the Japanese folkloric

extinction, Dorji Penjore points out, the school curriculum includes too little material from the folktales even though the use of the indigenous folktales is expected to be far more effective in inculcating our traditional values compared to the folktales of foreign origin which are being used (12). This situation, sadly, is synonymous with the Mwaghavul story. Moreover, as the stories of *Laareep Dí Ra Kwar Mish Shèè Fira* (*The Young Woman who Disappointed her Fiancé*), *Là Kwee kí Sibel* (*The Chick and the Baby Wildcat*), *Mat Butbish kí Ginighin Fira Tiding* (*The Wicked Woman and her co-mute wife*), *Mee Mat Shwatnyit* (*The Biased Woman*), and *Wuk kí Kwee kí As* (*The Chicken and the dog on cooperative Farming*) narrated as examples in this paper show, Mwaghavul *tangcham* are no less entertaining, interesting or rich in morals as their foreign counterparts.

The forces of globalization and consumerism are glaringly before us, and we cannot escape from this reality, that have become so essential to the modern economy and modern way of life. However, these very same forces which are threatening our traditional culture and values have brought us tools like the digital technology which we can use for their preservation and promotion. Therefore, this paper offers some practical recommendations for collecting our folktales, in the form of text, audio and video using the currently available digital technology to create the first comprehensive and dynamic 'Mwaghavul Folktales Online Database'. This paper concludes by stating that our oral traditions are at the risk of extinction and that the best way to preserve and promote our oral traditions would be to archive them using digital technology and include them in the school curriculum on a broader scale than is done now.

Examples of Mwaghavul Folktales

Recent years have seen the publication of a few books on African folktales in general and Nigerian folktales in particular, but these collections of stories do not include stories from the Mwaghavul oral community. The examples of *tangcham* used in this study are part of the fieldwork carried out in 2017. As it may be expected, folktales vary from region to region although the overall theme and sometimes even the main plot of the story remains the same. The perspectives on Mwaghavul folktales which these presents are based on those of 7 districts of Mwaghavul chiefdom.

Mwaghavul folktales include the following kinds: human tales, Human-animal tales, Human-animal-moralizing tales, animal tales, Animal-moralizing tales, Animal-trickster tales, Animal-Pourquoi tales, Animal- Human- trickster tales, Animal-trickster-moralizing tales, Animal-humour tales, Animal-Human-moralizing-tall/fantastic tales, Animal-celestial-moralizing-tall/fantastic tales, Animal-Pourquoi tales-moralizing tales, tales of magic, Celestial-terrestrial-humour tale, Terrestrial-aquatic-trickster tales, Ghost-Human-Plant tales, Human-monster tales, tales of the ogre, These stories give us a glimpse into the morals, values and lifestyle of the Mwaghavul people.

Traditional Values of Mwaghavul Folktales

F.B.O. Akporobaro avers that folktales like oral poetry are not only imaginative creations but they "reflect the cultural norms, local history and realities of an environment" (107). It may serve as a catharsis, provide a worldview, describe sanctions and prohibited behaviour, liberate one from the urgency of his situation or describe various types of

useful behaviours and strategies. Ernest Emenyonu adds that enshrined in folktales are:

Some of the values espoused were direct, blunt and uncoated, the narrator often using a particular story to reinforce a moral issue of the moment. Some stories advocated instant justice through revenge or retaliation of an evil act or the deployment of *deus-ex-machina* who killed off miscreants and hardened criminals. Good invariably must prevail over evil, and right over wrong. Wit and cunning (The use of common sense) must excel over brute force and abusive might. Hard work must yield good results and be rewarded. Honesty always paid off. Falsehood and fraud were anti-social behaviours and must never escape severe punishments. Corruption in any form or manner was strictly frowned upon and the 'soul that sinned' died instantly to serve as a deterrent to others (2).

The above lengthy quotation becomes pertinent because it encapsulates the authenticity of the array of values in *Mwaghavul tangcham* and justifies the need for its preservation. The *Mwaghavul* people, like most other ethnic groups in Africa, have distinctive oral traditions which are connected to and express *Mwaghavul* social and cultural values, attitudes, beliefs, worldviews, philosophies, experiences, and aspirations. These social and cultural elements form the thematic framework for *Mwaghavul* folktales, particularly folksongs. As among the Akan, the Acholi and the Ewe people of Ghana; the Yoruba, Hausa, the Igbo of Nigeria; and the Sotho of South Africa many

Mwaghavul folktales deal with themes which are universal such as human nature and human relationship. These include relationships in marriage, in kinship, between the genders, and between individuals of different social and economic status. There are also folktales in which the issues expressed are not necessarily peculiar to Mwaghavul Society. A case in point is the idea of making moral commentaries on social issues and problems such as child neglect, gender role, theft, pride, greed, selfishness, laziness and political propaganda. It is noticed that some tales validates, commends and encourages a pattern of social behaviours and attitudes which are culturally acceptable in Mwaghavul society such as hard work, honesty, kindness, self-control, obedience, loyalty, and cooperation. Some of these issues are discussed below.

Story 1: *Laareep Dí Ra Kwar Mish Shèe Fira (The Young Woman who Disappointed her Fiancé)*

In the Mwaghavul world view, betrayal is viewed as an oddity that destroys the bond of trust. Trust is important in any given family and other human society. Since folktales invariably reflect the human society, it is thus understandable that trust features as a thematic subject in Mwaghavul *tangcham*. Trust as a bond is built around friendship and other human relationships. Rodger L. Jackson opines that trust is an ingredient of life and so life without trust is unimaginable. Trust allows "the formation of bonds of utility, community, and intimacy" (89). When trust is bridged in any given relationship an individual or group feel betrayed.

As a theme, betrayal has appeared in various stories both oral and written. Stories pointing to betrayal are popularly

observed in the Bible, and also in some other literary works in English, among other languages, for example, the biblical story of Samson and his wives, and that of Judas and the death of Jesus (New International Version, Judges 14: 15-20; 16: 4-21 and John 18: 2-5), in the eponymous play of William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, and the story of the animals in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

The story *Laareep Dí Ra Kwar Mish Shèe Fira (The Young Woman who Disappointed her Fiancé)* narrated by Jifosiah Alex of Panyam, the story is about a young girl who betrays her Fiancé after she is traditionally engaged to him. One day, the girl and her friends are in the stream to bathe. Once the girls pull off their clothes and start swimming, the betrayed young man shows up and carries their clothes to the top of the tree. Each girl takes a turn to sing a song to redeem her clothes. When it is the turn of his lover, she uses the song to disclose her identity. As she continues to sing, the water level keeps rising until she is carried away by the torrents. However, when she gets to a spot, she grabs the root of a tree and remains there. One day as her brother comes along the stream path looking for timber, she recognizes the sound of his axe against the tree, and begins to sing:

A wee can sheep díisì
Kaa díyem kì Na Wumgtúghúr sì 'e?
Kàt a díyem kì Na Wumgtúghúr
'Be wu so ku wu cèt mwos gam kibel dí
Ku wu jì ku wu shang an dí.
Who's cutting this tree
Like the son of Na Wumgtúghúr?
If it is Na Wumgtúghúr's son
Then brew *mwos* to fill a small pot

So you come and remove

At the repeat of the song, the boy recognizes the voice of his sister and quickly searches around. He finds her under the roots of the tree, at once he returns home to tell his parents. At the first instance, the father is reluctant to believe the boy, but as the young boy insists; the father believes him and seeks help from the birds to rescue his daughter. He invites *ngooroo, nkiling, nfyem, nkuriit, ntaaseet, ki pák mo díki zak. Ri tyoorpoo mmo nne jir ngo dí ri sham mang Nàakos* (the pied crow, the black kite, the bateleur, the black bird, the cordon-bleu and others). However, only the bateleur is able to rescue Nàakos. And the bird is crowned the king that day.

This human-animal-moralizing tale portrays the consequences of betrayal. Nàakos breaks the nuptial arrangement between her and the young man. Consequently, she is punished by nature- the rising tide of the river, synonymous with the biblical story of "Noah's Ark". Coincidentally her redemption from the punitive state is again through nature- the bateleur. This shows that the Mwaghavul people believe in the interconnectedness of man and his physical environment. Thus, while portraying betrayal as a vice, the story teaches both adult and children the interconnectedness of man and nature.

Story 2: *Mat Butbish ki Ginighin Fira Tiding (The Wicked Woman and her co-mute wife)*

Co-wife relationships are usually characterized by intrigues, jealousy, envy, favouritism, and treachery which often brings devastating consequences. Mwaghavul *tangcham* are structured around the thematic gravitation of co-wife rivalry. In some instances, co-wife relationships function, not

majorly as the main plot, but as a subplot. This phenomenon shows that the Mwaghavul society like most African societies is patriarchal where the patrilineal principle takes precedence over the matrilineal, and where the agency of women is significantly undermined by phallic hegemonic attitudes.

In Mwaghavul folktales, the co-wife is represented as the woman whose quest to possess her husband's love leads her to commit acts with disastrous consequences. This portrayal of the co-wife helps in validating the patriarchal notion that women are their own problem as they cannot manage their own relational patterns, especially when they are involved in the competition for the love and attention of men. *Mat Butbish ki Ginighin Fira Tiding (The Wicked Woman and her co-mute wife)* narrated by Sarah Monday of Mangu tells the story of a woman whose stock in trade is to poison her co-wives out of jealousy and desire to be her husband's only wife. This wicked act gets a young girl who is a seer very angry and she resolves in her mind to save the man from the hands of his wicked wife. One day she feigns illness and pretends to have lost voice. After a while the husband of the wicked woman sees her and says to himself:

*Katbaa dī mat fina mo ki jì murapkas be dī an
nlaplaareep dīis̄ ni. Ra dōghòm den a tiding, be ba dī
ra nji lepoo mpee kas. Dee ri mer so pu ra dī.*

*If my wives had not been dying, I would have
looked forward to marrying this young woman.
Luckily, she's mute; so she won't be generating
unnecessary issues.*

Now the young girl who is a seer encourages the man through her gestures, and he proposes to her and gets married to her.

After fulfilling the marital rites, he takes her home. The wicked wife confronts her openly assuming like everyone else that the young seer is mute. She tells her *Ni ciingurum-ngurum mo jidee a wii tiding o. Yi tong mmun dak, nàá.* (True human beings didn't succeed let alone you, a mute person. Well, live with us, woman, and we see what happens). After this statement, she plans to poison her food. One day she cooks and gives some to the mute co-wife after lacing the food with poison. However, her attention is distracted and the mute co-wife uses the opportunity to exchange their food. The co-wife returns on seeing that the mute wife had eaten proceeds to eat the poisoned food unknowingly. After a while, she begins to writhe in pain and it dawns on her that she has eaten the poisoned food. At this point the mute wife reveals that she is not mute after all, she is only there to avenge the death of the innocent women and also save her husband from her wickedness. Before the wicked wife's death, she confesses to her crime, the husband vows not to marry another woman but lives with the younger wife happily thereafter.

The folktale is replete with the motif of reversal of fortune and the issue of co-wives' rivalry which are common day to day social happenings. In this tale, children are exposed to such vices as jealousy and the danger of extreme emotion. The tale further tells children that one's actions may eventually have a reversal effect, so caution and tolerance are virtues for co-existing in the Mwaghavul society.

Story 3: *Làa Kwee ki Sibel (The Chick and the Baby Wildcat)*

An analysis of the virtue of obedience is portrayed in this folktale. A theme of obedience is strongly crafted in the example through symbolic character and magic. In the story, parental obedience is a prominent theme. Parental obedience in the Mwaghavul community as well as universally meant that children are required to obey their parents. In the African setting, the term 'parents' is not exclusively biological, it encompasses other relations. In the story entitled *Làa Kwee kî Sîbel (The Chick and the Baby Wildcat)*, the chick goes out to play and meets the wild baby cat, they play together until evening and return home. The next day as she gets ready to go out to play, the mother asks her where she was the previous day. The chick tells her that she has a new friend. She innocently describes the creature as "*Ni kî rep káa ngák kî nighin dang gùlùng.*" ("It had a smallish lean head and a long furry tail."). Immediately the mother senses danger and warns the baby cat not to play with the creature again. Meanwhile, the wild baby cat also tells his mother about his new friend and his mother gets angry that he allows their meat to go unharmed. She instructs the wild baby cat to catch the baby chick and bring home. However, the chick heeds her mother's advice and did not go out to play. The wild baby cat waits for her for a while and decides to go close to the chick's house and calls the chick through song:

Sibel: Nàakúm, Nàakúm, put mmun so ntan o! Cat: O naval girl, come! Let's go and play!

Kwee: Hai o! Hai o! Doghon Nàá toklek o! Chick: Never!
Mother warned me yesterday!

Sibel: Nàakúm, Nàakúm, put mmun so ntan o! Cat: O naval girl, come! Let's go and play!

Kwee: Hai o! Hai o! Doghon Nàá toklek o! Chick:
Never! Mother warned me yesterday

The song becomes a symbolic way of communicating the Chick's resolve to obey her mother. The story ends with the moral that anyone who heeds to instruction will be saved from danger. The major thrust of the exemplified folktale is to enforce a strict code of obedience to parents and elders by younger members of the Mwaghavul society. Indeed, obedience for one's parents and older members of society is enshrined in the canon of Mwaghavul social codes of conduct. In the scenario which plays out in the story, children are under strict obligation to obey and respect their parents and elders who may not necessarily be biological parents. This worldview of the Mwaghavul people is synonymous with the universal culture of obedience. This is further accentuated in the biblical verse in *Ephesians* 6:1 which instructs children to obey their parents. James Tar Tsaaior adds that "the theme of obedience occurs in many African folk narratives" (66). Thus, it is not strange that Mwaghavul folktales appropriate it as a thematic preoccupation.

Story 4: *Mee Mat Shwatnyit (The Biased Woman)*

The virtue of equity in the family is the social base for folklore. Families use these traditions to present themselves, to characterize each other, and to note important transitional

events as they honour the family. Barre Toelken also asserts that traditional expressions develop a family sense of 'us' that is distinguishable from other groups. Because family often is the first group a person knows, the habits and assumptions acquired through family traditions shape perception and experience in a natural and more profound way. Bascom notes that there usually is more than amusement going on when folktale is being performed in a family setting. He acknowledges that some traditions invite fantasy and creativity, allowing people to imagine living in a better situation or escaping the limitations of life and death. However, these fantasies often release tension to prepare family members to accept or adapt to their life situations. If they question how things actually are, often there is a tradition to validate what the family stands for and to indicate how members should behave. To perpetuate the family as a unit over space and time, often traditions will validate previous behaviours and attitudes even if other options are appealing or even more viable.

Traditions thus have a function to instruct and direct on how to act and live. Bascom observes in his research in Africa that children in non-literate societies primarily are taught by stories, sayings, and ceremonies. Families can use traditions to teach appropriate behaviour and to gently reprimand members for making unacceptable decisions and undesirable actions. The common storytelling situation of Mwaghavul is when old people stay at home with children during the day, the former nursing the latter, and often narrating folktales, parents and adults are out in the fields or busy in work and also when the parents and adults are back from the field, as they all wait for food to be ready. The folktale narration is the replication

of what elders are experiencing in the field even as tales are being told. Children will soon face the adult life portrayed in the tales. This prepares children for adult life. It warns them about the danger of evil things and advises them to cultivate universal values such as compassion, generosity, and fellow feeling for the interest of all. Moreover, tale-telling activities in family help members relate to each other, know each other's moods and talents, and learn how to adapt relationships when changes occur. The bond of relationship in Mwaghavul family household is exemplary only because of such activities still persist in the family to remind the members of the importance of maintaining a traditional behaviour even in the proliferation of other culture items. *Mee Mat Shwatnyit (The Biased Woman)* is an example of such a function.

In the story, the relationship between co-wives in the family is illustrated. In the story, a certain woman is senior wife had died to leave behind a daughter named Locustleg. The second wife who had three daughters always maltreats her co-wife's child. Whenever she cooks food she sings a song to call her daughters to the table excluding Locustleg. This woman continues to starve Locustleg; unknowingly to her, an old woman monster observes her and subsequently learns the song. One day, the Monster cooks her own food and calls the woman's children through the song; the children hear the song and respond as usual. The Monster kills all the three children excluding Locustleg who is always left out in the feeding ritual.

In the tale sampled here the ordering of a family life is suggested in the polygamous. It validates the family conduct and setting in the traditional Mwaghavul society as

polygamous. In this instance, the co-wives who treated their step-children wickedly are punished. In the first tale *Locustleg*, the disfavoured wife's daughter, who lost her mother is spared by the monster while the wicked step-mother loses her children. This validates that the expected action from step-mothers whose co-wives die is to embrace the children of their co-wives and treat them as they would treat their own children. Failure of the co-wives in this expected behaviour breaks the family setting, as the killing of the children by the monster implies and leads to grievous circumstances. The belief has been validated by the narration of this tale. In a polygamous setting, it is expected that wives and their children be treated without discrimination. Failure to maintain this standard in the polygamous family breaks mutual faith in the family relationship and breeds injustice. Such injustices are handled by the deployment of a *dues-ex-machina* who brings instant justice to the unjustly treated within the family setting. This basic idea has been provoked by the tales with the theme of rivalry. The tales have the function as a means of suggesting that in the polygamous family relationship all members should be treated with equity.

Story 5: *Wuk kɪ Kwee kɪ As (The Chicken and the dog on cooperative Farming)*

In *Wuk kɪ Kwee kɪ As (The Chicken and the dog on cooperative Farming)* narrated by Pandak Philemon of Ampang West, the dog and the chicken organize a cooperative farm labour. First, the work for the dog, when they had worked and sit to take refreshment, the dog turns the fonio beverage on the rock making it difficult for the chicken to drink. After a while the dog and the chicken return to work on the chicken's farm. When it is time for them to take their rest and also

refresh themselves, the chicken pours on the new shoots of swordgrass. This makes it difficult for the dog to drink the beverage and he spends the day hungry. Children through this tale will learn the negative impact of mischief. Here we see a positive relationship is ruined due to mischief and selfishness of the dog. The chicken revenges and pays the dog back in the same proportion.

The present effort to analyse the sample stories is geared towards showing the rich values in the Mwaghavul orature and hence justifies the need for its preservation. Folktales can be used to inculcate traditional values in our children. Today, most of the storybooks and picture books and animatic films that children read and watch are those from the western world. Children enjoy these books and animatic films. But if there are storybooks and picture books of Mwaghavul folktales, the children would understand the characters more clearly and enjoy them even more. In the process, our traditional values would gradually seep into their brain. This will have more effect than any number of lectures and sermons which our youths generally find very boring.

Using the internet to Preserve Mwaghavul Folktales

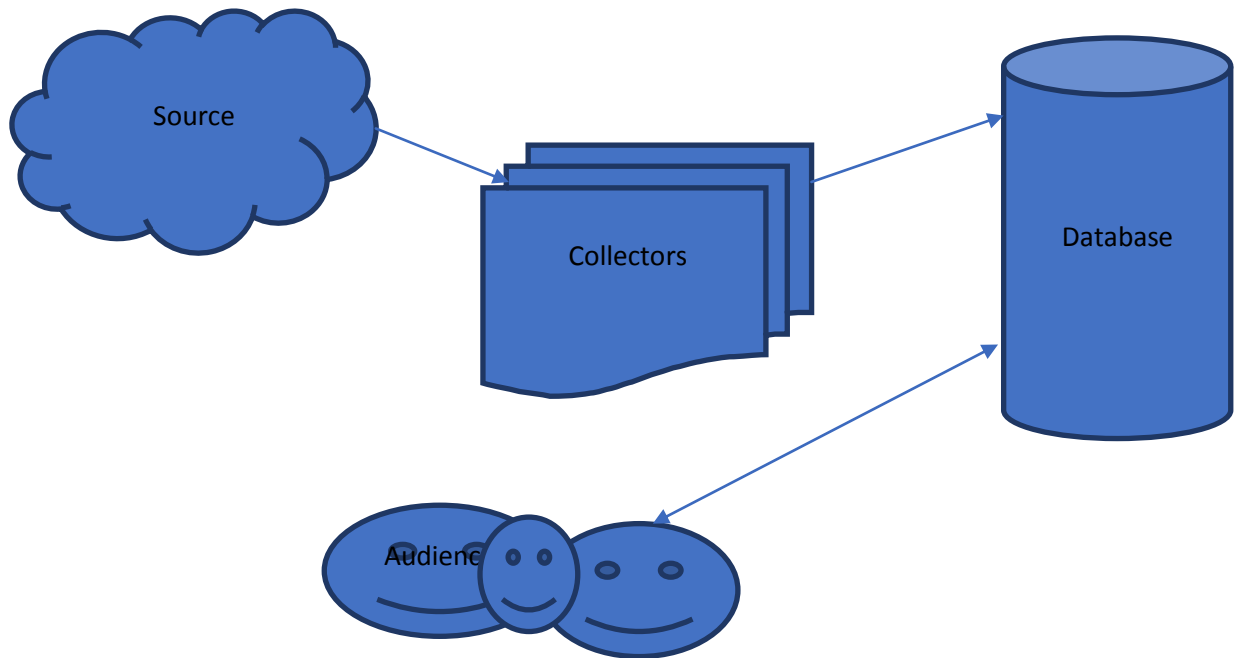
The cyberspace has provided a vast ambience for online archiving of manuscripts, audio and video recordings of oral literature and this is a technique of cultural preservation widely accepted by indigenous communities around the world. The study to collect and digitally archive the Mwaghavul folktales was supported by Firebird Foundation, which has a mission to collect and protect the rapidly disappearing indigenous literature and traditional knowledge. The advent of digital technology is a boon to the efforts towards preserving

our oral traditions. Digital technology has made collecting, compiling, archiving and making the various forms of oral traditions available to the global audience very easy, provided we have the willingness to commit a certain amount of our time, energy and resources to it. The following are some practical methods employed for preserving the Mwaghavul folktales using the currently available digital technologies. This the first creation and attempt at hosting the 'Mwaghavul Folktales Online Database'.

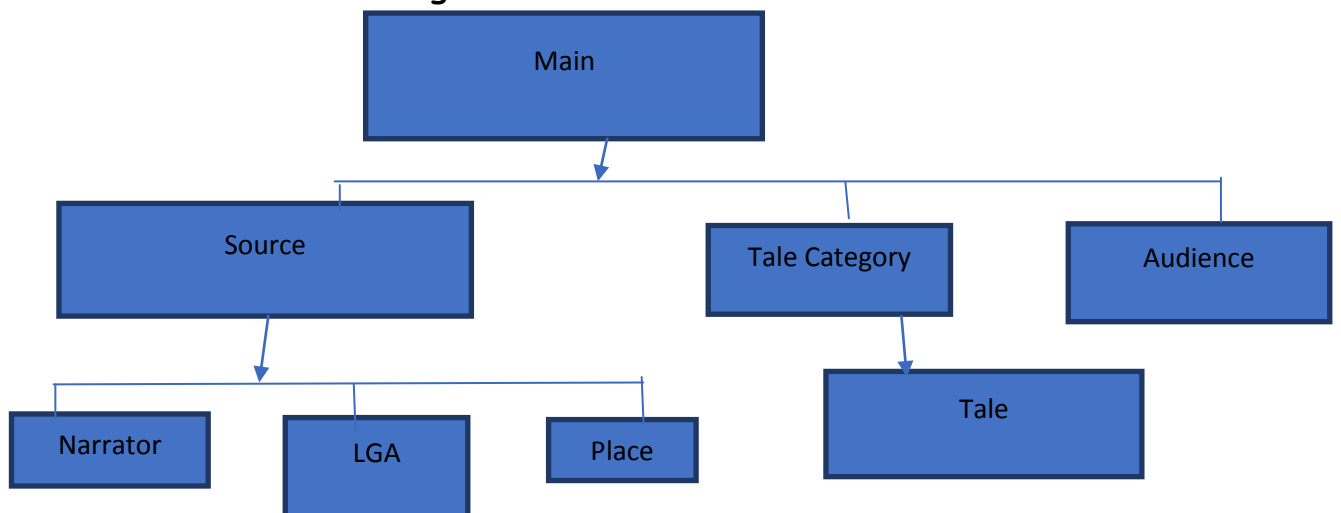
Creation of a web server and a database

A web server and a database will be created to host the collection of folktales and other future oral traditions of Mwaghavul people patterned after the method of Tshering Cigay Dorji. The server is to be managed by the Information and Communication Technology Centre, Faculty of Arts, and the Department of English, University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. A suitable website with the proper interface is created for accessing the collections in the database. Accessibility is divided into three levels based on whether the user is an administrator, a contributor, a registered user or a non-registered user. See figure 2 for the framework design.

Figure 2: Mwaghavul Folktales Online Database Architectural designed Framework

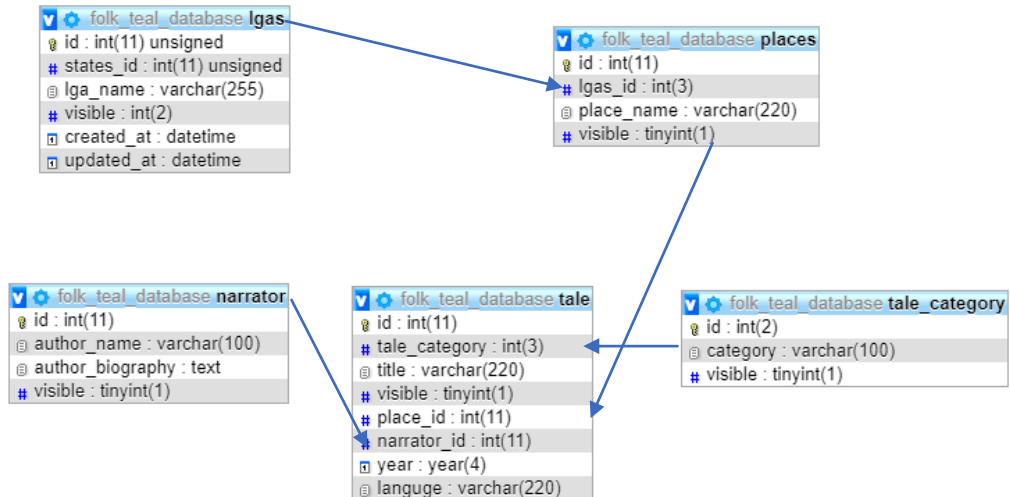


Functional Block Diagram



Database designed

Entity_relational Diagram *



Formats for archiving: at this stage of the study, 100 folktales are collected for digital archiving. An item in the collection will be archived in the form of text, video or audio in suitable formats. Efforts are made to have any single item represented at least in the form of both text and audio. The text is in both Mwaghavul and English. The audio and video are in Mwaghavul language in which the story was originally narrated. This would help preserve the original impact and flavour of the story, which is often lost in translation.

Accessibility and terms of use: the collection will be freely accessible to everyone and the collection is made freely available for use in non-commercial undertakings, especially for education and research in any country in the world. Users should be able to post comments and feedback to the stories. The host has the copyright to decide whether to allow all users or just registered users to post comments.

Recruitment of contributors: There is a need to build a large collection of orature and this is not an easy task without contributions from a large number of people. So, one of the most important future tasks in this endeavour will be the recruitment of a large number of interested contributors, rather than relying solely on a few dedicated researchers to go around Mwaghavul communities collecting folktales and other forms of verbal arts. The collected data (text, audio, and video) would be uploaded into the Mwaghavul Folktales Database. This would enable a build-up of the database.

Making the website dynamic, not just an archive: the website will be made dynamic, and not simply an archive of folktales. There is an area where interested individuals can discuss various topics related to the folktales. There should also be provisions for the readers to upload a different version of the story in response to a story in the database.

Search and retrieval: as the Mwaghavul Folktales Database grows in size to probably accommodate other indigenous languages across the Middle Belt, it would become difficult to find the items one is looking for. This envisaged challenge necessitated the designed framework to make provision for metadata.

Collaboration with Tertiary Institution in Middle Belt: The objective of this research is to make the database operational. Once the database becomes operational and reaches a certain size, collaboration could be set up with tertiary institutions within the country for further research

and development of the database and increasing the size of the collection.

CONCLUSION

This paper outlines the importance of the Mwaghavul folktales as a vehicle for transmitting traditional values and preserving the unique culture and traditions of the Mwaghavul people. It highlights the danger of extinction facing the Mwaghavul verbal arts due to the forces of globalization and commercial entertainments. The threat is real if we do not take a timely action. The timely action that we need to take is to preserve and promote our oral traditions through the use of digital technology creating a comprehensive and dynamic database of our oral traditions. Efforts should be made to include more African folktales in general and Mwaghavul folktales in particular in the school curriculum and publish storybooks and picture books based on these folktales for our children.

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