

An Examination of the Potency of Mwaghavul Folktales in Conflict Resolution

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Abstract: It has been observed that although the African continent is steeped in various forms of conflict, there is inadequate scholarly interest on conflict resolution; peace building and development in Africa particularly with regards to Literature and Oral Literature. This paper is based on the hypothesis that Mwaghavul indigenous peace promoting and sustaining methods are still a thriving arsenal which has gone into oblivion due to urbanization. Therefore, the paper utilises perspectives from Mwaghavul folktales to explore conflicts in society and how they can be resolved through indigenous methods. The paper emerges from the conviction that imbedded in our folktales are values that can be explored to navigate peace among conflict-torn regions in modern Nigeria. The data for the study is based on a sample of folktales, existing literature on folktales and insider participant observations. It establishes that folktales are concerned, among other things, with conflict and its resolution, maintaining positive relationships, tolerance and inculcating peaceful co-existence. The paper, therefore, concludes that modern peace building activities should blend with indigenous peace promoting and sustaining frameworks. The role of folktales as a violence deterring mechanism among the Mwaghavul communities, though at a micro level, seems to be an asset; yet current peace building activities in modern Nigeria tend to work independently and outside the traditional parameters.

Keywords: Folktales, Mwaghavul, Peace building, and Conflict Resolution

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I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the many years of conflict bedeviling the world in general and the African society in particular, academic coverage of issues related to conflict resolution, peace building and development in Africa rarely pay attention to Literature, let alone Oral Literature. There is a growing urgency to stem the incessant conflicts that many African countries are brewing in, hence, the efforts of political scientists, legal experts and civil society activists, to theorize steps to building peace in post-conflict societies. This paper avers that Mwaghavul folktales are essential tools that can be explored to comprehend the various conflicts in Nigerian society and how they can be resolved. The paper argues that embedded in our indigenous literature are treasures capable of creating a peaceful society with guiding values and principles. Creative writers have long been associated with the vision and quest for social transformation. One of Africa's foremost creative writers, suggests that African creative writers have the responsibility to inform their societies of the wrong choices they have made¹. They also have the task of prescribing solutions to social ills. Of course, this suggestion emanates from Achebe's foreground knowledge on the roles of folktales in African communities. The marginalisation of Oral Literature has prevented scholars and other members of society from appreciating its potential as a resource for peace-building. The marginalisation of Oral Literature scholars observe is sequel to the influence of the technology-driven 20th and 21st centuries.

Violence in Nigeria in its various forms has evolved over the decades. From use of traditional weapons, charms and amulets, Olawale Rotimi² observes that violence in Nigeria has taken sophisticated dimensions. Political, electoral, religious, ethnic/tribal, cultism and other forms of violence are dominant in the Nigerian society, in varying degrees. No region in Nigeria is the exclusive preserve of violence as each region has its peculiar form of it. In northern Nigeria, religious violence and extremist attacks are peculiar, in the South-South, militancy is popular and like extremist attacks in northern Nigeria, it has received global attention. In the South-East, cultism ferocity and robbery attacks are common forms of violence, while in the South West, political violence and thuggery are intrinsic. However, other forms of such as gender-based violence (rape, abuse, intimidation), tribal clashes, among others, still exist across the regions of Nigeria. Incessant violence has threatened Nigeria's peace, stability and unity as a nation.

With the coming of democracy, the negative impact of violence on social relationships seems also to have continued unabated. Reports by *Nigeria Watch* indicate that in 2016 alone, the main causes of violence in

Nigeria in order of number of fatalities were crime (4,127), political conflict (3,502), religious violence (3,361) and accidents including road crashes (2,618). The security risk index of major states in Nigeria shows that Rivers (with 6.6 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants) is more dangerous than Lagos (5.3 relative deaths) and Abuja (3.5 relative deaths). But Borno is still the most dangerous location in the country with 56.2 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants. Despite progress, the Boko Haram conflict remains a deadly issue with 3,147 fatalities in 2016. In ten years, from 1 June 2006 to 31 May 2016, it has led to a total of 32,842 fatalities. Roughly, the number of people who were killed directly by the insurgents (16,666) and by security forces (16,182)³.

According to the report, interrogating violence in Nigeria often brings into sharp focus historical issues that have plagued the political landscape of the nation since independence. For instance, the combination of politics, ethnicity and religion plays a large role in the contours of lethal violence in Nigeria. The 2015 Annual Report specifically implicated politics and religion as major drivers of violence. In 2016, however, the main drivers were crime and conflicts among herdsmen, a shift probably arising from the containment of the Boko Haram insurgency. Crime accounted for 4,127 deaths. This was followed by political conflicts, religious violence and road and other types of accidents. Many incidents involving Boko Haram were considered as both political and religious in origin, thus, vindicating the argument that, "if scars of the past are hidden away there will always come a time when those scars will suppurate and became a poison that will engulf all of us even the future generation" (1)⁴. It may be too early to predict how the colonial, protracted conflict and post-independence electoral violence have affected the moral fabric of the modern political community but all signs point to the direction that there was a breakdown of peaceable social norms and values. If this trend continues, it may well be that in the future, the traditional peaceable social norms and values that sustained Nigerian households and communities for decades may go into extinction.

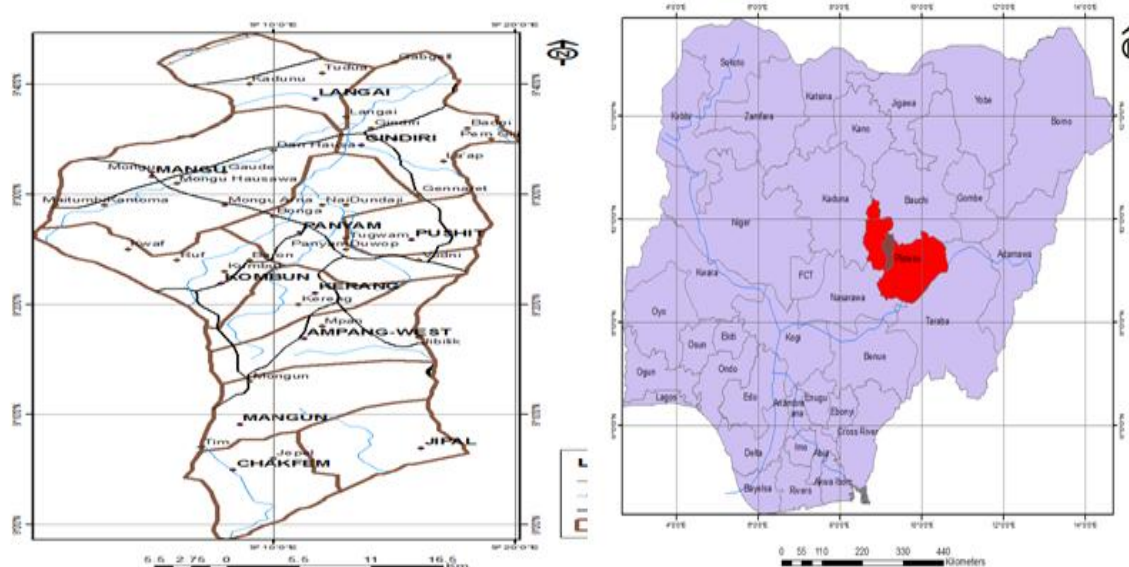
Questions which come to mind are: what has happened to traditional Nigerian peace promoting mechanisms? Which traditional Nigerian peaceable social norms and values are still being embraced by modern Nigerian communities? The current state of affairs among Nigerian communities shows that there is a greater need for peaceful co-existence, respect, tolerance, non-violence and mutual understanding to be fostered in order to consolidate peace throughout the country. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the extent to which folktales can be employed as a violence deterring mechanism using the Mwaghavul folktales as a model.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study involved the collection of data on Mwaghavul folktales of all types. The data collected were from narrators between the ages of 35- 75 years at Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. These folktales were transcribed, annotated, and classified based on themes. The amassed data were analysed based on its value to the people.

Study Design: The research employed the survey method in gathering data for this study.

Study Location: In this study designed towards collecting folktales from narrators, the study was done in 7 Mwaghavul communities in Mangu L.G.A. of Plateau, Nigeria.



Source: National Centre for Remote Sensing Jos (NCRS) 19-01-2018

Map 1: Showing the Study area

Study Duration: March 2017 to September 2017.

Sampling Techniques: The technique used in selecting the study sample was random sampling and purposeful selection. The random selection was considered based on the following conditions: that the participants must be native speakers of the Mwaghavul language and who live in the districts of the study area for at least fifteen years. The participants must have knowledge of Mwaghavul folktales and should be willing to narrate the stories for the purpose of scholarship. Thereafter, purposeful selection of those participants who met these criteria and based on personal interaction was done.

Data Collection Techniques: The data for this research was collected from primary sources. The techniques used in collecting the primary data were;

Unstructured interview: Interviews were conducted with native speakers of the language using a set of questions. The interview was done in two stages. The first stage was a discussion with Mwaghavul language committee to gain insight into the background of the study as well as ascertain the knowledge of the participants about Mwaghavul folktales. The second stage followed the data collection. The participants were guided during the face-to-face interview on the types of folktales required based on pre-determined study plan namely: folktales with animal characters, folktales with human characters, folktales with both animals and human characters, folktales with human characters and spirits (ogres and sprites). Information was collected in a qualitative format so that the participants were relaxed and fully participated in the interview. The folktales were instantaneously recorded as the participants narrated.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): The researcher used focus group discussion as a supplementary method of data gathering. This was adopted because focus group discussions are useful to cross-checking and validating data that have been collected. FGD is useful for the deeper understanding of cultural practices in a qualitative research⁵. The focus group members were elderly persons who have deep knowledge of the Mwaghavul culture and so they were considered to have the social authority to articulate it. Multiple discussion sessions with the group consisting of seven elderly persons emphasized specific topics such as folktale telling in Mwaghavul communities, the function of folktales to Mwaghavul people, past and present adult-child relationships, the social changes and everyday life among the people. The focus group discussion sessions were held predominantly in the beginning and end phases of the fieldwork with the aim of understanding the overall picture of the folktales of the Mwaghavul people.

III. INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

Recording the Folktales from the Participants: The tales were recorded in the field using H2n zoom handy audio recorder and HLDR – XR 160 digital HD Video camera recorder for visuals. With these gadgets, data were obtained directly from the informants without any alterations.

Photography: Harper asserts that photography is important to obtain images of participants, places and contexts in a qualitative research. Based on this assertion, the researcher used photographs (still images) to supplement audio recording and the field notes. In other words, through photographing, still-images of the context in which data was generated were produced. The instruments used for the photography were: Gionee A1 mobile phone and HLDR – XR 160 digital HD Video camera.

Interview Questions: This approach was used to gain an understanding of the values of folktales in Mwaghavul Communities. The general interview guide approach was adopted to ensure that the same general areas of information were collected from each respondent. This provided more focus than the conventional approach, but still allowed a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewees. In this research, the researcher utilized a standardized open-ended interview consisting of eleven questions. All the research respondents were given the same questions in order to gain standard information and this facilitated generalizations made in the study.

Transcription and Translation of Collection: The researcher relied on the assistance of Da Raymond Dawum (a staff of the Mwaghavul Bible translation office) who works as the Mwaghavul Literacy coordinator, for the transcription and translation of the collection. He was assisted by Da Alexander Le'an also a staff of the Mwaghavul Bible Translation office, Panyam. The orthography used for the transcription is that which Blench observed has been revised with the latest official guide published in 2013. This version has served the purpose of the Bible translation, Mwaghavul dictionary and a grammar book (work in progress) which is co-authored by Blench and Dawum. The editorial team of the Mwaghavul Bible Translation comprising of seven members validated the transcribed and translated versions of the folktales.

Method of Data Analysis:In the analysis of the folktales, the interpretative content analysis was used. The content analysis aims to directly elicit the human’s beliefs, values, attitudes and thoughts towards conflict and peace building process in the selected folktales. These attributes are analysed through the thematic preoccupation in the selected tales as displayed in Table 1. Before this analysis, the data were clustered and coded MF(Mwaghavul folktales) within the range of 1-100 (out of these 100 folktales, 6 tales were purposefully selected for this this article). The coding aligned the folktales to the titles and this coding were placed under tale-type, thematic, function, dramatis personae and motifs (only the thematic classification is of interest in these present study).

IV. RESULT

Table no 1: Shows the selected folktales, place of collection and themes.

Title of Folktale	Place of Collection	Theme
MF11 <i>ArDiDaafwan Bar DiakunSarkì Nvár (How the Hare escaped from the Lioness)</i>	Ampang West	Consequence of Aggression
MF98 <i>Dikkì Nàmìur (The Marriage of Miss Fat)</i>	Mangu	Effect of Envy
MF59 titled <i>LaareepDì Ra Kwar Mish ShèeFira (The Young Woman who Disappointed her Fiancé)</i>	Panyam	Acts of Betrayal
MF 17 <i>As kíkwee a PèeSerìbet mu Dik (The Dog and the Chicken at a Marriage Ceremony)</i>	Ampang West	Cooperation
MF23 <i>DaafwankìKwee Mo (The Hare and the Chicken)</i>	Mangu	Greed
MF89 <i>Mat ButbishkiGinighinFìraTiding (The Wicked Woman and her co-mute wife)</i>	Mangu	Polygamy (Co-wife Rivalry)

V. THEMATIC DISCUSSION OF MWAGHAVUL FOLKTALES AND THE IMPLICATION FOR PEACEBUILDING

Theme is the subject or main idea in a talk, piece of writing or work of art. This entails that in every discourse or literary text, there is a theme. It is the building block of every work of art. A literary text that has no theme has no heart. This is because themes are and will continue to be the fundamental concepts explored, extolled and addressed in a literary work. A lot of themes abound in Mwaghavul *tangcham* however the present study has identified twenty-seven themes in the data collected for the study. It is important to state here that, the themes displayed in Table 1 and discussion in the preceding section are fluidly, hence open to further critical discourse and thematic classification. Folktales like oral poetry are not only imaginative creations but they “reflect the cultural norms, local history and realities of an environment” (107)⁶. It may serve as a catharsis, provide a world view, describe sanctions and prohibited behaviour, liberate one from the urgency of his situation or describe various types of useful behaviours and strategies.

One of the urgent situations in the Nigerian polity is the incessant conflict as earlier mentioned. Conflict occurs when interdependent individuals or groups simultaneously pursue incompatible behaviours, perceptions, goals, needs, interests and values while perceiving their interdependence as negative. By its very nature, conflict is not static. Once a conflict emerges, it either escalates or de-escalates. The predominant responses: fight, flight or problem- solving approaches are usually compatible with what a particular individual or group is more accustomed to. Conflict resolution is a process which aims at bringing the warring parties together in the hope that they can find solutions which leave them all satisfied. Dialogue or facilitated dialogue with subsequent co-existence is one of the characteristics of the resolution of conflict. For the purpose of this paper, conflict resolution through problem solving is one of the aspects within the broader aims of peace building. Hence this mechanism of peace building is explicated in the data selected for this study.

Consequences of Aggression

Aggression is the feeling of anger resulting in hostile or violent behaviour. The Mwaghavul people like any ethnic group are liable to be aggrieved over issues that challenge their entity. They are also conscious that this emotional state can lead an individual or group of people to take positive measures or irrational actions against the offender, which may in turn yield negative results. In MF11 the theme of aggression is explicitly ingrained in this tale and is used as a caution against taking irrational action when one is angry. Most conflicts

are often escalated by irrational action by the individuals involved. MF11 *ArDiDaafwan Bar DiakunSarkì Nvâr* (*How the Hare escaped from the Lioness*) narrated by Joel Retceen of Ampang West, portrays the irrational action taken by Lioness when she discovers that the Hare continuously deprives her cubs of their share of the game.

Lioness' aggressions are rooted in the perception of the injustice done to her offspring by the Hare, who incidentally features as the villain in the narrative. The Lioness' anger depicts the realities the tale expresses; however, the caution is in their actions which is considered as irrational. The Lioness, after discovering that the Hare, all along deprives her children of their food and they consequently become malnourished, retorts "*Daafwan, a jì a del put akunyen!*" ("*Hare, come out, at once!*"). Boiling in anger, she yells, "*Mwaghamakcicinsi!*" ("*You're doomed today!*"). Such reaction gives the Hare an opportunity to plan his escape in both tales. Thus, the *tangcham* specifically urges restraint in any provocative situation.

The Effect of Envy

Envy seems to be a universal theme in most folktales around the world few examples are the tales of "Cinderella", "Snow White" "Beauty and the Beast" the Igbo's "Obaledo and the beauty-thief monster", the Yoruba's "The Fate of the Proud Princess", and the Ibibio's "The Pretty Girl and the Seven Jealous Women". The root of envy in these global examples is aroused by the exceptional beauty of the protagonists of the tales. In spite of this universality; beauty is viewed by many as subjective with each person having the right to interpret and observe what he/she considers as beautiful. Little wonder the English proverb states that 'beauty is in the eyes of the beholder'. The idea of beauty is thus different from people to people. The *tangcham* that discusses this theme deals with the effect of beauty upon the beholder. The story MF98 *Dikkì Nàamùur* (*The Marriage of Miss Fat*, see appendix B) a tale of magic with magic as *ma otif*. It was narrated by Sarah Monday of Mangu. The tale resonates around a King who gets married to Miss Fat, a magical creation from the fat of a cow belonging to an old woman. At the sight of Miss Fat, the King exclaims, "*A kyeet men diidangndiisi 'e ?*" ("What kind of beauty is this?"). He marries to her and loves her the most. Meanwhile, the King has three other wives, who now become jealous of the beautiful new bride because of the attention she gets from the King, so they decide to get rid of her. One day, the king travels, the last two of the other wives instigate the first wife to go against the King's instruction not to allow the new bride to be in the sun or near fire. They protest, "*A wiikiyit pee dinNàamùurdìisi... beyi so ceen ra put ku ra kituppakwusdi. Aakoowusnkigwaghap a baasmunubejeedakwa?*" ("It's you who have been giving Miss Fat the liberty.... go and drive her out so that she'll be stoking up the fire. Or is it only our legs that'll be getting burnt by the fire?"). The first wife agrees and drives Miss Fat to the hearth to stoke up the fire. On getting to the hearth, Miss Fat melts and turns completely into liquid. The King returns and discovers what had happened. Confusion sets in and none of the wives owns up to being responsible. At this point, the hare who earlier had mediated in the marriage between Miss Fat and the King comes in as *deus-ex-machina* to resolve the problem. He goes to the old woman and narrates to her what had happened. The old woman agrees to follow the hare to the palace. The King and his wives offer their apologies to the old woman. Despite the revelation of the mystic nature of Miss Fat, the King still pleads with the old woman for help, "*Kusukyicinbam, an kidom mat finadi vit.*" ("Please help me, I still love my wife"). She agrees to return Miss Fat after seven days. On the seventh day, the old woman returns her to the palace and tells them to take care of her. Eventually, the King finds out the wicked schemes of the other wives', and sends them away, but lives with Miss Fat happily ever after.

In the story discussed above, two major things depict glaringly the belief system of the Mwaghavul people. Firstly, fat is regarded as a symbol of beauty and potent for its curative value in Mwaghavul culture. In the past, it was commonly used on pre-mature babies' skin and their body parts until maturation (Sunday, and Le'an informants). Secondly, the number seven is symbolic within the *kum* that is the people's traditional religious practice and stands for the number of completions. This is synonymous with the biblical allusion to the number of perfections. In the *kum*, the ritual that accompanies child dedication is performed by pouring seven-handfuls of water scooped from the any stream. This story although multifaceted, teaches children many things such as consequences of scheming evil. Once an individual becomes insatiate by the circumstance surrounding him/her, such a person is susceptible to plot acts prone to violence. Hence through such tales, children are taught the need to be appreciative of their status.

Acts of Betrayal

Betrayal among the Mwaghavul communities is viewed as an oddity that destroys the bond of trust. Trust is important in any given family and other human society. Since folktales generally often depict the society of their birth, it is thus understandable that trust should feature as a subject in Mwaghavul *tangcham*. Trust as a bond is built around friendship and other human relationships. 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)⁷. When trust is bridged in any given relationship an individual or group feels betrayed.

As a theme, betrayal forms the kernel of narration; whether oral and written. Stories that point to betrayal are not restricted to secular works, as one would have imagined. The Bible contains sufficient instances of betrayal that can even attract a systematic investigation of same. Some ready examples are the stories about Samson and Delilah; Judas and his betrayal of Jesus Christ, and David's betrayal of Uriah.⁸ Some literary works of notable example include the eponymous play of William Shakespeare, Julius is betrayed by Brutus, Napoleon's betrayal of Snowball and the tenets of Animalism in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Okonkwo's feeling of betrayal by his clan in Umuofia in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, little wonder African folktales are replete with themes of betrayal.

In explicating the theme of betrayal, this study cites MF 59 which involves a girl, her fiancé (human and group of birds), the girl features as the protagonist and betrayer in the tale. MF59 titled *LaareepDí Ra Kwar Mish ShèeFira (The Young Woman who Disappointed her Fiancé)* narrated by Jifosiah Alex of Panyam, the story is about a young girl Nàakos who betrays her fiancé after she has been traditionally engaged to him. One day, Nàakos and her friends are in the stream to bathe. As soon as 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 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 stream. However, when she gets to a spot, she grabs the root of a tree and remains there. One day, her brother comes along the stream path to fetch some timber. She recognizes the sound of his axe cutting the tree, and begins to sing:

Mwaghavul

A wee can sheep díisi
Kaadyemkì Na Wumgtúghùrsì 'e?
Kát a dyemkì Na Wumgtúghúr
'Bewu so kuwucètmwos gam kibel
Ku wujikuwushang an dí.

English translation

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 rescue me.

As she keeps singing 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 to tell his parents at home. 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 so many birds like *ngooroo*, *nkiling*, *nfyem*, *nkuriit*, *ntaaseet*, *ki pák mo diki 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); but only the bateleur is able to rescue Nàakos. As his reward, the bird is crowned the king of the birds that day.



Fig 1:the *nfyem* (Bateleur) is a very distinctive and beautiful eagle found throughout the open grasslands and savannahs of sub-Saharan Africa

This human-animal-moralizing tale portrays the consequences of betrayal. Nàakos breaks the nuptial arrangement between her and the young man that she is engaged to marry. Consequently, she is punished by nature- the rising tide of the river. Coincidentally Nàakos' redemption from her punishment, 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, capable of instigating conflict, the story teaches both adult and children the relationship between of man and his environment. Implying that man can resort to nature to resolve conflict.

Cooperation

Cooperation is the art of working in unison for a common purpose, knowing that much can be achieved together than alone. This philosophy accentuates the Igbo proverb which states that *Ayukatamamirionu o gbaufufu* (When we urinate together it foams). This statement implies that the Mwaghavul, like other Africans, share a similar view on communality. MF 17 *As kiKwee a PèeSeribet mu Dik (The Dog and the Chicken at a*

Marriage Ceremony) narrated by Pãndãk Philemon from Ampang West and MF37 *Bitlanki KweekiAs (The Chicken and the dog on cooperative Farming)* narrated by Christiana Joshua of Kerang affirm this philosophy. These animal-moralizing stories depict the theme of cooperation. MF17 tells how the chicken helps the dog to eat at the marriage ceremony in Fulani encampment. At the ceremony, the chicken is allowed to eat from the crumbs on the ground but the dog is chased away. After a while, the dog becomes hungry and wonders how to satiate his hunger. The dog discusses with the chicken and a plan is reached. When the host serves cereal beverage, the chicken will jump into it and make it unfit for consumption and in this way the hosts are forced to pour the beverage away. This gives the dog an opportunity to eat to his satisfaction. After eating to their fill, both animals leave for home. The dog expresses his gratitude to the chicken. MF37, tells how the dog and the chicken establish a cooperative farming and how they take turns to farm for each other. However, in the course of the relationship, the dog tries to outsmart the chicken. The chicken becomes angry and pays back the dog by the same mischief.

In MF17 and 37, food has a symbolic implication just as it is in Greek myths and folklore. For example, in Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles and Hector's father, Priam, reconcile and share a meal, which dissolves an existing enmity and unites them. Mikhail Bakhtin for instance, briefly mentions the importance of the funeral meal in the *Iliad*⁹. Food, and the drinking and eating associated with it, is grouped with popular-festive forms, or themes and details taken from the popular culture of a given time, particularly the culture related to the carnivalesque. Since food is "part of every folk merriment," it often accompanies comic scenes, but the meanings of these scenes are not simply humorous⁹. The food scenes in MF17 and 37 may appear humorous on the surface, but a critical look shows that the food imagery heightens the theme of cooperation. These stories teach children and adults the importance of cooperation and the consequences of isolationism. The Mwaghavul folktales teach that cooperation engenders success. Folktales abound in other global cultures with stories about the importance of working together and the dangers of individualism.

Greed

In Mwaghavul culture, it is believed that greed leads to many social vices that can degenerate into the killing. This is exemplified in MF23 narrated by Tani Amos of Pushit it is entitled, *HimeDi Ni Met nDaafwanmBal (The Insatiable Appetite of the Hare)* in which the Hare invites the Guinea Fowl to accompany him to the Fulani cattle encampment. He warns her not to carry a ladle. The Hare tricks the Guinea Fowl and drinks all the milk in two instances. So, the Guinea Fowl goes home hungry. As they are returning home, the Hare employs the trick of the *lip* and succeeds in killing the Guinea Fowl. He roasts the meat and goes home. The next day the Hare visits the Bush Fowl and invites her to accompany him to the Fulani encampment. The Bush Fowl picks up a ladle and hides it under its wing. When they reached the cattle encampment, the Fulani offers them milk. The Hare asks the Bush Fowl to go home and bring a ladle. The Bush Fowl removes the ladle from under her wing. The Hare becomes very angry and says; "*Kaa fii diikagharak ni! A we sat nyinne mo nji cin mee wurlongmmun 'e?*" ("What a smallish strong head of yours! Who told you that we'd be given any milk?"). The Hare and the Bush Fowl drink the milk. Again, the Hare tells the Bush Fowl to leave the ladle at this point, but the Bush Fowl hides the ladle and brings it out when they reached the next encampment. This makes the Hare very angry. On their way home, he plans to use the *lip* trick to kill the Bush Fowl as he did to the Guinea Fowl. Here, the Bush Fowl outsmarts him and he ends up killing his own children.

In the past Mwaghavul people operated a basic subsistence economy. In other words, the provision of food played an extremely vital role in their lives, hence the food (meat) motif in all the stories that discuss greed. For comic effect, the Hare surreptitiously takes advantage of the culture of hospitality and at other instances, takes advantage of people's effort. This characteristic shows the Hare as selfish and greedy - two vices strongly condemned in Mwaghavul society. We find him plotting to outwit others of their share of meat but ends up outwitted. The story teaches children the consequences of greed.

The tale, condemns greed but emphasise hospitality and of good manners. Affirming the intertwining of both vice and virtue, Helen Chukwuma states:

The oral tale shows man in his many forms and in the various situations of life that show up the best and the worst in him. It can be said that there is a certain naturalistic element in oral tale in that it portrays the baser aspects of man: his greed, villainy, utter lack of sensitivity and his egotism. Amidst this clutter of vice and deceit, some virtue finds its way through and triumphs but not without a grim struggle.¹⁰ Chukwuma's assertion aptly explains the scenario in the stories about greed. Here the stories do not completely dwell on the trickery of the Hare but woven into the fabric of the tales are virtues such as wisdom or common-sense, sharing of one's possession (food) with the hungry, teamwork among others. Children will learn consequences of greed in fostering conflict from this story. This fusion of vice and virtue further demonstrates the ambivalence of the Mwaghavul folktales.

Polygamy (Co-wife Rivalry)

Co-wife relationships are usually characterized by intrigues, jealousy, envy, favouritism, and treachery which often brings devastating consequences in such marriages. MF89 is structured around the thematic gravitation of co-wife rivalry. In some instances, co-wife relationships function as a subplot. The practice of polygamy in the marriage system shows that the Mwaghavul society like most African societies is patriarchal where the patrilineal principle takes precedence over the matrilineal, and where the right 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 of disastrous consequences. This portrayal of the co-wife helps to validate the 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. MF89 *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 so she can be her husband's only wife. This wicked act angers a young girl who is a seer and she resolves to save the man from the hands of his wicked wife. One day she feigns illness and pretends to have lost her 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 dūisì ni. Ra dōghòm den a tiding, be ba dī ra nji lepoo mpee kas. Dee ri mer so pu ra dī.

If my wives have 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 through her gimmicks encourages the man and he proposes to her and marries to her and takes her home. The wicked wife confronts the new bride openly thinking that like others the young seer is mute. She tells her *Ni ciingurum-ngurum mo jidee a wii tiding o. Yi tong mmun dak, nàá.* (*Able human beings didn't succeed let alone you, a mute person. Well, live with us, woman, and we see what happens*). After this, the first wife plans to poison the co-mute wife's 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 has eaten goes on to eat the poisoned food. After a while, the first wife 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 there to avenge the death of the innocent women and also save the husband from first wife wickedness. Before the wicked wife's death, she confesses to her crime, the husband vows not to marry another woman, and so lives with the younger wife happily thereafter.

MF89 replete with the motif of reversal of fortune and the theme of co-wives' rivalry are common day to day social happenings in a polygamous setting. In this tale, children are warned against such vices as jealousy and the danger of extreme emotion. The tale further tells children that one's bad actions may eventually have a reversal effect, so caution and tolerance are virtues for co-existing in the Mwaghavul society.

Another cause of co-wife rivalry in Mwaghavul *tangcham* is infertility or a woman not giving birth to male children. In patriarchal societies, the male child is valued over and above the female, because the male child perpetuates the family line. This makes wives without children, particularly male children, insecure and vulnerable. They, therefore, visit their insecurities and frustrations on their co-wives and their children. This situation quite often results in hostility and deadly conspiracies. Sometimes the death of children, co-wives, husbands or disintegration of the whole family become obvious.

VI. CONCLUSION

There are a number of lessons that can be learnt from Mwaghavul folktales. Firstly, the above folk tale indicates that the phenomenon of conflict is understood among Mwaghavul communities. In other words, folktales reveal at the philosophical level the important differences in conceptualization of conflicts across the different cultures. Second, tolerance is depicted as important strategies whenever a conflict occurs. Finally, the folktales above provide a framework for addressing conflicts that is, facilitating dialogue at some instances as well as tolerance. As evidence suggests, facilitated dialogue is unavoidable because in any disagreement disputants do not just disengage and start living together as if nothing ever happened to their relationship. The fears, anger, mistrust and hate that usually accompany a conflict have to be dealt with during a facilitated dialogue. Overall, the depiction of a conflict in the folktales indicates how it should be addressed. In particular, some principles underlying this and other folktales can be applied especially to modern Nigerian communities that have experienced protracted conflicts unabatedly.

Apart from that, the important thing to note is that folktales are about peace. The process of promoting peace to achieve social harmony, tolerance or peaceful co-existence is what is widely understood as peacebuilding. Unfortunately for modern communities, going without folktales is perceived to be the norm but

in the real sense, peace is totally dependent on some cultural norms and values embedded in indigenous knowledge systems of a particular group of people. This therefore, suggests that folktales are an important resource for peace given that tolerance and co-existence prove to be lacking in modern communities judging by violent cases especially those related to political and religious differences. As such, contemporary peacebuilding should blend with indigenous ways of promoting peace if tolerance and co-existence are to be achieved.

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