



Research Article

Volume-05|Issue-10|2024

The Efficacy of Objects as Symbolic Representations in Africa: The Case of Oroko World view

Doreen Mekunda

Department of English and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Buea, Cameroon.

Article History

Received: 05.09.2024

Accepted: 15.10.2024

Published: 28.10.2024

Citation

Mekunda, D. (2024). The Efficacy of Objects as Symbolic Representations in Africa: The Case of Oroko World view. *Indiana Journal of Arts & Literature*, 5(10), 6-13.

Abstract: Africa is built on culture. Culture is a record of all elements saved in the arts, which speak for a people, perfected and transmitted in performance. The culture of a people and its transmission is exhibited through various performances during which diverse objects converse with the audience based on who they are, their status, and what they know. We approach this paper from the Afrocentric perspective, sampling four objects from the field: three stone fire side, calabash, snake, and water. These were selected and discussed among many as symbolic representations of notions in Oroko world view and belief systems. Our aim for using these objects is not to discuss Cultural Marxist theory and its tenets, but to sample symbolic representations of certain objects considered important and valuable to a people through the Black Aesthetic theory. This paper reveals that Africans grow and organize their lives around various objects and art forms accompanied by their symbolic representations that establish relationships and order in their various communities. As a conclusion, the study answers the question, if Africa is not the same everywhere, could there be some broad outlines or underlying elements by which certain generalizations can be made as common to Africans?

Keywords: Efficacy, Symbolic Representation, Objects, Oroko World View

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

INTRODUCTION

The Oroko are an ethnic group in Cameroon. They belong to the coastal Bantu group known as the Sawa. The Oroko occupy the Ndiang and Meme Divisions of the South West Region of Cameroon. The Oroko speak Oroko (first language), English and French (Official or Instructional languages,) and Cameroon Pidgin English. They are related to the Bakweri, Bakole, Duala, Bomboko and to the other Bantu speaking tribes (en.m.wikipedia.org). The Oroko believe in the existence of the invisible world of spirits inhabited by God Almighty, whom they call “God of the ancestors (*Obase wa Melimo*) and other gods and ancestors. They believe that there exist both good and bad spirits and that while good spirits bring joy, peace, and harmony among the people, bad spirits bring untold suffering and sadness. The people are predominantly farmers, craftsmen, hunters, etc., thus attaching more importance to traditional and cultural symbols which they think have much relevance in their day to day livelihood. Traditional or cultural symbols are non-verbal illustrations that portray the philosophical thinking which can express nationalism, religion, and many ideas of culture and the way of life of a particular group of people. Gladys I. Udechukwu (2019) had observed that, “Symbols are anything used to represent, express and stand for an event or situation. They are short expressions for the identification of an object or situation and that symbols serve in transmission of messages as well as focusing the mind on an idea or ideal. Symbols are objects used to typify or represent quality of something else and abstract ideas. Symbols direct or guide our behaviors and are used to show an event of past, present or future” (P.110).

Makoudjou (2012) argues that symbols are part of everyday life of the *ngamba* community, and that, be it during everyday conversation or special events, symbols remain omnipresent because they embody the meaning of realities and clearly put in evidence the underlying meaning of words. Again, Sanka (2020) shows that in the Paasaala people’s culture,

symbols are also employed in the story to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of the dirge as well as expand it when he uses the hawk for its good sight and, therefore, symbolizes sight in the story and the horse and the male lizard which symbolize male virility as per the Paasaala culture, the same way the fowl is known for its intercessory role in the relationship between Africans and their Creator, divinities, and ancestors (p. 35).

From the above, we see that, African cultural ecosphere is one that is engrained in art. Taking the case of drama for instance, Oyindamola and Nkechinyere (2024) hold that, “African drama is generally believed to find its roots in the traditions and culture of the African society such as... the festivals, masquerade, religious rituals, and the moonlight story telling...it has been in existence before colonialism” (p.185). All these manifestations of drama in the everyday life and culture of the community are made up of symbols with which the people identify. Sathvara (2018) adds that, arts (drama) “...is a fundamental human activity”. (p.1023) The African people’s everyday realities and patterns of survival are recorded as culture that is handed down

orally in religious practices and ritual ceremonies from one generation to another. These realities and patterns are flexible enough to accommodate new surrounding and evolutions without losing core practices. As such written literature in Africa are but written expressions of oral traditions expressing African cultural realities.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAME

We approach this study based on Afro-centrism which is the placing of African people in the center of any analysis of African phenomena. It is a world view that is centered on the history of people of African descent or a biased view that favors it over non-African civilizations. For this study, we purposively sample four major objects, the three stone fire side, the snake, water, and the calabash, which the Oroko attach importance to their wellbeing in alignment with our objectives for this study, as our data for this study. However, we do not intend to discuss these objects as a whole or their literariness in entirety, but rather, we aim to study only these four objects that are used either specifically or generally by sub-groups and the African people in general, highlighting their importance to the people and what they represent as we cross-reference from existing literature and through personal communication with resource persons.

What are Symbols?

Kanu (2014) argues that, "A cursory glance at the African culture reveals that symbols are an integral part of the organizational life of African societies, and constitute a fundamental element in the African people's construction of sense knowledge and behavior" (p. 426). In the like manner, Makoudjou (2012) notes, "practices are symbols, signs of recognition through which the entire community expresses itself and transmits its beliefs, customs, and aspirations." (p.9) Also, Schiller (1997) says cultural politics "is the process through which relations of power are asserted, accepted, contested or subverted by means of ideas, values, symbols, and daily practices." (p. 2) Relationships of power come from established hierarchy, which are validated within the cultural settings of most African societies as Bongasu Tanla-Kishani (2005) remarks, "...among the Nso" of Cameroon, a strongly hierarchical society with a complex pattern of social organization" (p.57) is visible. These hierarchies are evident by the various orders and secret societies, with specific symbols representing particular ideologies and communicating different messages both to the initiated and uninitiated based on collective consciousness and patriarchy.

African culture is functional and dynamic, it aims to preserve balance and educate its people on living together and imbibing in them the importance of some symbols often stretched in meanings as culture is handed down and adapted to new realities orally. Reason why Nyamnjuh quoted by Forkwang (2021) asserts:

Humans are as much products of culture and society... as they are producers of culture and society and consciousness. Humans are both victims... and progenitors (creators) of social rules and regulations that inform their relationships with and perspectives (consciousness) of themselves, others and the world (p.330-31).

Nyamnjoh means that Africans are glued to their worldview such that each element of culture has an attached meaning to which they abide for society to function well. When Marni (2003) argues that part of any study of the art and culture of Africa must acknowledge the sheer vastness of this varied continent, not only in physical characteristics but ultimately of the peoples who live there, each with their own specific history, beliefs, system of government, traditions, and art styles, we also bear in mind what Lia (2019) argues:

Many proverbs spring from an Identical Perception of Reality, although through different images in which he gives such examples: 'The farmer who has never left his fields thinks that his farming system is the best' (Hausa, Nigeria), and 'He Who has never left his village believes that no one can prepare porridge better than his mother' (Ewé, Togo)." (p.4)

The imageries contained in Lia's examples are different but are symbolic reflections of the same notions from where we agree that there are differences in the African arts and cultural practices and in expressions of them like Marni (2003) accentuates, but that there are underlying cut across values that unify them all. It is from this premise that we discuss the four objects in Oroko land as African symbols.

Three Stones Fire Side (*Masoso*)

The three stones fire side may mean many things to many people of Africa. To the Oroko and other Africans, it is a symbol of culture that has been handed down from different generations in almost all African traditional and urban settings. It symbolizes physical warmth and also emotional comfort that build familial bonds and reconnect families. In a traditional Oroko setting where there are no other forms of fuel, the three stones fire place carries all pots, whether during cooking or after. This symbolizes the foundation on which everything leans on; reason why without one or two of the stones, nothing can stand thus the family suffers. The fire and the fire-place, from the wisdom of the Adinkra symbol of Pa-gya symbolize war. It means to strike fire or make fire (Personal communication PC: V. Abena 2024). In BongasuTanla-Kishani's poem, "Emancipation", the fire place is mentioned three times. /I believe/the hub remained behind/ in the ground, around the fire-place, /not far from the grindstone/ over which

our womenfolk worked thirstily/to feed our children!
(Bongasu Tanla-Kishani 1988:31)

Kishani testifies that all cooking takes place at the fire place. The fire place is a source of life and the phrase “over which our womenfolk work thirstily/ to feed our children!” is testimony that the African, especially the African woman, works tirelessly and attaches a lot of importance to the fire place for human survival and that the very essence of life depends on the fire place. The fire place, the hearth or the three stones fire place in traditional Africa was usually built at the centre of the main sitting room in Oroko traditional huts and houses. The fire place at the centre of the house was used for the relaxing ambiance, signifying that life to the Oroko, and by extension, to the African, revolved around the fire place, reason why A.T Ngeh (PC: 2024) contends, “It is around the three stone fireside that stories, myths, and legends are recounted when people/ the family/kith and kin gather.” This means that the fire side remains an entertainment pool for the African family, around which they socialize, make merry, and gain psychological stability after serious day’s work in the farms and bushes. However, with the coming of the Christian religion, this tradition was criticized. It is only with the advent of colonialism that people started building the three stone fire place at the corner of the house or completely behind the main house. This is illustrated in Jumbam’s *The White Man of God*, (1980:110) when Big Father criticizes the people for having black walls covered in soot and Small Father goes from hut to hut advocating that people should make changes by adding windows and moving their fire places from the centre of their houses to elsewhere. Africans attach so much importance to the fire place, reason why Small Father does not completely advocate the abolition of the fire place to execute his boss’s orders. He rather advises that these fire places be moved from the centre of their house.

To corroborate this, Ngeh and Nformi (2014:10) have attested that in the face of Western influence, the African must preserve and conserve his cultural heritage and even fight to regain what has been lost”. As such, Ngeh and Nformi agree that the war of emancipation starts from the fire place, and the striking and making of the fire of knowledge defies euro centrism but grounded on Afrocentric aesthetic, strengthening and strategically directing ways of revitalizing the African culture.

The fire place to the Oroko is also the source of light and heat because of its central position, such that during the relaxation period the house receives more light and at all corners of the house and this position is even what makes the fire-place culturally distinguishable. It is during this period around the fire place that stories are told, that is the handing down from generation to the next of the Oroko culture is done. Women knead fishing nets while the men weave baskets and bags for those who do it at leisure. This is corroborated by Kishani when he says: /Yes, around the fire-place/ where our youths rebuild guitar-bridges/ with the broken calabashes, / wherein intact, we had fetched and stored the fresh water/from the streams of our free days; (1988: 31). To Kishani and to the Oroko, the fireplace serves as a hub and main source of heat and light of the home. It is a social focal point for family and friends. It acts as a resource centre, some sort of a recreation centre for especially the youth. It is at the fire place where skills are developed and re modelled (where our youth rebuild guitar-bridges). The fire place with its smoke might have added benefit of protecting people from insects and especially mosquito bites. It is also known for its flexibility to use a wide range of fuels in different seasons.



Figure 1: Picture of the three stones fire side by Researcher, June 2024

Again, it is around the fire place that myths, folktales, riddling exercises take place. The stories of legends in Oroko land are told around the fire place. Thus, the fire place is a place where traditional history, lore and wisdom are handed down from one generation

to another and for the purpose of continuity. The stories of the First World War that was known in Oroko land as “*Bila Ba Nakeli*”, (the war of Nakeli) are usually handed down by the fire side and only at dusk because it is only at this period of the day that the audience can be attentive

after a day's work in the farms and the people are relaxed. Nakeli Nw'Embele was the local warrior who founded the association called *mosong'a kwele* (let Mosongo kill). He had the mission to protect the Ngolo people from external threats and eliminate their enemies. He is believed to have possessed "mystical" powers that made him to be feared by all and he was questioned about his activities against and his resistance to the Germans (Ebune, 2015, p. 100) during the First World War. Thus, the fire place is an abode where the Oroko exploits and magnanimity of legends are told.

These same exploits of historical realities like slavery can only be told by the fire-place and Kishani does not fail to capture it in his "Emancipation" when he says:

*So/ amorously human/ our anointed memories
of echoes/endure in stamina/ around the fire-
places and whetstones,/ Yet still fleeing away
from their savage deeds/ with murmurs of
defiance,/aching but never ticking away/with
those taximeters of market-days and crops of
slavery, linking us/ to lost names, lost tongues/
(31)*

The "anointed memories" of the fire-place are so strong that even the aching and annoying slave songs could not wash them away. Even the savage deeds of slave masters that defied the African culture with the

intention of washing it away and making Africans lose their names and languages could not succeed in defying the culture because as the poem ends, there is a glimmer of hope for not surrendering this culture when the poet personae says "we never recapture the scan and sing/until we win" (31).The fire side in effect, leaves indelible marks that seem not to be wiped away because they have been indirectly baked by the fire emanating from the fire places.

The Snake (Nyoh)

Many societies see the snake as dangerous, destructive, and as an agent of evil and darkness. This is probably because of the Christian presentation of the snake to the first humans that were created by God as captured in the Bible. However, to the Oroko, the snake, especially the one that moves on both directions (*Indotyphlops braminus*, commonly known as the brahminy blind snake) is a non-poisonous snake that represents fertility or creative life force, to the extent that once seen, and since it moves slowly, the people go back home, take some white chalk and throw to it, while murmuring some words of their desire to have children. This signifies that they have accepted the blessings the snake portends and brings along with it as the people believe. Additionally and generally, the fact that snakes shed their skin through sloughing is symbolic representation of rebirth, transformation, and immortality, which the Oroko are testimony of.



Figure 2: Picture of a non-poisonous snake by Researcher, June 2024

To the Oroko, the snake represents continual renewal of life, harmlessness and due to its quality as a guardian angel and an inspiration to many an African, Kishani refers to it as "the militant snake with silent tread/dwell and guard and muse/ in the silence of sacredness and lore." (31) The "militant snake" is a symbol of wisdom, guardianship, immortality sensuality. *The Acta Theologica* (2005:189) holds that, "since time immemorial the snake, probably more than any other animal, has been associated with religion and magical powers. In conjunction, the snake also is traditionally being seen by the Oroko as a symbol of healing, after all, is it not the fat extracted from a python that is used to

cure several diseases, including poison in Oroko land? Joining supporting voices to this position, A.T Ngeh (PC: 2024) contends that, "the snake is a symbol of rejuvenation and regeneration." As such, the snake is a guardian of our Afro-centrism, healing our essence with its magical powers, rejuvenating and regenerating the Africans in the strength of their cultures and traditions. The gentility of the "militant snake" is compared with the sacred python, the sacred animal of Idemili in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* as described by the author:

*There were two pythons- a big one and a small
one-which lived almost entirely in his mother's*

hut, on top of the wall which carried the roof. They did no harm and kept the rats away; only once were they suspected for frightening away a hen and swallowing her eggs. The African Trilogy: 2010, 219)

The sacred python is a symbol of authority of the culture and tradition of the Ibo and which must be treated with reverence. It is only with the coming of the Christian religion that the likes of Oduche start reading the snake in the manner that the Garden of Eden in the Bible had presented it, associating it with lies, evil, and temptation, reason why the son of Ezeulu, (the Chief Priest of Ulu) Oduche, with his Christian mindset, locks the sacred python in a box with the intention of suffocating it to death. The authorial intrusion: "He would do it so carefully and secretly that when it finally died people would think it died of its own accord" (219) tells although he has the intention of killing the python, that there is the deep conviction that African Traditional Religion (ATR) imbibed in Africans despite intense missionary work and no matter how much exposure they have had is still powerful.

The Calabash (*Ekungu*)

The calabash is a traditional artefact from the hard shell of the calabash fruit. The calabash as seen and used by the Oroko is a multi-purpose object. Once the calabash is dried and hollowed it can serve as storage for food and as a dish to serve food. It is also used to store water and even make the water so cold since traditional Oroko villages don't have fridges from which the

villagers can drink cold water. Talla et al (2020:18) argue that in the Kedjom Chiefdom the "calabash was an embodiment of material heritage, a reflection of culture and identity within the society." They further insist that, "In many aspects, a cracked calabash was not useless because the place of the calabash in the Kedjom chiefdoms had diverse cultural symbolisms." Then they give an instance that, "cracked calabashes were known to be used for other purposes like the preservation of kitchen substances. The calabash was revered, rarely discarded and was patched and re-patched, through the passing of time" (Talla et al 2020). A.T Ngeh (PC: 2024) argues that, "a broken calabash will symbolize a destruction of our culture by colonialism, euro centrism and imperialism." However, and in consonant with Talla et al, the fact that a broken calabash can be re-patched and re used over and over in various forms, explains why Tanla-Kishani (1988:31) would use the symbol of the broken calabash as an avenue for creativity when he says: /where our youth rebuild guitar-bridges /from broken calabashes/ wherein intact we used to store fresh water. (31) The poet uses the cracked calabash to show the multipurpose nature of the calabash. This means that culture, like the calabash, no matter its state, is handed down, from one generation to the next and will serve all generations in one way or the other despite an encroaching culture. If the calabash is not used to serve palm wine and preserve water when it is unbroken, the broken one could be adapted to serve several purposes like making of musical instruments to produce sweet cultural music that will bind people together.



Figure 3: Picture of a calabash by researcher, June 2024

This cultural artefact, the calabash, can be used to store money. It is a sacred object that serves divine purposes, as well as it can be used in ritual practice to serve as a container for spiritual and magical substances. Among the Oroko, it is on a piece of a broken calabash that chalk that is used for blessing and cleansing of the village is prepared. It is in a small calabash that water used for blessing family members is put. Even during an illness that is thought to have been a curse, it is in a calabash that water that is used to prepare the antidote for

that illness is put. This is corroborated by Talla et al (2020) when they note: "the calabash in the Kedjom culture was linked to spiritual connotations as displayed in their sculptures, music, dances, myths and legends that attempted to portray the religious and spiritual convictions of the people." (18).

Therefore, in ATR, the calabash holds a special place because it can as well serve as a helmet for hunters and hats for protection against the sun, as well as a utensil

for cooking. The same way other symbols like the lion skin and the peace plant symbolize power, royalty, and peace respectively among the African people, so too is the calabash.

Water (Madiba)

This universal solvent is the elixir of life in both animals and plants because every system of the body in living things needs water to survive. Water serves a plethora of functions like hydration, agriculture, sanitations and hygiene, energy production, transportation, cooling and heating etc. It doesn't only wash objects clean, but refreshes them. It is a symbol of purity and wisdom as it allows the human body to function both in the spiritual and the physical worlds. Depending on the traditions of the people, water can be read as a representation of many things. Among the many people of the world, water does not only heal the soul, it also nourishes the body and awakens the spirit, and like Jim Lauria notes, in "The Spiritual Significance of Water" (2023):

Water is the representation of wisdom, peace, and purity... we are all aware of the necessity of water from keeping us alive to quenching our thirst, to wash the dirt from our bodies and our food, not to mention its role in producing that food, our survival depends on water" (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/spiritual-significance-water-jim-lauria>).

The above qualifies water as the very essence of life in both the spiritual and the physical realms and that the essence of the spirituality of water is that it enables man to make the dependence of human life on nature an important dimension.

Water, when either muddy, hot, or when it overflows the bank, portends danger. However, among the Oroko, water means a lot more than the above uses. First and foremost, the Oroko use water during peace-making processes and conflict resolution. During this process, the warring parties are brought together by the peace-making mission and while they stand facing each other, water is poured on the ground after the leader has murmured words pertaining to the conflict. He then invites the gods of the two parties to come and end the conflict. After the water is poured from the traditional cup, the parties embrace each other and the conflict is ended. The Oroko also use water to dispel bad spirits from the homesteads and villages. In this case, salt is put in water and sprinkled around the homestead to send away evil spirits and ghosts especially at night. Another method the Oroko use to dispel evil spirits around their homes is by standing a cup filled with water behind the main door of the home. This is believed to protect the members of the household such that when the evil spirits visit, what they see is an ocean, not the people. Also, as a form of blessing, the Oroko throw water in the form of libations when a child is born and when someone is about

to travel from the village. During *esoa-maliba*, (throwing of water) a traditional ritual performed by a family or village head depending on the event, water is used during the designation of a successor. As Molombe Hans Masalo in "When I Die.....*Esua Maliba*, the Culture of Will among the Bakundu in Cameroon" puts it:

The esua-maliba is a process that is usually performed by the head of the village in the person of moele-mboka. He is the one responsible to perform the ritual. He has the prerogatives to refuse or to perform it during cultural festivals. His words were final in the Bakundu society to a certain degree after due consultations with the lineage heads. Though each society or civilization practice their own methods of will making according to the appellation of their language. (2022)

During the *esoa-maliba* the village head, family head, father, or mother depending on the event has water put in a calabash and he/she calls on the ancestors while throwing the water to the floor to shower blessings upon the people. In the case of the making of the next of kin that was selected by a dying father, the will making exercise is done with the successor present.



Figure 4: Picture of Researcher swimming in a Lake, September 2024

Again, water is used for healing. It is a source of healing in the sense that there exist sacred springs, rivers and other water bodies that the people believe possess strong healing properties such that once a sick person is bathed in those water bodies he/she is completely healed of the illness. Thus, water, is a personification of healing and purification, such that all purification rituals require the use of water and this symbolizes the washing away of the impurities that are believed to have enveloped the concerned. These are only some of the many ways the Oroko use water and this shows to what esteem the people hold water.

This could be corroborated by Bongasu in "Emancipation", in which he views water in the like manner as Jim when he qualifies it as "fresh water" as he

says: “/with the broken calabashes wherein intact we had fetched/ and stored fresh water/from the streams of our free days; /around the sacred spring-forest/ (31).” To Bongasu, like to other people in the world, fresh water does not only awaken the spirit, but it is also used for meditation as well as it is a symbol of life. The word “stream” as used in the poem as the source of water signifies purity and thus, unadulterated. The fact that the water is fetched from “the streams of our free days”, that is, during the persona’s childhood days, the stage of innocence, further magnifies how fresh water is devoid of any impurities and free from iniquities. To the poet water acts as protection, and at the same time showing the level of innocence and vulnerability of the youth. In the like manner, like in the poem, Oyelak (2021) asserts that “to the Yorùbá, water is firmly established as the mysterious sacred source of life and its substance and symbolism has been deeply woven into the fabric of their religious belief and practices....and the space and place accorded water justified their discoveries of theophanic essence in water in diverse forms. The Akans, therefore, regard most of their rivers, brooks, and water as sacred, life-givers and protectors.” (120). Similarly, Hagan, in “Water and Spirituality in Some African Cultures and Traditions” talking from the perspective of Akan culture holds:

Water plays an important role in African spirituality for reasons that are not difficult to discern. Water is not only the element uniquely identified with physical existence and the survival of human, plant and animal life, water is also the vital common link between all living things—the element that all living things share (18).

When Hagan uses the Akan proverb that, “When the chicken drinks water, it shows it to God (*Akoko nom nsu a, odze kyere Nyame*)” he is reiterating the fact that the Akan people of Ghana are thankful to God for their lives and acknowledge that it is God who makes it possible for providing that which sustains their lives, thus teaching us that all creatures, and human beings in particular, need to lift up their heads to God in grateful acknowledgement of his power and goodness (Hagan, 1). Water is as indispensable for physical survival as it holds deep symbolic meaning in spirituality. Water, in all its glory and ramifications, is considered a purifier of the soul (Amina Shazi) by the Oroko.

A name, on the other hand, though not an object in the literal sense, is a concept that identifies something because it is more like a descriptor of an object. Thus, names are an important part of our identity. Oroko names are important cultural symbols to the bearers and to the community of the bearers at large. To the Oroko, children are given names that represent concepts, abstract notions, moods, events, etc. reason why the Oroko have names like *Ituka* (suffering), *Njalui* (I don’t have), *Betapo* (problems), *Ikoh* (money), *Bonyeki* (Blessings), *Balana* (women), *Biyana* (men), *Buwe*

(poverty), *Yoti* (hate), *Belingo* (love) etc. depending on the circumstance under which the child was conceived and born, such that when Africans lose their cultural names for borrowed ones, they lose the expression of their cultural identity. This is corroborated by Bongasu:

So/ amorously human/ our anointed memories of echoes/endure in stamina/ around the fire-places and whetstones,/ Yet still fleeing away from their savage deeds/ with murmurs of defiance,/aching but never ticking away/with those taximeters of market-days and crops of slavery, linking us/ to lost names, lost tongues/ (31).

He is insinuating that our naming system is a cultural symbol that has implications on the self and perceptions of the bearer, but regrets that the coming of the new tradition had helped the Africans to lose their cultural identity by losing their African names and tongues for the advantage of the encroaching cultures. While Bongasu Tanla-Kishani (2005:58) holds the view that all African names and the cultural values they confer to children arise from, depict and reflect a variety of cultural origins both inside and outside Africa even if they tend at times to call some of their conflicting choices and practical uses into question”, Oyelak (2021:120) on his own part remarks that almost every river among the Yorùbá people is associated with one particular deity or other, and the same is worshipped. This, to a greater extent, reveals the importance of names of people, objects and concepts. The bearers and the believers of these names have faith and fate in them as is reflected in the naming practices in Yorùbá sociology and other areas of their lives. As such, names are a symbol of belonging and being part of a culture and community that influences and guides the people’s perspectives and approaches to live and livelihood.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is been discovered that Africans in general and the Oroko in particular are strictly cultural beings. It is in the nature of Africans that they grow and organize their lives and communities around various art forms and notions accompanied by symbols that establish relationships and order. Symbols are a vital part of Oroko culture and society because they are used to express the Oroko philosophy, preserve Oroko history, and teach the African people of African ideology. It is, therefore, our conclusion that certain objects and symbols are an inextricable, inexhaustible and thus ever-growing code of conduct that all must learn and abide to in order to organize themselves in their various communities. To understand the worldview of a people, one has to understand their culture, look into and unravel the coded knowledge embedded in their objects and symbols that are common to them, such that even abstract notions have a bearing to their wellbeing.

REFERENCES

1. Achebe, C. (2010). *Arrow of God*. In *The African Trilogy* (pp. 163-413). Penguin Classics.
2. Ngeh, A. T., & Nformi, D. N. (2014). Folklore and commitment in Anglophone Cameroonian poetry: A study of Bongasu-Tanla-Kishani and Nol Alempong. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 2(3), 16-29.
3. Betoto, J. E. (2015). Nakeli-Wa-Embelle and the Ngolo resistance to German colonial rule in Cameroon, 1903-1905. *Epasa Moto: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities of the University of Buea (New Series)*, 2(1), 89-102.
4. Bongasu-T.-K. (1988). Emancipation. In *Konglanjo*. University of Yaoundé.
5. Kishani, B. T. (2005). IDEOLOGIES OF WOMEN'S NAMES AMONG THE NSO'OF CAMEROON. *An African Journal of Philosophy/Revue Africaine de Philosophie*, 57.
6. Fokwang, J. (2021). Drinking from the cosmic gourd and the fallacy of completeness by way of the African proverb. In F. B. Nyamnjoh et al. (Eds.), *Being and Becoming African as a Permanent Work in Progress: Inspiration from Chinua Achebe's Proverbs* (pp. 327-333). Langaa Publishing.
7. Hagan, G. P. (2015). Water and spirituality in some African cultures and traditions. *Human Development* Vatican. <https://www.humandevlopment.va>
8. Hans, M. M. (2022). When I die... Esua Maliba, the culture of will among the Bakundu in Cameroon. In *Our Norms, Values, and Identities: Historicizing Museum Art and Cultural Heritage in Cameroon* (Unpublished).
9. Jumbam, K. W. (1980). *White Man of God*. Heinemann.
10. Kanu, I. A. (2014). Symbols in African Philosophy and the issue of nation-building. *International Journal of Scientific Research*, 3(9), 426-428.
11. Lauria, J. (2023). The spiritual significance of water. *LinkedIn*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/spiritual-significance-water-jim-lauria>
12. Makoudjou, L. C. T. (2012). The language of symbols and African communication: The case of Ngemba. University of Yaoundé I.
13. Lia, M. (2019). (Illustrations). *African Proverbs: Wisdom of the People*. Comboni Missionary Publications.
14. Marni, W. (2003). African Art: Utah Museum of Fine Arts Evening for Educators. *UMFA*. <https://umfa.utah.edu>
15. Oyelak, T. R. (2021). Water Symbolism in Yorùbá folklore and culture. *Yoruba Studies Review*, 4(1), 99-123.
16. Retief, F. P., et al. (2010). Snake and staff symbolism, and healing. *Acta Theologica*, 26(2), 1-7. PMID: 12197200.
17. Sanka, G. C., et al. (2020). Tales in the Paasaali dirge: Structure and moral lessons from the past. *Manusya: Journal of Humanities*, 23(1), 19-39.
18. Schiller, N. G. (1997). Cultural politics and the politics of culture. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 4(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.1997.9962580>
19. Shuzi, A. (2005). The spiritual meaning of water. *Spirituality and Health: Theosophical Magazine*. Kessinger Publishing.
20. Talla, T. R., et al. (2020). Utilitarian and ritualistic significances of the calabash in the Kedjom chiefdoms (Babanki) of the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. *Indiana Journal of Arts & Literature*, 1(1), 11-19.
21. Udechukwu, I. G. (2019). The significance and use of cultural symbols in contemporary African society: Igbo symbols as a paradigm. *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies*, 8(1), 110-116.