



The Mwaghavul Gothic Gold Mine: A Quest for Moral Restoration

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Abstract: This paper examines Mwaghavul Gothic literature as a medium for moral restoration. The aim of the study is to identify Mwaghavul Gothic tales that convey moral themes. This will contribute to the restoration of lost moral values in Mwaghavul communities and the society at large. Moral standards are essential in safeguarding African societies from social, political, natural and religious decay. The method used in collecting the data for the study was oral interviews with selected focus individuals. The stories collected were primarily Gothic narratives or those with Gothic features. Gothic stories are viewed as means of influencing the social, moral, and psychological lives of the people. Individuals tend to learn and adhere to moral standards more effectively when they are influenced by supernatural, horrific, mysterious, or fantastic elements within their society. Based on the findings, this research concludes that Gothic stories play a vital role in guiding individuals and communities towards the pursuit of morality.

Keywords: Mwaghavul, Gothic literature, oral narratives Moral Restoration, Supernatural Elements

Introduction

Every culture possesses its own values and moral codes; however, many of these values are either gradually disappearing or have already been lost. Contemporary society is witnessing significant moral decline, and as a result it is now confronted with issues such as kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, fraud, bribery, corruption, indiscipline, and the exploitation of the environment. The role of literature in addressing societal problems cannot be overemphasized. In this regard, Ogungbesan (as cited in David Ker 2004) asserts that “We must restore our literature to the focal position it ought to occupy in our cultural awareness” (p. 32). He further emphasizes that “The moralistic basis of our culture is everywhere proclaimed by our literature” (p. 32). The



Mwaghavul people possess a vibrant culture and a rich repository of moral values, which if sustained, can help mitigate the increasing social vices and moral decay in society.

The Mwaghavul people are those “who today occupy the old nine (9) districts of Ampang, Chakfem, Jipal, Kerang, Kombun, Mangu, Mangun and Pushit... in Plateau State, Central Nigeria... who spoke the same language called Mwaghavul... though with slight variation” (Barnabas, 2011, p. 28). The Mwaghavul language is classified as one of the Afro-Asiatic languages spoken on the Jos Plateau, and it belongs to the Chadic subfamily (Gowon, 2011, p. 21). Similar to other African oral traditions which, as Finnegan (1970) notes, “need to be understood before we can appreciate the status and qualities of many of these African literary forms” (p. 56), Mwaghavul oral literature embodies aesthetic, social, personal, and moral significance. The belief system of the Mwaghavul people incorporates supernatural beings such as spirits, ghosts, monsters, extraordinary powers, and other Gothic elements, all of which are believed to exert influence over individual and communal life.

Morality, according to Kurt, (as cited in Septiany, 2016), is “an attitude belonging to the principle of good and evil, or right and wrong” (p. 2). Traditional Mwaghavul society did not tolerate moral transgressions. There was a need to regulate human excesses, prevent wickedness, and curb immoral behavior. Gothic narratives functioned as mechanisms for instilling fear, thereby regulating the social and psychological behaviour of the people. The purpose was to encourage individuals to monitor their actions and live according to acceptable moral standards. Although Gothic literature is often presumed to entail “the inclusion of some supernatural content” (Siguroson, 2009, p. 1), this definition is limited. Siguroson (2009), citing Harriet Guest, identifies two essential features of Gothic literature: “a benighted and powerless populace, and superstitious fictions which are fabulous, but not necessarily supernatural” (p. 2). In Mwaghavul culture, Gothic narratives exist predominantly in oral form and function as moral and social regulators.

Theoretical Framework: Structuralism

This study adopts structuralism as its theoretical framework. Structuralism emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and has its foundation in linguistics. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist,



was a central figure in the development of the theory as a modern approach to linguistic study. According to Barry (2009), Saussure focused on the patterns and functions inherent in language and emphasized that meaning is produced and sustained through grammatical structures (p. 40). This approach differs from nineteenth-century linguistics, which primarily concerned with the historical evolution of language.

Saussure argued that language operates synchronically and is composed of signs. These signs (or words) are arbitrary, and their meanings are maintained by social convention. Meaning, he posited, is relational, as no word can be defined in isolation from others. All words therefore exist within “differencing networks” (Barry, 2009, p. 41), suggesting that meaning in language is never fixed. Language, therefore, constitutes the world as humans perceive and understand it.

Shija (2021) explains that structuralism, as an intellectual movement, gained prominence in France through the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. The central idea of structuralism is that phenomena can be understood within the context of larger structures that produce them. Concepts cannot be understood in isolation. These structures are not inherent entities in the external world; rather, they are imposed by human experience and perception. The meanings of objects do not reside within the objects themselves but are attributed by the human mind.

Another strand of the structuralists was the one developed by the Russian formalists. According to Shija (2021), the formalists were interested in discovering the rules that make a work of art literary. And so the process of defamiliarisation was important to the formalists in defining what should be good literature (p. 70). Building on this, Boris Tomashevski introduced the concepts of *fabula* and *syuzhet* which apply to all kinds of literary discourse. *Fabula* is the underlying idea behind a story and can be a short summary of the entire work. *Syuzhet* on the other hand is the process of defamiliarising a straightforward theme the writer passes across.

The concept of *fabula-syuzhet* is instrumental to Vladimir Propp’s research on folktales. His study on the collection of Russian folktales showed that they share the same *fabula* by either maintaining an underlying theme or characters act the same functions. However, these



folktales had their varied and distinct *syuzhet* as seen in their different storyline, plots and characters. From this study, Propp states that the diverse Russian folktales operated on the same underlying structure. As such, the idea that if folktales could contain such a structure, it is likely to discover such firm structures in other bodies of cultural productions (Shija, 2021, p. 70).

Shija (2021) also notes that anthropologists eventually shifted their attention from studying individual myths which is comparable to *parole* in linguistics, to studying systems of myths, which correspond to *langue*, thus mirroring Saussure's templates. Lévi-Strauss demonstrated that diverse myths from unrelated cultures could be understood as variations of the same underlying ideas. His studies of customs and cultural practices revealed that anything originating from culture constitutes a system of signs. Myths, therefore, function as signs across communities but are linked to equivalent signs in other societies (p. 76).

Structuralism is adopted in this study because Gothic elements form an integral part of the Mwaghavul life and culture, functioning as components within a broader social structure that sustains moral order and communal stability.

The Moral Impact of Gothic Narratives

Stories exert profound influence on individuals and society. Akmalovna (2019) observes that:

It is known from the history of mankind that ancient peoples and nationalities expressed their noble dreams, ideals through their epic heroes. In them, the attitude of man to nature, to man, to the world as a whole, he succeeded in moral values. And it was an important tool in regulating the interaction of the people in society (p. 139-140).

From this assertion, it is clear that tales serve as tools for expressing identity and personality. They are as old as human existence and carry values upheld by the societies from which they emerge. They also serve as mechanisms through which behaviour is checked and regulated. Akmalovna further observes that "Mankind has always glorified the idea of a happy life, moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, diligence, [and] friendliness" (p. 140).



Gothic literature, according to Kennedy (2020), employs “dark and picturesque scenery, startling and melodramatic narrative devices, and an overall atmosphere of exoticism, mystery, fear, and dread.” Writers often employ supernatural elements, romance, historical themes, and adventurous characters to entertain readers. Gelsone (2010) describes Gothic fiction as a sub-genre characterised by enigmatic narratives, tracing its origin to Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*. It is believed that realism had stripped the novel of what Walpole termed “Fancy,” and he aimed to restore this imaginative quality through the use of the supernatural, ultimately reclaiming morality. However, “literature containing fear and dread, or ‘the sublime’ as it was called in the eighteenth century, predates the Gothic novel, as seen in the poems of the Graveyard School” (Gelsone, 2010, p. 4). Gelsone (2010) further argues that “the Gothic believes the root of evil is within man, and it must be corrected by divine guidance. Divine justice functions by purging evil from the world” (p. 9). Here, divine order becomes the basis for morality. Gothic stories are therefore significant because they often link moral instruction to the supernatural.

Dubois (2008) contends that Gothic stories cultivate imagination and communicate moral lessons by addressing psychological and ethical dilemmas. Similarly, Webb (2007) argues that:

Children are born with the full spectrum of human emotions, wild, exciting, passionate, vigorous, totally irrational and raring to go. But they are also inexperienced and longing to explore their feelings. This is why they need to be scared and fantasy is an excellent, ‘safe’ way to do it (Webb, www.theguardian.com).

This suggests that children’s behaviour require guidance, and fantasy or Gothic narratives provide a safe means of helping them navigate their emotions. Webb further posits that Gothic stories help children balance the abstract and real worlds, stating that children need stories that “provide developing emotions with a contextual framework within which to awaken and limber up, ready for real life when it hits” (Webb 2008, www.theguardian.com).

Jacobs (2019) maintains that “to understand the moral function of Gothic fiction, it is first necessary to understand the elements of Gothic fiction” (p. 21). Bishop, (as cited in Jacobs,



2019) identifies four Gothic features as “an antiquated space, a hidden secret from the past, a physical or psychological haunting, and oscillation between earthly reality and the possibility of the supernatural” (p. 21). Using Kirkman’s *The Walking Dead*, classified as Gothic fiction, Jacobs (2019) notes that:

Kirkman in his work reflects the loss of innocence, the ambiguity in choosing right from wrong, and uncertainty about how to treat our fellow human beings with dignity.... Kirkman offers healthier choices of self-hood and community... advocates the potential of humanity to improve themselves and their culture in this new world which we find ourselves (p.16).

Rahim and Rahiem (2012) assert that the moral impact of Gothic tales lies in their ability to “educate children to become not only persons of morality, but responsible for their own actions” (p. 454). They further argue that such stories are effective in providing role models, enabling discussions of moral dilemmas, and contributing significantly to the moral education of both children and adults (p. 455). They also maintain that Gothic tales help children become familiar with examples of good and bad deeds, regulations, punishments, and the reasons behind moral choices. In the process, children learn problem-solving, reflective thinking, and empathy. Lastly, they note that Gothic stories serve as “a way of passing a culture’s history, a way of teaching values to young and old generations” (p. 455).

On the moral implications of Gothic narratives, Bishop, (as cited in Jacobs, 2019) states that Gothic fiction “assists in discovering the necessary elements of humanness, by assessing the social wants, needs, and fears of the environment and society that creates them—essentially, it provides a resolution to ‘the story of humanity’s struggle to retain its sense of humanity’” (p. 21). Gardner, also, (as cited in Jacobs, 2019) argues that “art rediscovers, generation by generation, what is necessary to humanness” (p. 21). For the Mwaghavul people, as for many African societies, Gothic narratives remain central to moral to moral instruction and preservation of communal humanity.

Mwaghavul Gothic Literature and its Moral Significance



This study defines Mwaghavul Gothic literature as narratives that combine both imaginative and experiential tales of strange, mysterious, supernatural, or adventurous beings and events that evoke awe or fear. By describing these narratives are both fanciful and experiential; the study acknowledges that while some stories are purely products of imagination, others are based on direct or indirect experiences of narrators. The plot, motif, setting, and atmosphere of these tales embody features associated with Gothic literature. The narratives often involve strange or mysterious occurrences, supernatural qualities, or heroic figures with extraordinary abilities. A story may incorporate one or several of these features. In essence, Mwaghavul Gothic tales are often awe-inspiring, frightening, or both.

Mwaghavul Gothic settings include the night, forests, water bodies, caves, sacred lands or hills, the land of the dead, and other isolated places. This differs slightly from the setting of the Gothic romance inaugurated by Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*, which, according to Abrams and Harpham (2012), typically involves “a gloomy castle furnished with dungeons, subterranean passages, and sliding panels; the typical story focused on the sufferings imposed on an innocent heroine by a cruel and lustful villain” (P. 151). In Mwaghavul Gothic narratives, characters include water spirits, growing spirits, spirit doubles, earth mothers, ghosts, monsters, mask spirits or masquerades, ancestral spirits, witches and wizards, revenants, war heroes, birds of omen (such as owls), dogs, cats, eggs, twins, seers, medicine men, priests of the native religion, diviners, and even a damsel with bamboo legs. Mwaghavul Gothic storytelling therefore demonstrates highly varied and imaginative characterization. The atmosphere is typically weird, uncanny, tense, chilling, or sensational. Emotions range from fear, horror, and sorrow to awe, reverence, and caution. The media through which Gothic elements operate in Mwaghavul tradition include whirlwinds, lightning bolts, fetishes, drowning waters, disappearance, sudden appearance, curses, and nemesis.

Onuche (2014) provides a broad definition of morality as “a code of conduct put forward by a society or other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for his or her own behavior, or normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specific conditions, would be



put forward by all rational persons” (p. 145). Thus, moral standards may vary from one individual or group to another. One person’s moral code may abhor murder, another may detest lying, while yet another may consider a different set of actions morally significant. Common moral values among the Mwaghavul people include obedience, honesty, courage, truthfulness, responsibility, patience, loyalty, justice, and communal support. Haggai (2011) identifies togetherness and mutual assistance as essential moral values in Mwaghavul tradition, noting that “age groups of men (20 – 50years) and youth organized themselves for clearing paths, communal work (*wuk*), where members of the same age group and gender worked for each other on the farm” (p. 40).

Mwaghavul Gothic narratives carry varied moral significance. One important moral function is inculcation of courage, endurance, and dexterity in young boys undergoing puberty initiation. During the fishing ritual associated with initiation, Danfulani and Haggai (2011) observe that “the initiation priest did something mysterious by making the water level rise and at the same time shouted to the boys to rush out of the water to escape being drowned. The slowest boy could get drowned” (p. 63). Thus, puberty initiation was more than a rite of passage; it was a preparation for responsible membership in society and a prerequisite for marriage. Danfulani and Haggai further explain:

The boys were initiated by making them pass through a grove, under a sacred tree, or were made to lie down flat while rituals were performed. They were taught basic tenets of community life-that included living together, obedience to elders, public spiritedness, endurance, secrets of the esoteric traditions and love for the group (p. 81).

Another moral significance of Mwaghavul Gothic literature lies in its role in preparing future religious functionaries. The Chief Priest was “the custodian of the spirits of the ancestors and linked up with ancestral spirits (*Nji*) to appease them and avert calamities such as epidemics, locust attacks on farm crops, and other evils that would befall the land” (Haggai, p. 39). Gothic stories thus play a vital role in shaping the attitudes, courage, awareness, and spiritual discipline expected of such leaders.



Personal interviews with Dawum, Ayuba, Dadughun, and Teervwat reveal that Gothic stories were used primarily to teach children important lessons about life. They functioned as tools for instilling self-control, caution regarding where and when to move, caution against wandering aimlessly, and awareness of dangers such as evil spirits or harmful forces. The stories taught contentment, obedience, caution, respect for knowledge, bravery, knowledge of communal history, care for children, non-interference in others' affairs, intelligence, truthfulness, kindness, and communal support. In essence, Mwaghavul Gothic narratives served as a moral compass for younger generations.

Selected Mwaghavul Gothic Narratives and their Morals

This study collected a number of Gothic narratives from informants. For the purposes of this paper, four stories were selected and analysed in line with the study's thematic focus. The analysis adopts Neiman's theory, as cited in Septiany, which identifies four types of moral aspects: religious, individual, natural and social morality (p. 2). Individual morality concerns personal standards that shape character and are generally accepted within a society. Social moral aspect deals with man's relationship with other human beings. Religious moral aspect is about man's relationship with God or the extra-ordinary power of attorney. Natural morality is concerned with man's relationship with nature. The stories were collected through oral interviews with selected informants, transcribed in the narrators' original language and subsequently translated into English. Thus the stories are as follows:

Narrator: Teervwat, Emmanuel.

Transcription: Kùm Yaa mètè Gwàr

Gyèt mee gurum cìn lek nkaa maar ò ba ni a m̀ri kas. Maar ni a mu mee gwàr. Wuri yaa ngumaar ni kí maar firi. Yàksí ɓe ngumaar ò mo yaa wuri kí maar ni so pun kùm nkí maar firi. Wuri so kat ngu pun-Kùm ɓe ri yakshii ni nri. Wuri cín long kí mètè kaghar mbii ò ngupun-kùm ni ri ribet pe wuri ò. Dee mo so pun kum ni. Kat moo so cìn mee teer mo lee ɓe mo bàa put so per kum ni. Ngu pun-kùm ni wuri sat nee, "kum ò wan pun mpee maar kí komtak, wuyi kí naa a me ye? Wuyi túngpee! Wuyi yaghal nkyen!" Mo so cìn mètè teer mo lee ɓe mo waa put per kùm ni ò zak. Ni cìn ɓit mindong ɓe kùm ni yaa òak nkaa ngula maar ni. Muut maar yaa ngula maar



ni kí nyem firi mo. Ni twa mo. Yaksí dee mo jì kat ngumaar ni be mo sat nee, “Kúsuk, bà maar ò jì mu chut túghúr nkaa ni sí a munu kas. Yaksi kisi dee mún kí mu murap dak. Kat Wún ki pun kùm nkaa maar ni be wu sat mmun.” Dee nyem maar ni mo láp nee, “Toh! Wun si ne a maar mughu. Dang cìrangwuwaawumurap ye? Mumún kí pun kum nkaa maar funu. Kat wun kí dom ku wu bàr be wu njii mbii ò mu ààr kùm ni ò aku kaghar gurun fughu ni mo bàr ò. Kat wu cìn kisi kas be mumún mu nsekyeen aa cìn kum ni.” Dee be mo òng fwo ni aku mu aar kum ni mpee ku mo yit maar ni ò ngumaar ni.

Translation: A Spell-Casting Ritual Inflicted a Man

In the past someone disputed over a farmland that was not his. The farmland belonged to a man. He snatched the farmland from the owner. Then the owner of the farmland that was snatched went and performed a spell-casting ritual on his farmland. He went and met a ritual priest and explained it to him. He gave a goat and some other things the ritual priest needed from him. Then they went and performed the spell-casting ritual. After some few days they went back and performed the rite on the ritual again. The ritual priest said, “The spell-casting ritual I performed for this man’s farmland, what are you waiting for? You should act! You should arise quickly!” They went and spent some few days and came and repeated the ritual. It took a year then the ritual began to act against the farmland grabber. As an act of vengeance, an illness affected the farmland grabber and his people. It killed them. Then they went and met the farmland owner and said, “Please, that farmland we took by force is not ours. Right now we are just dying. If you have done a spell-casting ritual on the farmland then tell us.” Then the farmland owners replied that, “Toh! You claimed the farmland was yours. Why then did you die? We have performed a spell-casting ritual on our farmland. If you want to survive you will bring things we will use to perform a spell-breaking ritual so that the rest of your people will survive. If you don’t do like that we will continue doing the spell-casting ritual.” Then they begged for forgiveness for the ritual to be erased so that they leave the farmland for the owner.

Religious moral to this story

The Mwaghavul people believe in leaving vengeance to a supreme being whom they consult and perform ritual rites. There are ritual priests, diviners, healing priests and medicine



men that usually intervene for the people. Here, the man whose land is forcefully taken has learnt not to engage his enemy in any physical fight but to recourse to a supreme being for justice. The ritual priest engages the Supreme Being or deities to seek justice for his client. It is a repeated action until the ritual or the spell which is believed is sent by the Supreme Being begins to act against the evil doer. The land grabber suffers the consequences of his action and knows it must be something beyond human power. He realizes his bad deed and seeks intervention. For him to be forgiven there has to be restitution for the ritual to be stopped. Therefore, the people learn to recourse to deities for justice. People become afraid of doing evil for the fear of a supernatural power that can act when consulted.

Narrator: Dawum, Raymond Joshua

Transcription: Ààskwee DiLè as At MeeGwar

Jagham fina diisi ni a nkaa jì kí mee ààskwee di mo sat nne ààskwee ni a mee dikaam mu tulu ni di rii muut yàm, dangbe rii le yit nkaa yil ni ku rii naa mbii di nii so di. Kat mee mbii so a gòdòl koo mee mbii diibish di ni mpee jì nkaa yil ni be mo mmak baa ji kaa ààskwee si. Kat mo jì ni be mo nsat mbii di gurum ni mo cìn di ba ni nkaa ar kas di ni mmak dul mee luk nkaa mo, koo kat mee luk di be mo mmak jì sat nne luk di moo jeel mpoo ni be a mbii diisi dul luk ni nkaa mo ku ni wang yit di mmo. Méé be a mee bóghón di ni kudi a kyeen di ni mmak jì nkaa gurum ni mo be ni nji sat nne mee bóghón kí jì, be a mbii di gurum ni mo ncìn diisi ku mo put di mpoo ni.

Gyet mu so a pee tangran; mún di mpee ni be mu naa mee gurum moo kuur mmee lú pan kus kí pee tangran ni. Mu yaghal mu so di be mu so mu kat nyemnan mo di; dee mùmún kí dár mmu a nòghòl mpee di mu kudi ndween. Dee be mu kat nne a ààskwee jì. Ààskwee ni nkaa rúghúm a mee mbii di ba gurum moo mak kiling ni kas. A mee ngu yakshii sat nne a mbii di ààskwee ni sat ndiisi; nne mee ngunan funu di di gyet nne ààskwee nii kyam jì, be nne ni jì kí mee lop mpee sat. Di a ngunan mini nduk ààskwee ni aku ri pet gurum mo mpeeku mo kiling lop kí ni di be ngunan ni mang ààskwee ni vwet so sí. Ndi wuri mang vwet so sí be ni shwal ndikaam di wuri jì ààskwee ni mbut be ri le ku as at gwar ni. Dang be di mpeeni, be ba nyèm dii mpee ni moo man nne mee as kí at gwar ni kas be mo nkaa nang nee, “As kí at ri azeen me?” Be mee gurum nne, “Ii, as at ri azeen.” Ààskwee ni sat nne a di le ku mbii mini kat ri mpee di ba wuri jì



kaat di ku ri kiling shii ki mwaan fidi ni kas. Be nne kat ba ri nji ki laa firi ni ku mo tok di kas, be ba laa ni nkyes kas. Mo waa sat pak mee mbii mo di abwoon zak. Mùmún mu yaghal mu yit mo di mpee di ba mo ribet mpee ku mún jep mo sekyeen kí dar mpee ni kas.

Translation: The Egg that Made a dog Bite a Man

My story is about the coming of an egg of a household that was said was their grandfather who had died long ago, and was keeping watch over the land to see what was going on. If something was not going right or something evil was to come upon the land then they might come in form of an egg. If they came they would say the thing that the people did that was not right that could bring a problem upon them, or if there was a problem they could come and say that the problem they were suffering from was as a result of a particular thing done against them so that they would be aware. Sometimes it might be a trouble ahead of them that would come upon the people. Hence it would come and say that a trouble is coming, thus this was what the people would do to escape from it.

Some years ago we went to school; we were there when we saw some people gathering in a house closed to the school. We went there and met elders there; we were just standing between their legs because we were still kids. We found out that it was an egg that came. The egg was saying something people could not comprehend. It was an interpreter that said that that was what the egg said; that there was one of our elders that some time ago the egg had ever come, that it came with a message to tell. It was that elder that was expected to keep the egg and called people to hear its message but the elder took the egg and threw away. When he carried it and threw away it angered the grandfather that came in an egg form. Thus he made a dog to bite the man. At the place, the people that were there were not aware a dog had bitten the man and were asking “Did a dog truly bite him?” Then someone said, “Yes, a dog truly bit him.” The egg said that he caused what happened to him because he did not welcome him and listen to the purpose of his trip. That if he would not come with his wound so he would be interceded for, then the wound would not be healed. Some other things were also said afterward. We later left them because they did not allow us kids to continue to stand there.

Individual Moral



An individual is expected to be obedient to parents and custom. One also has to be a custodian and also show concern and care for the spirit of his ancestors. Man should know he does not live independent of others. He needs to relate first with spirits of his ancestors to receive guide and help and then second, with other humans. Family, clan or community may depend on a man for solution to problems. Hence, man has to be conscious, careful, alert and circumspect in his responsibility as someone's survival might be dependent on his action or responsibility.

Narrator: Ayuba, Sunday

Transcription: Mee wàt Biring Mo Di Kum yaa Mo

Gyet mpee funu ɓe mee das mo so la mat mmee tulu. Be das di mo la mat ni mo waa so shang ɓiring nyèm di mo la reep ki mo ni nwat zak. Dee nyèm di mo màng ɓiring mmo nwat ni mo so tok kùm. Kùm ni tong di ni met mbit laarvul dang ɓe nii ji yaa pút. Kum ni waa shee ji yaa tu a reep ki nyèm cìn kum ni mo mpee di raa cìn dik nwat ni mo. Gyet reep ni ra fès men aasi di ko a weye nne ki dom ra. Kum ni ji can ra ku ni tu ra di. Wat ni mo yaghal manshii ni mbwoon di mo so woo. Mo so ndang fwo ni. Mo so kat dyemnihin ki puun ki ra diilee mpee dang fwo ni. Wuri nne, “Toh! Yaksi wu njii a ngal gong ye? Nii tong dang kat wu ni a ki ɓiring, ɓe mpee bit laarvul ɓe ɓiring ni mo nden a laarvul.” Dee wat ni mo tu sar mmo ku mo dang fwo ni aku mo so woo kum ni di, dang ɓe muráp nii dar ntulu ni. Mbii diisi ni di a 80s si mo.

Translation: Spell-Casting Ritual that Affected Some Horse Thieves

In the past, in our place, some people went and married from a family. Then the people who went and married the woman went and also stole a horse of those they married their daughter. Those whom horse was stolen went and performed a spell-casting ritual. The ritual tarried for more than twenty years before it started manifesting. The spell first started by killing the daughter of the people that performed the ritual because she had married the thieves. That time the lady was so beautiful that everyone said they loved her. The spell cut short her life and killed her. The thieves later discovered it after they investigated. They went to plead for forgiveness. They went and met the younger brother of her father to apologize. He said, “Toh! How many million will you bring now? It has been long and if you will bring a horse, then for twenty years the horses will amount to twenty.” Then the thieves pleaded with them and asked



for forgiveness before they went and uprooted the spell, and then the deaths were halted in the family. This thing was in the 80s.

Social Moral

Social activities like marriages, dance festivals, hunting celebrations, communal farming and the likes constitute a part of existence and are cherished by the Mwaghavul people. However, dubious activities like stealing, lies, pretense, cheating and all vices are greatly abhorred by the Mwaghavul people. When one enters into marriage, one has entered a life time social relation with his in-laws and the family at large. One is not expected to hide under any social cover to cheat or steal with the mind one will not be discovered or caught. One should not commit any vice that can affect the social relationship one is having with people.

Narrator: Dadughum, Dominic

Transcription: Mee ngu Jukun di ri Ji mBilip Àmpidong

Mbii lúkshik dii Ampidong nii kam mmun nne mee mbii di mpeeni. Pan di nteer dii mu bit diisi mo, be mee ngu Jukun kaa mpee cìn bilip nkaa Ampidong ni. Bilip ni yaghal waa jì den kí mee mbii. nNàat moo loghot jì mbilip nkaa am ni; be moo dar a deng ku mo cìn bilip ni di. Amma ndi ngu Jukun ni wuri jì mbilip ni, kyet wuri jì beet arang kí gwar di wuri dee a ngunan di wurii tap ki pee ni ye, ba nyem yil ni mo man kas. Dee ngu Jukun ni ri mang kòng-am diilee ku mo del kaa di kí ni mpeeni. Ba gurum mo man pèè di mo del kaa di kí kòng-am ni mpee ni kas. Ndi mo kaa kí kòng-am ni be nne ngu Jukun ni ri sat nne wuri ndel a am ni. Wuri waa yakshii nne nNàat moo sat nne mbut mbilip di mo cìn, be mo kat am ni a ar gǎng kun. Nne di a deng di, di a naar di dang dii ndeer di. Be nne wudi ndel a àm ni kudí naa am ni. Dee gwar di wuri kam pu pee ni cii nne ba moo del mbut am ni kas, be ri diin nne dùn ndel. Wuri waa sat nne ngukam pee ni jì del mmo mbut kòng-am ni be wuri kwar didi. Ndi mo del mbut kong-am ni be mo túp mpee ku mo so di. Mo túng so a deng am ni. Mo pán gyes so lee be kòng-am ni cii mwaan, ba ni dom waa so di kas. Gwar di kàà kám pee ni mmo nne di dar ku dii naa mo dii yit. Lang lee be di naa am ni sham yaghal kaa fivir si, be ni cibet jì be ni jì wang poo vul a ku ni le kòng-am ni a naar, be ni dyep kòng-am ni kibin di mbut am ni. Nyem di mo di mbut kòng ni mo cìn a dambút mpee jì kaa pút. Har ni jì wúl be ndi mo jì wúl mpee ku mo put di, be am nii waa yaa mo baa ni



shi bwoon. Kyes ni be mo yaghal dang a gwar di kam pu pee ni mo ku ri vwet teng sham mmo, aku mo yaa kaa put di. Har cicin be kòng-am ni di mbut am ni. Moo waa sat nne jí ngu bilip ni rii pak mbii mo di mo sham dee mbut am ni zak. Jír kí si be ba ni kam seen mmo kas. Mo so be parmeeci mo baa so jì kí mee kòng-am diides. Mo kaa del ár kí ni mBwoonpee ring, dang gurum mo naa be mo sat nyemtileng mo. Mo kaa dang ngu Jukun ni rii sat nne mee kòng fidi dee mbut am ni. Dee mo tal pe ri nee, “Dang wu jì kí kòng diides a mpee me ye?” Wuri nne, “Mun kí dom kat mu del kí kòng diides ni, be mu nlop teng nni ku mee ngo sham di a deer kí am ni ku sham bwaghat teng di nkòng di ni sham dee àm ni ku mu dul kaa dí.” Dee mo cii mmo nne ba mee gurum kí del di am ni kas. A kí sí be mo baa. Mo le ngunan di jí ri so kam pee ni mo aku ri waa yit mo del kí kòng-am mbut am ni yak long mo poovul mpee di wuri tep waar. Am di ba mee gurum kí del di kas be ri yit mo del dibut. Ni waa le zak jí a wuri a mishkagham mo dyel kwang yil mini, be mo yaghal lá nri mpee di rii so màngshik.

Translation: A Jukun Man that Came for Research at Lake Pudong

Surprising things in Lake Pidong is revealing to us that there is something there. Some days ago just recently within these years, a Jukun man came to do a research on the Lake Pidong. The research however brought in an issue. When whites do come for research on the lake; they usually stand ashore to do the research. But when the Jukun man came for the research, the people of the land did not know what he had come and discussed with the man that was the elder in charge of keeping watch over the place. The Jukun man took a small boat and went with it to the place. People were not aware of the time the Jukun man went up with the boat to the place. When they went up with the boat it was said that the Jukun man insisted he would enter inside the water. He also explained that the whites said in the research they did, that they found the water was in three layers. That there was the upper layer, the middle and the lower layer. He would enter the water to see it. Then the man that showed them the place warned that no one should enter inside the lake, but he insisted that they would enter. They also asked the man who showed them the place to join them in the boat, but he refused. When they entered the boat, they pushed it to float. They rowed over the water. As they rowed a little, the boat refused to drift; it could no longer move. The man that went and showed them the place said he stood and was just



looking at them. Suddenly, he saw the water rose like a tornado, then it came rolling and opened its mouth into two putting the boat in the middle, then it lifted the boat and capsized it into the water. Those in the boat struggled to come out. When they were about to come out, the water was retarding them back. In the end, they begged the man that showed them the place to throw a rope to them; they caught it and came out. Till today, the boat is there in the lake. It was said that the researcher had some gadgets that also sunk into the lake. With all that they did not learn a lesson. They went and some other day came back with a bigger boat. They came and passed through with it at Bwoonpe, and people saw it and reported it to the leaders. They came and the Jukun man said his boat had sunk into the water. They asked him, “Why then did you come with a big boat?” He replied, “We would like if we put the big boat inside, then we will tie a rope on it so that someone will dive beneath the water and tie a rope to the boat that was sunk inside the water so we can pull it out.” Then they were stopped that no one entered the lake. As such, they went back. The elder that had gone and shown them the place and allowed them to enter the lake where the boat sunk was made to bring seven livestock because he broke a rule. He allowed them to enter a lake that no one entered before. It also happened that he was formerly the king heading that area of land. He was stripped of it because he had got himself into trouble.

Natural Moral

There are places of nature like water bodies as seen with Lake Pudong, forests and places people are not expected to go there or do any activity there. Sometimes the people make some of these places sacred. Some of these places possess mystical features that scare people. Whichever way, it has helped to preserve nature. Until now, the Mwaghavul people have some restrictions as to how they exploited nature. Places that are not meant for people to touch or thread into are avoided for fear of punishment. Anyone who disobeys rules nature whether a stranger or a native is punished by supernatural powers or the community leaders or priests. This story reveals the universality of rules and morals in Mwaghavul nation as this Lake Pudong did not spare the researcher who is a stranger. Nature is sacred and is to be honoured by all and sundry. The researcher’s life is probably spared because he is not a native, but he has to suffer the consequences of losing his property.



Mwaghavul Gothic Literature and the Missing Link

Literature is a vital component of cultural identity. The cultural identity of any given group or tribe is dependent on its culture, language and literature. Stories transmit values, preserve history, and regulate social behavior. Gothic narratives function as moral instructors. Also, in some cases, these stories are partly security mechanisms for people in Mwaghavul society. Literature and culture of a people get lost when there is no transmission to the younger generation and as the elders gradually die, such stories become extinct. Currently, many Gothic stories and other stories are disappearing exponentially as a result of neocolonialism and globalization, where stronger and powerful cultures are taking a dominant role over the Mwaghavul culture. Current educational curriculum that emphasizes cultural diversity gives relative advantage to dominant cultures over Mwaghavul which is contributing to the loss of these stories.

For many reasons, Mwaghavul people appear to favour western culture and literature over their cultural heritage. This we see in the interest of researchers in literature. English appears to be prestigious, while indigenous languages and literature are perceived to be burdensome, boring and of little interest to many. We also see how some family values neglect cultural heritage and literature. To some extent, some families feel educating a child with indigenous cultural lore renders a child uneducated and cannot compete effectively in a global society. Hence to achieve a higher social status, the interest is to adopt the language, culture and literature of a people who have come to dominate through colonization and domination. Parents may begin to use the contact culture and literature with their children and gradually the intergenerational transmission of the cultural heritage and literature is reduced and even ceased to exist. Consequently, there may be no people who share such stories and eventually Mwaghavul Gothic stories may no longer be transmitted at all. Languages, culture and literature which have not been adequately documented go into extinction. Therefore, Mwaghavul Gothic stories are losing relevance in favour of western and other dominating cultural stories. It is therefore important to close the gap.



Moral Implications of Non-Transmission of Mwaghavul Gothic Narrative to Younger Generations

Gothic narratives play a crucial role in helping children mould positive character traits and good moral behaviours. Gothic literature is passed down through oral tradition; hence, it helps younger generation to develop memory, discern character types, and understand causality in human actions. Youths learn the sources of success and failure, the roots of conflict, and the consequences of moral choices. Without transmission of these narratives, younger generations may lose important moral frameworks, weakening communal cohesion and personal responsibility.

Recommendation

The desire for a good moral conduct in every society cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore recommended that there should be a drive towards encouraging attitudes and activities that promote morality. There can be better ways to disseminate and transmit Gothic stories to the people. The researcher is recommending that Gothic stories in a digital age can be transmitted through e-books; mp3 versions and animations of such stories for wider coverage and to bolster interest. Educational curricula should incorporate indigenous content, particularly local narratives, within literature studies.

Conclusion

Morality in traditional Mwaghavul society was absolute. There were values that were generally accepted. Human behaviour needed to be controlled and Gothic tales were one way people were socially and psychologically controlled. While there was respect for values such as honesty, togetherness, and other communal norms; there were also reasons for fear of supernatural consequences of doing certain things in society or behaving in certain ways that do not conform to Mwaghavul societal norms. Reviving and preserving these narratives can significantly contribute to moral education by reinforcing awareness of consequences and promoting adherence to societal conventions.



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Brief Biographical Note

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