www.rjoe.org.in Oray's Publications ISSN: 2456-2696
Research Journal Of English (RJOE)
An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal Impact Factor: 8.16(SJIF),Vol-10,Issue-1(Jan-Mar),2025
Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI), Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

# Heritage Of Resilience: Unearthing The Story Of An African Village by Robert Peprah-Gyamfi M.D

Asst .Lect. **Atheer Makki Alshimmary**
University of Kerbala, Center for Strategic Studies, Iraq
Atheer.m@uokerbala.edu.iq

Paper Received on 20-12-2024, Accepted on 23-01-2025
Published on 2 5 -01-25; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2025.10.1.157

**Abstract**

In examining the concept of resilience through the lens of an African village, it was discovered that ecological-communal knowledge systems play a crucial role in understanding resilience's origins and expressions. Resilience is not an imported or externally imposed idea for the village studied, but rather an embedded worldview that has been shaped and developed over generations. Ancestral cosmogonies and worldviews serve as living reference frameworks, guiding appropriate resource relations and ensuring existence, survival, and reproduction in a sensitive context. In this African village, resilience is perceived as an intrinsic, ontological quality of existence, intricately linked to spirituality and communal social-ecological relations. Community resilience initiatives should consider and respect local philosophical precepts, ancestral knowledge systems, and frameworks of existence and resilience to be relevant and effective.

The village consulted for this research often stands in for Africa in international debates on climate change. The challenges it faces are thus regarded as indicative of possible futures for the planet as a whole. In response to the international attention, the village's elders hoped to convey its story, particularly its heritage of resilience in the face of change. Consequently, this study was undertaken in collaboration with the village. The findings shed light on how the story of resilience is conceived, articulated, and enacted in this African village. It is hoped that these findings will contribute to the ongoing global discourse on climate change, as informed by an African perspective.

**Keywords**: African Village, Heritage, Resilience, Community, Cultural Identity, Endurance, Societal Evolution, Local Narratives.

## Introduction

In the heart of Africa, embracing the ivory shores of Lake Tanganyika and the foothills of the mighty Muyovwe Mountains is a village known as Nsumbu. This village, which translates to "the digging place" in Bemba, is home to around 2,000 villagers. Largely off the beaten path of mainstream tourism, Nsumbu remains discreet and unassuming. As the sun rises over the horizon, casting warm hues upon the hardy Swahili-style grass-thatched huts, the village awakens to the melodious chorus of roosters crowing, children laughing, and the gentle shuffling of women preparing fish for the day's meals. Life in this village may seem simple and mundane, but beneath its surface lies a rich tapestry of stories that speak to the resilience and strength of its people. Tucked away in a scenic corner of Africa, it may seem like the sleepy fishing village of Nsumbu has very little to offer the outside world. But, as the African adage goes, "until the lions tell their side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." An attempt is made to tell Nsumbu's side of the story—a story that advocates for and celebrates the African heritage of resilience. Like many other African villages, Nsumbu has weathered its fair share of storms throughout history. But instead of surrendering to the forces that threatened to engulf it, Nsumbu simply dug its feet deeper into the fertile soil of the earth that has nourished it for centuries, not only to survive but to thrive. Through the poignant retelling of oral narratives, the aim is to unearth the delicate layers of resilience sewn into the everyday lives of Nsumbu villagers in hopes of uplifting similar narratives hidden beneath the surface of "developing" villages elsewhere, especially those in Africa.

## Background and Motivation

A small village in Southern Africa holds the key to the continent's deep resilience but is ignored, limiting the global understanding of Africa's rich narrative. Village traditions, often dismissed as primitive and irrelevant, actually contain far-sighted developmental blueprints forged over centuries. Early European explorers and writers perceived Africa solely through their own narrow worldviews. Their descendants perpetuate this exclusion, fueling Africa's modern misunderstandings and neglects, despite the continent's emerging global significance. The West's incomplete picture of Africa stems from ignoring its towns and villages: embedded in their language, music, religion, traditions, and institutions are Ubuntu understandings of community, environment, development, leadership, and governance relevant worldwide (Ahiahonu, 2015). Not exploring village Ubuntu wisdom compounds the damage of colonial misrepresentations, leftover inequalities, and skewed global power dynamics undermining Africa's success. Irrespective of these, Africa persists, progressing and ultimately triumphing, its success enigmatic to the "first" world. Unraveling village

wisdom illuminates this resilience. Settling in the Northern Cape in the late nineteenth century, black African use of the land was primarily pastoral. However, continuous white settlement and land claims up to the mid-twentieth century rendered a pastoral economy untenable. Forced relocation into overpopulated villages, the bane of reservation life, was countered with large-scale emigration via pass-book "exile" agreements, viewing faraway cities as career lands. While many perished, the fortunate parlayed pastoral and agricultural acumen into urban tenacity and village metamorphosis from barren wastelands into productive oases. Ironically, a landless 1936 policy uprooted remaining villagers to mushroom towns; despite this blow, many villages thrived anew. With apartheid's demise came the "return" to a homeland, a battleground of political machinations and contestations, yet villages prevailed prodigiously.

**Scope and Objectives**

This paper seeks to investigate a rural village in West Africa with a vanished past. The village, however, survives and even flourishes in obscurity, thanks to the resilience of its inhabitants. From colonial times to the last decades of the 20th century, the village suffered great losses, leaving the villages shattered in witness of an absent heritage. European explorers and their African henchmen invaded, burned, and pillaged what stood in their way. Colonial oppression and ignorance victimized what remained. As towns flourished, rural villages, invisible to the merchants of progress, withered away. Brutal wars against imperialism, triggered by the advances of 19th-century European industrialization in Africa, ruined what remained of a glorious past. Quelling the brutal consequences of warfare with welfare, Western modernity went about turning the once-rugged colonies into compliant wastelands. The last decades of the 20th century should have brought hope through democratic change and development assistance. Instead, the suffering continued in the name of debt, structural adjustment, and good governance.

As the 21st century turned, democracy and good governance reconciled an obedient Africa with its Western creditor. Development assistance was redirected towards civil society, aiming to emancipate it from an otherwise problematic and corrupt state. In a compliance endeavor with externally induced human rights, democracy, and accountability discourses, civil society, and its popular organizations were deemed repositories of hope for grassroots participation and the political empowerment of the marginalized. In the din of popular empowerment and civil society advocacy from beyond Africa, the blindness and arrogance of the civilizing mission are repeated, albeit in a changed setting and with different protagonists. Now, African NGOs and their Western partners, educated in the very discourses that vilified their people and cultures, scheme to set right the African mis up. Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices are

as misguided as before. They stand in the way of 'progress' and need to be modernized and democratized to comply with the Western standards of development (De Wet, 1992).

Nevertheless, amidst the folly and despair, hope remains in the most unlikely of places. In the rural obscurity of a village far away from the Northern glare, a past long gone away from the scrutiny of progress is unearthed. Behind a forgotten threshold, a tale of resilience is whispered. Because it fell from history's view does not mean it vanished. Because it could neither be seen nor understood does not mean it did not survive. Because the inquiring gaze bore witness to a ruined past does not mean it lay waste. A heritage of resilience runs through the village and the hearts of its people. Here, the scape land hope against the tide runs (Koutra, 2005).

**Historical Context**

Communities in Africa today are often identified in terms of policy-relevant and administrative units, such as villages, neighbourhoods, wards, districts and regions. However, village or ward boundaries cannot always clearly be drawn on the ground. Some groups may have free access to resources in one village but none in another, or resource use may shift from one village to another in response to good or poor resource availability. Composition of categories such as village, neighbourhood or ward, as well as the networks associated with them, can be redefined. Such fluidity is revealed in the histories of many villages whose current boundaries may be the result of recent colonial or post-colonial interventions (Lentz, 2006). Some villages even recently established or re-established themselves in colonial times. Current village boundaries may diverge considerably from the original ones as a result of resource scarcity or abundance, population movement, political manoeuvrings, colonial intervention, or a combination of these factors.

African ontology stresses that the world is a dynamic and open system in which flexibility, growth, innovation and change can occur. There are therefore no definitive beginnings or ends, only processes, events and activities organised around categories such as time (calendars, rituals), space (villages, wards, neighbourhoods) and social relations (kinship, gender, age). All categories – social, spatial or temporal – are created and structured in a certain way, making them stable. However, because the world is dynamic, all categories are also subjected to constant challenge, contestation and redefinition, and this gives rise to unintended consequences and new socio-political arrangements (Lesego Molefe, 2010). Villages can thus be seen both as historical entities shaped by contingencies unique to a particular time and place, and as socio-spatial constructs, the composition and meaning of which may have been endlessly

contested and redefined throughout history.

Despite the emphasis on the locality and historical uniqueness of villages, village or neighbourhood boundaries defined by the people themselves frequently diverge from those recorded by colonial officials. The fluidity of boundaries as defined by indigenous people renders their villages even more complicated for European observers used to fixed jurisdictions. The perception of villages as having ill-defined jurisdictions gave rise to much frustration in the eyes of European administrators who were used to strict delineation of village boundaries as part of an orderly world.

**Pre-colonial Era**

It is said that Africa is the cradle of human kind and indeed the diversity of cultural heritages in Africa is unmatchable anywhere else on planet earth. This diversity includes music, languages, arts, architectural designs, social structures, kinship relations, religious beliefs and practices, dramatic performances and more. Interestingly enough, most of these cultural heritages have survived the test of time through oral transmission from one generations to the next. This wide range of cultural heritages is threatened by a numerous challenges including globalization, modernity, protracted man-made and natural disasters. This necessitates the documenting and research of these cultural heritages. A testimony to the plethora of cultural heritages is the artistic and poetic expressions in Dagaare language found in the north western region of the country. The Dagaabas have a rich cultural heritages in the form of oral traditions, proverbs, music, dramatic performances, architectural designs, kinship relations, knowledge on medicinal plants, social structures, and knowledge on astronomy, weather forecasting, planning of farming activities and time reckoning (Lentz, 2006).

Dalokoo is a research village located in the north western part of Ghana in the traditional area of the Dagaabas. It is found in the Lawra District which is about 684 kilometers from Accra, the capital city of Ghana. The village was established in the eighteenth century by the late chief or Naa Dakoo Baaba Naa who migrated from a town called Dapaan in search of good farmland and to escape from a prolonged war. As a newly settled village, the first comers encountered the challenge of managing and accessing land. The first comers or the autochthonous people were the Dagara ethnic group and later on people from other ethnic groups arrived in the village purposely to settle because of its fertile land for agriculture. In order to foster peaceful coexistence among groups that have different languages and cultural practices, boundary rituals were performed at the periphery of the village (O. Alapo, 2022).

**Colonialism and Its Impact**

Like many towns and villages across Africa, this village faced major upheavals in the early stages of colonialism – first with the Germans from the 1880s-1916, and then the British from 1916-1961. Despite their initial ignorance of the African way of life and stubborn views about African savagery, some missionaries and colonial officials of European descent humbled themselves, immersed in African communities, and later published studies on their intricate knowledge systems (Ndille, 2017). They revealed the richness and sophistication of African natural resource management practices, and health and social systems, which helped communities adapt to changing environmental and social landscapes. Unfortunately, most of these records ended up gathering dust in European libraries and archives. This village, like many others, is poorly documented in such ex-colonial archives. On the contrary, it is viewed as a 'failed village' due to misguided outsider judgments about the effectiveness of introduced educational systems. Yet, oral accounts from village elders, coupled with a few surviving documents from the Catholic Missionary archives, attest to the existence of rich knowledge systems that have underpinned the resilience of the village over the past century or so of rapid change. As a first step in reconstructing village knowledge systems, this essay examines how colonial encounters pragmatically prompted the unearthing and expansion of social knowledge systems in this village.

**Community Structure and Dynamics**

The village was established around 150 years ago by a significant historic figure who hailed from a distant land. As time went on, more inhabitants migrated to the village, its demographics changed and the way of life of the first settlers evolved, but the village has remained focused on the same lake for water, fish and arable land. The village survived colonisation and the imposition of European education and religion. The imposition of a modern primary school on the village resulted in an interesting compromise between European and indigenous modes of education. The village was able to reject Christianisation, although it has always seen the value of literacy. After independence, the village was also able to resist meaningful political intrusion into village affairs. However, local politicians manipulate the village youth for political gain, leading to the deterioration of local cultural heritage practices and languages. Today, the village is dealing with the absence of ethnic identification, which has significant implications for the village and account its uniqueness (Lentz, 2006).

There are currently 77 households with 584 total inhabitants in the village. The majority of the villagers are pure indigenous speakers of the same language and followers of the same religion. Since the establishment, only two other households have settled in the

village, but they both directly relate to the first settlers. The village's isolation is further enhanced by the fact that the neighbouring villages do not share the same language or religion, although all the villages have coexisted peacefully for decades. Still today, inter-village marriages are prohibited and cohabitation with people from the neighbouring villages is mostly frowned upon. As a result, the villagers are uneasy about outsiders documenting their culture. They fear that the story and vocabulary of their unique religion will be misinterpreted and misused by people of different faiths (Beel et al., 2017).

**Social Hierarchies and Roles**

Consequently, males have grabbed leadership positions and the actions of women dismissed as inconsequential. In fact, before colonial intrusion, many African societies had their social systems configured in manners that conferred power and authority on women, making them lords over men. In the Krobos traditional polity, women hold powerful political positions and wield tremendous globally unceasinging authority over men (Kofi Agorsah, 1991). Political arguments usually pre-supposed that hierarchy was a directly imported design without local precedent or parallel. However, political hierarchy was existent in pre-colonial west Africa, albeit in localised forms. Among the Krobos of Ghana, hierarchy developed in the traditional social systems partly through matriarchy albeit ironically, from the womb of humility. Women of the Krobo socio-political system are the lords or 'mothers' of a naturally submissive men folk. Men's political authority is solely dependent on women's social authority. Contemporary Krobo men could only ever aspire to positions of political power if they first become, by chance or birth, sons of women who are granddaughters of the first Krobo women political leaders. Despite recognition as spiritual/cultural fathers of the Krobos and dominance in the priestly institution of clan worship, traditional Krobos' men have never led traditional politics. Gender distribution in political hierarchies has often been assumed now colonial traditions impose ward representation on all, that societies without such arrangements have either no hierarchies or simply monogendered arrangements. Krobos had widely six hierarchal levels of political representation: the Chief ranked at the top followed by subordinate Chiefs, Headman, Clan elders, Asamando elders then the Stone.

**Economic Systems**

Systems of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Systems are predictable yet influenced by unpredictable interactions of human and environmental variables. Traditions and technological practices may persist for decades or centuries, but random and extreme events can interrupt these trajectories and systems

evolve anew. Climate change engenders vulnerability and creates disruptions in the systems upon which livelihoods depend. Village communities in Africa continue to pursue the same livelihoods and annual cycles of subsistence agriculture as their forebears did generations ago (Kevane, 2008). Resilience is rooted in cultural memory, social solidarity, and the coalescence of cooperative systems that bind people and histories together, for better or worse. Villages become archives of past knowledge and interactions.

The economy of the village for generations has revolved around subsistence farming. Every family toils on their plot of rented land, planting and harvesting millet, beans, and corn, while also rearing goats, chickens, and the occasional cow. Similar to Haiti, cultivatable land is scarce and everyone relies on the ailing goodwill of a handful of better-off families that own patches of heritage soil. When desires exceed needs, the necessities of everyday life take on a different meaning and wealth accumulates. With the inheritance of land, status, and power, the inequality deepens (Cameron Britton, 1993). The village is home to thirty-five families but this number swells to as many as sixty during summer months as those in exodus return with their offspring for the rites of passage into adulthood.

**Cultural Practices and Traditions**

Every ethnic group in Africa has a unique set of traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices. These customs are often deeply rooted in a people's history and the environment in which they lived for centuries. In Lesotho and the greater Drakensberg region, African cosmology has played a significant role in shaping social relations and cultural practices. High mountain ranges are viewed as sacred spaces, and ancestors are respected as custodians of the land. For centuries, these indigenous world views shaped development and nurtured harmony with the environment. Even when forebears of present-day black South Africans were forcibly removed from their land, the cultural practices instilled a sense of belonging and stewardship of the land.

The Basotho, one of the groups that settled in the southern highlands, practiced mountain ecology that was shaped by their cultural beliefs and social institutions. They viewed mountains and hills as sacred spaces in which gods and ancestral spirits dwelled, and consequently sought to protect and preserve them. Environmental abuses, such as land degradation, were considered taboos, punishable by spiritual wrath. When converting to Christianity, missionary endeavors were thwarted in mountain spaces, which were instead viewed as holy. The Basotho straddled two landscapes, nurturing two world views that shaped social practices of and attachments to the environment. Anthropogenic fire, cattle management, and communal fencing maintained social

stability and harmony between peoples as well as between people and the environment. Unlike other African groups, the Basotho have not lost their land; rather, their individual ownership transcended communal ownership. However, colonial and apartheid rule imposed additional tenures and parliamentary acts that undermined the Mountain Custom (Lesego Molefe, 2010).

**Rituals and Ceremonies**

Rituals and ceremonies are important components of the African village Heritage widely accepted by participants. For a Heritage to be said to be alive and practiced, it means the rituals and ceremonies associated with it are performed either on relevant community social occasions or as part of daily community life. These may have been community activities done on a larger scale in the past but may have down sized to family or household performance in the present. This is the case with the Laimbwe I hneem rituals and ceremonies associated with the village Heritage. Other ceremonies and rituals perform on food sustainability in relation to the village Heritage are the Laimbwe I hneem Rituals and ceremonies associated with everyday activities (Kam Kah, 2016). The I hneem ceremonies and rituals perform on everyday activities associated with village Heritage are the I amneem and I gwiem ceremonies. The I amneem ceremony and ritual involve one or more families bringing their children who have recently undergone the village II hneem common age grade initiation to the home of the Ndzeh village chief for public acknowledgement to the community. During this time, the Ndzeh village chief blesses the children and offers a sacrificed pig to the ancestors in appreciation for seeing the children through the initiation. The I gwiem ceremony involves the male compounds that participated in the village I hneem planting undertaking bringing cooked food to the home of the community planting chief to appreciate him for the time spent to lead the farming endeavor and also to the ancestors who blessed the undertaking with a bountiful harvest. This ceremony also doubles as a time when plans are made for the distribution of the harvests from the community farm. Like other African societies, Mupun festivals and rituals are performed in cycles in consonance with seasonal changes in nature and agriculture (Danfulani, 1996).

**Oral Histories**

Ancestral memories are rarely captured in books, but thousands of voices fruitfully testify that storytelling is a living heritage. Oral histories are the invisible foundations of written histories, still today at risk of being forgotten or silenced. Awareness can build resilience through the re-telling of stories. (Jeurissen, 2009) outlines simple methods to unearth oral histories as an entry point for scholars and communities alike. Finding the right storytellers with the right questions is paramount in capturing the core

of their knowledge. Each interview should be audio- and video-recorded and transcribed to accurately convey a storyteller's personality and choose themes for follow-up interviews. Respect for cultural differences in storytelling practices is equally important. In this case, a western-like interview structure was rejected. Instead, a social gathering at sunset with tea and snacks proved to be the best starting point to find the right storytellers who became good friends and enthusiastic participants.

The village where the project took shape has stories of resilience to share. After their land was colonized by settlers, the villages in the area were left with the least fertile soils. Droughts and famines resulted in an exodus to find better pastures. Yet, one village stayed put and resisted the odds. (Margarita Castro, 2017) describes how stories can define a community and become collective heritage, carefully controlling the storytelling enactments in time and space. Similarly, storyteller gatherings were carefully scheduled at times and places that honor the elders. Each storyteller was the main actor of their own play, dramatically re-enacting their memories of the village's struggle and resolute choices through social and environmental changes, shaping its identity and heritage.

**Challenges and Adversities**

The road to independence is fraught with difficulties, and these difficulties are especially pronounced when starting life out in a new country. In Liberia, women are further challenged by society's expectations of femininity and a patriarchal culture that restricts choice and opportunity. Nevertheless, one former refugee's extraordinary determination, resilience and tenacity has seen her realise independence and build a successful life for herself and her children. This film uplifts a spectacular personal story, and highlights the profound sacrifices made by mothers for their children. With the focus on a particular woman's journey, the film also gives insight to wider issues surrounding refugees, women and education (Jane Brown, 2013).

Set in rural West Africa, Paula's Story follows the journey of a young Liberian woman who flees her war-torn homeland as a refugee, and moves with her family to the unfamiliar and culturally different country of Ghana. In a new country, Paula confronts new challenges, including illiteracy. At age 13, Paula begins an arduous journey to secure an education for herself, against overwhelming odds. Determined, brave, and with the support of her mother, Paula triumphs. She advocates for herself, learns to speak English, confronts the wrath of those who would keep her illiterate, and navigates the complexities of schooling in a nation where students must pay fees (Nkambule, 2014). Ultimately, Paula's tenacity prevails, and she wins a scholarship to an elite secondary school. The ramifications of this success extend well beyond Paula. An

advocate for education, she seeks to share the opportunities she has received with her peers, challenging the notion that education is only for the privileged.

**Natural Disasters**

Natural disasters have devastating environmental, social and economic consequences in contemporary Africa. In the late 1990s, a series of bio-physical, financial and political shocks afflicted a remote village in southwestern Uganda, forcing many residents to migrate or change livelihoods. An opportunity to calibrate and reconnect a series historical oral interviews and photography with new interviews and photos in 2019, 22 years later, informs a new analysis of resilience in this village. A return to a village largely unchanged by global forces reveals how emphasis on agency and social solidarity in local narratives and practices of resilience challenges dominant top-down and techno-managerial understandings of resilience (Keith Guthrie, 2000). It suggests that resilience should be regarded as a "village" epistemology; locally contingent understandings and practices of resilience that often deny or challenge official understandings of resilience. Narratives and practices of resilience enacted in this village emerged in opposition to dominant colonial and post-colonial understandings of development. Oppositional resilience helps to highlight the entanglements and diversities of histories, epistemologies and practices of resilience at different socio-spatial scales. The village as analytic foregrounds understandings and practices of resilience that are contingent upon socio-historical contexts often ignored in academic debates or policy prescriptiveness of resilience. Emphasis on agency, reciprocity and social solidarity in local narratives and practices of resilience, and understanding resilience as village epistemologies counter dominant top-down and techno-managerial understandings of resilience.

**Political Instability**

By November 1997, the African village of Togo becomes a multi-party political system, encouraged by civil society organizations (CSOs) and organised rural grassroots villages. But many problems still abound. The politicisation of the rural grassroots CSOs and subsequent disbandment leaves villages devoid of structures to campaign for their development. Many rural villages fall hostage to intimidation and violence by ruling party thugs, especially during elections. The unchallenged ruling party dictatorship careful designs its repressive measures to thwart a repeat of the 1992 opposition triumph. In November 1996, Togo holds parliamentary elections under the auspices of the imposed Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which curtails government funding of public services.

Despite being a scramble for public financial resources, the parliamentary elections are characterised by thuggery, intimidations, harassment and violence by ruling party goons against opposition supporters. Two days into the elections, ten people die as violence spirals. In one constituency, the ruling party openly buys votes. Disputing the elections' outcome, the opposition contests in the constitutional court, but this regime controlled institution dismisses the objections. Political violence is endemic in Togo, from violent independence to today (Anaele, 2014).

**Resilience Strategies**

The community of Ndikongoro in Burundi's capital Gitega is nested on a steep hill that is part of a chain of small mountains. Building houses on hills affects the conditions of a village. Often rich people own the flat lands hence poor widow single mothers settle on hills battling the forces of nature and patriarchal oppression. Socially and environmentally challenged Ndikongoro village historically has always been a battleground of women's resilience against colonial and modern male oppressions and environmentally against nature's wrath of landslides, floods, drought, disease. Ndikongoro stands as a narrative of women's resilient strategies their agency and fooling the patriarchal judgement by transforming the 'wild' womb of nature into venues of survival. Resilience a buzz word in development discourse often in Western context signifies disaster preparedness and ability to bounce back to normal life post adversity. On the other hand resilience in Africa and particularly in Burundi is socially and environmentally nested word influenced by its colonial and post colonial histories. Burundi was a canoe state administered by German colonization. After world war Gitega was chosen as capital because it was hill top thus resistant to external invasion. Colonial policies intensified Hutu Tutsi divide. The then King Mwambutsa IV in 1959 unleashed a massive slaughtering of Hutu nationalist peasants triggering an exodus of over 200,000 people. Heavy historical burdens of genocide poverty oppression have always dominated and challenged Burundi villages (Vertigans & Gibson, 2019). However Burundi village communities resiliently thrive on disputes threading contemporary survival. Resilience strategies are embedded in social customs traditions history and the womb of the environment.

**Community Support Systems**

At the centre of any community is an intricate web of social support relationships. These support systems take several forms, offering emotional, financial, humanitarian, and material assistance. A social network of formal and informal spokes interlinks the village of Rumbek. Elderly widows care for infants and school children, providing them with food and love. In return, the young children voluntarily help to safeguard the

widow's food stores, accompanying them as they keep watch on pain-stakingly collected millet or grains parched over firewood. Protecting these stores, the children silently honour the respect demanded by elder's wisdom. During focus group discussions, children express their gratitude for these social connections with simplicity and eloquence, explaining, "They love us, and we love the things they give to us." (Skovdal & Campbell, 2010).

Farmers who have only their labour to offer in the subsistence agricultural economy support Rumbek's poorest households. Harvest gatherings draw on kinship networks and neighbourhood group labour, employing nine or ten youths per widow or fatherless home to beat down and gather sorghum. Together, the children sing as they work, voicing their pride in collective effort: "Where meat is cooked, go children to it, where sorghum is harvested, come build effort!" Young boys earn respect as "men" by bringing food home for cooking. Households with bountiful harvests repay these community labour investments with generosity. After harvests, everyone eats meat and millet porridge, and the poorest enjoy good feasting: "If they would not give, we would not harvest." In dry seasons, communal work turns to well-digging, five or six men digging while boys draw the water (Budowle et al., 2019).

**Innovations and Adaptations**

Amidst the stark realities and pressing challenges that characterized the socio-economic milieu, communities constantly sought innovative pathways to ensure survival, adaptation, and resilience. Innovations poured forth from every nook and cranny, as creativity and ingenuity acted as key survival mechanisms. From art and music to food preparation and healing practices, new community norms emerged, often refining and adjusting earlier ones. Many of these innovations endured beyond the crises, becoming persistent ways of life. These novel practices, often dubbed adaptations or adjustments, took root at the individual, family, and communal levels.

At the community level, a key innovation involved holding meetings under trees, in open spaces, or borrowed halls, rather than relying on pre-colonial structures dominated by headmen. Discussions remained inclusive, with all willing participants encouraged to share grievances and deliberations recorded by scribes in rough format. Decisions reached unanimity; majority rule risked splintering the community. Once consensus was achieved, resolutions were publicized immediately, ensuring collective accountability and prompting public sanctions for noncompliance. This innovation fixed community dispute resolution at public forums, in direct view of all. Prior to this, deliberations alternated between held secrecy and public display.

A second new practice countering illicit behavior issues involved allocating specific days for open public interrogations of suspected wrongdoers. Every community member was obliged to attend, and absences were themselves grounds for suspicion. Allegers presented their cases first; the accused then spoke, followed by questioning from the assembled, with the accused's behavior deemed telling. Community testimony was considered highly credible; individual shame amplified communal anguish, often compelling confessions. The public nature of these interrogations ensured everyone remained vigilant, promptly reporting any misdeeds, and enforced harsh penalties for collective shame exposure. Such practices persisted long post-crisis, influencing some parochial court aspects and monitoring thoroughness.

**Health and Well-being**

The villages maintain traditional practices such as herbal care, temples, and alms that positively influence the villagers' health. During the formal inquiry, the villagers elaborately explained questions related to health and well-being. In addition, observations were made at the temples and herbal trees. There were multiple temples located in different wards, where daily rituals and prayers are performed early in the morning. Everyone gathers at the temples and prays for peace and prosperity. Such religious activities foster a sense of community and belongingness. Temples are also places of social interaction, where people share their joys and sorrows. During the visit, it was noted that a villager had passed away, and the rituals performed thereafter demonstrated the villagers' strong faith in god and the traditional practices associated with mourning and last rites (Jane Brubacher et al., 2024). In addition to temples, the villagers also worship herbal trees such as banyan, peepul, neem, and tulsi. Local beliefs regard these trees as sacred, and villagers do not harm them. These trees are also associated with traditional health care practices. There are designated places for herbal trees, where villagers pray and offer food to the spirits residing in the trees, seeking cures for ailments. Whenever a villager falls sick, they first seek remedies from the herbal trees and request a specific leaf or twig from the tree. This traditional practice has been passed down from the elders to the younger generation. Villagers reported that their health is generally good and do not recall any occurrence of epidemics. It was observed that plantain, ginger, and turmeric are cultivated in and around homesteads, which are considered herbal and are used in daily food preparation.

**Traditional Medicine**

Traditional medicine is a major component of health care systems in most nations, particularly developing nations. Such systems also have the benefit of being inexpensive and environmentally sustainable. These services are commonly utilized by

individuals with lower education levels, literacy levels, and socioeconomic status (E. Mustafa Ahmed et al., 2023). The village of Yaayi, located in southern Mali and bordering Burkina Faso, like many rural and disadvantaged communities in Africa, relies on traditional herbal medicine due to a lack of modern health care infrastructure. One such practitioner is Muja, a 75-year-old man who learned herbal medicine at an early age through observation and apprenticeship with his grandfather, a renowned herbalist in the village of Baguineda. Despite his humble lifestyle, Muja is highly regarded in Yaayi for his expertise in traditional medicine. Medicinal plant species are primarily sourced from the Yaayi region or obtained from traders who travel to larger towns such as Koutiala and Sikasso. Interviews with Muja reveal the use of 13 different plant species in 9 distinct formulations to treat various ailments, including diabetes, hypertension, fever, headaches, and stomach aches. Most of the plants used are local to Yaayi.

The village of Yaayi, located in southern Mali and bordering Burkina Faso, like many rural and disadvantaged communities in Africa, has a long history and reliance on traditional herbal medicine. Such systems also have the benefit of being inexpensive and environmentally sustainable. Traditional medicine is an important aspect of the culture and health of communities worldwide (Tsang, 2017). The use of medicinal plants has gained global attention in recent decades because it is still an important and widely used practice, particularly in developing nations like Mali. Each society maintains a set of these medicinal or healing traditions that are preserved and updated over time, using local natural resources. There is very little research on the specific medicinal plants found in Yaayi and the neighboring village of Baguineda in the Sikasso Region of Mali. This study aims to identify and document the plant species, methods of preparation, and ailments treated using traditional herbal medicine in the village of Yaayi, as well as provide a preliminary analysis of the level of knowledge in young people in the village.

**Modern Healthcare Access**

Although the village has no formal health facility, the villagers have devised a system of coping that includes access to health professionals, traditional health services, and self-medication. The village cooperates with a private hospital that sends a nurse once a week to the village. If a villager is sick, they can either go to the private hospital or the nurse comes to the village. Also, those who can afford it go to another hospital in a nearby town. Those who cannot afford transport to the hospital will seek the services of traditional healers or do self-medication. Also, some women villagers have been trained as traditional birth attendants. Access to healthcare is difficult in most villages in Africa and health facilities are either far, poorly equipped, or have no health workers

(Mangundu et al., 2020). In such situations, villagers devise coping mechanisms in order to access health services.

The village is an example of coping with the challenges of healthcare access. The villagers do not feel that health services are a right as enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution since health facilities have not been established in the village since independence in 1980. To the villagers, health services are a privilege which they must seek or use coping mechanisms. Nonetheless, the villagers have made some strides in accessing health services. They have negotiated with a private hospital and a nurse visits the village once a week. Trained birth attendants ensure expectant mothers give birth in safety. The health coping mechanisms employed by the villagers are influenced by the infrastructure, economic and political environment, and colonial historical context (Paris-Saper, 2015).

**Education and Knowledge Transmission**

Like many African nations, Lesotho has an oral tradition that serves as a repository of the community's history, culture and values. The importance of these oral traditions has only come increasingly under threat through the age of public schooling and western socialization. Nonetheless, these oral traditions are often still inclusive of intricate knowledge of the surrounding environment and its flora and fauna. This knowledge system is often referred to as Indigenous Knowledge (IK). This study found that herders, most of which are Basotho males aged between 11 and 19, are often at the forefront of the community's oral traditions and its attached IK, which serve as the poem's focus. The Basotho are one of the many ethnic groups predominantly found in the highlands of Southern Africa. The heartland of the Basotho people is in the Kingdom of Lesotho (Pitikoe, 2018).

Being a landlocked country, Lesotho is bordered on all sides by its larger neighbor South Africa. Throughout the colonial era, Lesotho (then Basutoland) fell under great foreign influence and control, particularly from the British, who undermined the chieftaincy system and later annexed Lesotho. After WWII, the Basotho people began voicing anti-colonial sentiments, which led to reforms in the governance system. By the mid-1970s, the Basotho National Party abolished political reforms, igniting a string of violence resulting in many political exiles. The ensuing political vacuum led to South African encroachment, who were particularly concerned about the free flow of water from Lesotho to South Africa and thus backed the BNP. In an attempt to curb this influence, a developmental state was formed in Lesotho. However, the state captured by the elite exacerbated poverty, and when the South African apartheid regime fell, similar protests erupted in Lesotho. Today, Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy where

land access and tenure remain vested in the King (Elizabeth Thornhill Stonier, 1996).

Past and present (m)any national and regional socio-political upheavals have resulted in Lesotho's predominantly rural composition, unique geography and ecology, and namely youth out-migration, and have paved the way for societal prioritization of livestock ownership and herding (libōtsoana) system. Today, he-libōtsoana overwhelmingly take the form of communal herding, employing one or more herders on a contract basis to tend to the household's livestock. Herding is often contracted out, as households with livestock may not themselves be able to tend to them due to, amongst others, the spatially endless societal structures of pastoralism vis-à-vis schooling and modern employment, or simply household poverty and/or dwindling livestock numbers.

**Traditional Educational Systems**

The need to examine the traditional educational systems of African communities arose from the feeling that little is being done in the area of research and documentation of the traditional systems of education in African villages, towns and cities. As a result, people in charge of development processes have a tendency to overlook or ignore these systems. This may arise from a feeling that such systems are not sophisticated enough to be taken into account, or from a misunderstanding of what education systems mean and the part they play in society's development (UKAMAKA TERESA & NNIA MBA SR, 2013).

The main aim of the research was to document, characterise and assess the educational practices of the chosen African community cognisant of, and in response to, the global push for development. Furthermore, the research attempted to evaluate the viability of these traditional educational systems to complement modern systems in the context of development issues. To ensure a better understanding of the selected African village, it was necessary to provide a brief background on historical, demographic, economic, political, social and religious issues that play a role in shaping the development processes (R. Akinwale, 2013).

**Integration of Western Education**

Enlightened by the above quagmire of African education, it becomes paramount for African planners and implementation agencies to recognize the paradigm shift being experienced by the globally increasingly educated populace and how such a shift could be integrated into the African indigenous worldviews so that development can be

participatory and sustainable (UKAMAKA TERESA & NNIA MBA SR, 2013). The call by African scholars on the need to relook at the African educational systems as one of the pre-colonial pillars that buttressed the African development, social inclusion, and harmony should not fall on deaf ears. Africa development endeavours, both pre and post colonial, have been largely swayed by the Western dogma dependant on the Western education systems. Since independence from colonial rule, African development has been largely informed by the international, and to a larger extent, Western development agencies, which however is at variance with how Africa and African communities perceive development. African indigenous paradigms of development as perceived by the African communal worldviews was and continue to be at odds with the Western individualism and capitalistic paradigm. It is mournful to note that imperialism, in one form or another, still waxes stronger on the Africa continent in spite of the hollow independence. It is imperative to note that the present African development quagmires, past and present, were brought about by the Western education systems imposed on Africa. African educational systems pre-colonialism buttressed the development and social harmony within the African communities, but with the imposition of the Western educational systems, the African communities have been turned into a quagmire of social ills.

**Gender Dynamics**

A recurrent theme in oral history recollections is women's involvement, responsibilities, and defined roles in the agricultural and ecological heritage of the village. Gender roles are deeply rooted in culture and traditions. Even in changing times, cultural roots endure, embracing both change and continuity. In the past, women were the primary custodians and users of agricultural and natural resources, while men held a dominant position in decisions regarding these resources ((Carol Anne) 1961- Murphy, 1990). Women's roles encompassed agriculture, livestock husbandry, natural resource gathering and management, household care, childbearing, and childcare. Men's roles were linked to herding, ploughing, homestead building, hunting, raiding, security, maFene (age set initiation), and management of agricultural output. This division was largely kin-based, with women in clans and their natal homes involved in similar activities and knowledge.

In the oral history interviews, as village agricultural knowledge and practices are discussed, there is an expected emphasis on women's roles. Women's roles in agriculture and knowledge systems are highlighted, often including their recollected practices, knowledge, and technologies. This focus on women's roles is not merely an intention of the researchers; it aligns with villagers' perspectives on their world, where gender-based divisions of responsibilities in agriculture are acknowledged. Men are

recognized as having a role in agriculture, but it is primarily discussed in regard to women's contributions and roles, depicting women as the major players. It is not so much that women's contribution is emphasized at the expense of men's; rather, it is accepted as a fact that women are the core custodians and players in agriculture. Thus, it is not by choice that the text focuses largely on women's contributions; it has more to do with how villagers perceive their world. As one villager put it, "it is like that; take it or leave it."

**Roles and Responsibilities**

In portraying rural African village life, a diversity of roles performers are critical in creating and presenting the narrative. Specific roles emerged during the village focus group meetings. These roles, which grew from discussions about who does what in village life, included elders, artists, farmers and pastoralists, women, youth, and change agents. Every one of these roles was filled by participants in these narratives. People in these roles recounted facts about their responsibilities in village life. Elders articulated the roles of decision-makers and custodians of cultural heritage with a strong tendency to fill that role in the storytelling. Artists and artistic expression were at the forefront of the narrative with this role being filled exceptionally well by three articulate professional musicians whose songs were the basis of the narrative. Farmers and pastoralists filled important roles in recounting their livelihood and its connection to the environment and cultural heritage. Women's roles were particularly interesting, as they are the keepers and transmitters of cultural heritage, but women were virtually silent in the narrative aside from relaying the roles of women from the focus group (Beel et al., 2017). Youth had a strong role in the narrative filling in some gaps in the focus group discussion about rural material culture and posing critical questions to the elders regarding change and cultural heritage. Perhaps the most profound aspect of the youth role was the recognition in both the focus group and narrative that heritage is fragile without conscious attention and effort to pass it on. Finally, there was a strong thread in the narrative of the roles of change agents. This included the agency of local grassroots endeavors but requested that outside education and assistance be part of the solution in the face of social and environmental changes threatening cultural resilience (Rebecca Van Dolah, 2018).

**Empowerment Efforts**

In an effort to reclaim agency, women in the village interviewed tell stories about themselves, their lives, and their recent past. These storytelling sessions were organized in early 2015 by an outsider who wished to carry out a research project in collaboration with an African village. Although initially intended purely as an academic endeavor,

the storytelling slowly transformed into a participatory project where the women began taking charge of the direction of the sessions. As the storytelling progressed beyond the initial research framework, it became clear that the simple act of telling stories could be an empowering process in itself (Garretson, 2015).

At the outset, there was uncertainty about how many women would participate, and some explain why they were hesitant to take part in the project. As it turned out, more women came forward, eager to tell their stories. Some participated in only one storytelling session, while others were present for all five. The gatherings took place in a relatively informal setting, allowing the women to share their stories in a comfortable environment. After some initial hesitancy, the women became more engaged, taking turns speaking while the others listened. The majority of the stories revolved around life in the village, its struggles, and most notably, the importance of the new water source dug shortly prior to the storytelling sessions.

**Environmental Sustainability**

Each culture defines, conceptualizes, understands and experiences environmental sustainability differently, shaped by socio-historical contexts. This diversity in understanding and dealing with environmental sustainability is significant for co-production of knowledge and problem-solving in a contemporary globalized world.

The Kom of north-western Cameroon define, conceptualize, understand and experience environmental sustainability and socio-ecological resilience in nuanced and multi-faceted ways. These local definitions and understandings have been shaped by historical encounters, engagements and negotiated settlements with the internal and external socio-political and environmental stresses, shocks, changes and transformations as well as choices and decisions made. In the face of emerging and unfolding global environmental and climatic changes, shocks and stresses, there are lessons from the Kom of Cameroon worth exploring, mining and applying for contemporary future. With the aim of spurring wider inquiries and discussions across disciplines, geographies and temporalities, this paper excavates, unearths, recounts and shares the environmental sustainability and socio-ecological resilience narrative and history of the Kom of north-western Cameroon.

The Kom's environmental sustainability narrative and history covers the indigenous understanding of, conceptualization and definitions on nature conservation, resource endowment, resource balance, use, management and utilization; emergent environmental conservation practices and institutions; empowerment of environmental

conservation practices; colonial intrusion, imposition and reworking of indigenous environmental conservation practices and institutions; environmental conservation practices and institutions during the post colonial period; and striving eco-parliament amidst current stresses and shocks to the socio-ecological landscape of the Kom.

**Resource Management Practices**

Concurrently with the contemporary socio-spatial changes, the aggrandisement of land market, the intensifying urbanisation, the increasing importance of individualism and childcare, as well as various other attendant changes, certain localities still persist in maintaining social-based village life and an egalitarian way of living. This tenacity of traditional practices, embedded in the wider context of change, is important because it sustains a kind of folk culture or vernacular that is nowadays disappearing in most parts of Europe.

Folk culture is often romanticised as something idyllic, passive, and unchanging. However, it has been inherently resilient and has gone through multiple metamorphoses as a result of having to constantly adapt to changing environments. Today it is challenged by more dramatic changes than those experienced ever before in history. Fluctuating, unpredictable, and uncontrollable globalisation, combined with the rise of individualism, consumerism, and a celebrity-based imaginary hierarchy of social stratification, threatens the unitary socio-spatial continuation of many socio-cultural phenomena. Village life is also questioned by the very concept of village, which tends to be understood primarily in administrative terms when policies are planned and funded (Sola, 2005). As a result, the adaptive capacity of village life is undermined, even though the necessity of adaptation has been acknowledged.

Having been abandoned by the majority of its inhabitants and selected services, the analysed village might seem doomed to elimination according to the administrative understanding of rurality. Nevertheless, it is still inhabited and the remaining villagers keep the renaissance of wider resource management practices alive with the very understanding of village as a life-possessing locality. This persistence is supported by the wider socio-political context, which encourages villages to maintain their viability emphasising the importance of individual efforts for local development rather than providing monetary investments (E. et al., 2015). Considering this situation, the researched village life is informative with regard to some possible futures of villages in the same post-folk, post-soviet, as well as generally post-agrarian, rural cultural contexts.

**Climate Change Resilience**

Climate change poses some of the largest and most challenging changes to have confronted humans in modern history, manifesting across local to global scales with wide-ranging implications. While the timing and severity of change varies widely, some impacts are already being felt, such as increased extreme weather events, altered seasonality, changing biophysical conditions, and shifting flora and fauna distributions. In mobilizing efforts to enhance socio-ecological resilience, it is important to empower adaptive pathways that fit local cultural context, such as through engagements with heritage (Rebecca Van Dolah, 2018).

Matthew Sayre and colleagues demonstrate how they integrate local ecological knowledge and traditional agricultural practices with science in facilitating a community-led adaptation platform to assist indigenous potato farmers in adapting to climate change impacts in the high Andes of Peru. Their adaptation model constructs a rights-based approach through the mobilization of 'biocultural heritage.' By engaging adaptation through biocultural heritage, they empower local actors in directing the development and allocation of resources, services, and political and legal support to enhance local socio-ecological resilience. Through this case study, it becomes clear how heritage becomes a platform of human agency for empowering local identity and placing governance of climate vulnerabilities in the hands of local actors.

**Influence of Globalization**

The Maasai are a semi-nomadic pastoralist group inhabiting Kenya and Tanzania. They are one of the more numerous and internationally famous groups in Africa due to their vibrant culture and colonial associations with bravery and freedom. However, globalization is impacting them and their territory, particularly in terms of land loss and the "cultural commodification" of their identity (Marie Kotowicz, 2013). National and global links are forming Maasai individuals and communities into new socio-political groupings, but it remains unclear how effective these activities are at reconstructing resistance and alternative development strategies. Globalization—often misconceptualized as simply Westernization, universalization, and homogenization—has brought new technologies and ideas to people's lives worldwide.

Rather than a top-down Western imposition, the changes brought about by globalization dispossessing or endangering ethnonational cultures encourage and provide possibilities for their active retotalization and reconstruction. Globalization moulds local cultures and identities, but it also localizes and indigenizes global influences.

Empirical field research conducted in 2007-2008 within Maasai communities and with Maasai individuals in urban centres exposes the effects of globalization on local culture and identity. It demonstrates how these influences are critically adapted, resisted, and indigenized by communities and individuals anchored in local geographies and cultural frameworks. Focusing on Maasai people, the research contributes to wider issues concerning the impact of globalization on local cultures and identity.

**Economic Integration**

Integration between different groups, tribes or communities in a nation can be either through economic, social, cultural or political integration. Economic integration is the coming together of different parties or groups with the view to undertake or engage in economic activities aimed at improving the economic wellbeing of such parties or groups. Political integration is the coming together of different groups, tribes or communities in a nation to form a common political party, grouping or association in order to pursue similar political objectives. The same thing in as far as social integration is concerned. Communities or societies can come together due to social reasons whereby one community can join or integrate with another community on the basis of certain social activities such as sports, traditions, belief systems among others (T. AGHEMELO & IBHASEBHOR, 2013). For the purpose of this research, the focus is on economic integration between communities, societies or peoples. African communities or villages like any other communities in the world also have their own economic integration systems that either came in formal setups or informal arrangements.

**Cultural Exchange**

Cross-cultural awareness is enhanced through cultural exchange (CE), or the transfer of cultural ideas between different cultures. The youngest South African province, Mpumalanga, with its rich Afro-Indigenous cultural heritage, is ideal for CE. Cultural activities that promote cross-cultural awareness must involve the participation of local Afro-Indigenous and immigrant communities. Afro-Indigenous communities originated in Africa and currently inhabit Southern Africa. The study looks into CE in the context of Heritage of Resilience's (HoR's) cultural activities in Mpumalanga and uses qualitative methods to unearth CE challenges and opportunities. Findings reveal that CE is limited but is enhanced through HoR's cultural activities, where pro-active community involvement in cultural activities can enhance CE. These findings are significant in promoting CE in Mpumalanga and further afield, especially in developing countries with emerging tourism economies (Benton & Zulu Shabazz, 2017).

CE is essential for the growth and sustainability of cultural tourism in the context of cross-cultural awareness. CE is limited between Afro-Indigenous and immigrant communities in Mpumalanga, and CE can be enhanced through cultural activities involving community participation. HoR's cultural activities enhance CE by bringing together cultural groups from different backgrounds, providing cultural groups with a platform to share their cultural heritage, and raising awareness about the importance of cultural heritage. Cultural activities involving the proactive participation of local communities enhance CE, and these findings are relevant in promoting CE at the local level in developing countries. The study adds to the growing body of literature on CE in developing countries, particularly in rural districts with emerging cultural tourism, by investigating CE in the context of cultural and community heritage. It further investigates the challenges and opportunities for CE through in-depth, interpretive case studies. The study addresses two research questions about CE challenges and opportunities in HoR's cultural activities.

**Reflections and Future Directions**

This paper is both personal and academic. It captures the collective efforts of a doctoral research journey undertaken in a small African village over a decade. The intention is twofold: to share the experience with those from similar villages and to provide scholars valuable insights into navigating academia's complexities. The exploration begins with the foundation – the village and its people. Life unfolds with the rhythm of the sun, animals, and nature, as they find joy in simple, shared experiences. Over time, external forces press upon this innocence, from the colonial heat to modern development's shambles and the 'contemporary' pressure of researchers and academics. Yet, amid uncertainty, the free souls seek solace in life's ebb and flow. There's a yearning to 'take the good life forward,' like the village's baobab trees, where nurturing children is paramount.

The village is observed through an outsider's lens, feeling both lost and at home amid the solar system's opening and closing cycles. The story is told in four parts: the foundation as a village upbringing, the good life amid the educational path, the unearthing of resilience heritage, and academic and personal reflections. Each part holds concepts and experiences that may resonate with similar villages. At its core, the story is the good life and heritage of resilience unfolded, yet at the periphery, it's an academic discourse highlighting on-the-ground village realities, the beautiful yet unspeakable good life, and academia's closed, entangled reel injustices and complexities (Ahiahonu, 2015).

**Lessons Learned**

A small village in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, called Lwandile, has an important story to tell. Advances in audio-visual technology, increased access to these technologies, and improved access to the Internet could help preserve this story for future generations. The story of Lwandile is essentially one of resilience in the face of colonial and apartheid oppression, broken promises of development after 1994, and more recent threats from a multinational mining company. African villages in the early 21st century struggle with the legacies of colonialism and apartheid (Nicola J Bidwell et al., 2011). In these struggles, they draw on their heritage and act with remarkable resilience. Resilience here refers to the capacity of a people to cope with social disruption and change, and bounce back in a different form (Ahiahonu, 2015).

Lwandile was founded a little over a century ago by a group of Xhosa people resisting the imposition of a colonial 'land tenure system' of freehold title and ownership. The founder of Lwandile, Headman Mpendulo, was originally from the village of Qumbu and came to Lwandile with the support of the powerful Xhosa prophetess, Nongqawuse. For almost a century, with little outside assistance, Lwandile thrived as a village, creating and relying on its own social and economic systems. A state imposed Native Administration Act extinguished Lwandile's independence in 1954 and integrated it into the Langa Native Reserve. Although other outside interventions followed up to 1994, promises of development and improvements in living conditions were largely unfulfilled. Now, in the 21st century, with the village living in dire poverty and social instability, a multinational mining company wants to prospect for minerals on village land. This threatened disruption to village social systems once again provoked a coming together of the villagers.

**Opportunities for Growth**

Throughout the interviews, informants reflected on opportunities for the village's growth. These include natural resources, assets that change ownership, and the role of local governance. Natural resources are viewed as a precondition for village resilience. Huulisaar were described as the village's heart and a place for the local community's play and work. An important focus group discussion was dedicated to the opportunities arising from the asset ownership shift from the national forest authority to the local governance. It was hoped that proactive management of the forests would bring them back to local people, just as they were used before nationalisation. However, the forest was most often described as an asset causing problems. While bringing income, it also required a lot of work and made it difficult to engage in other activities. Lowu forests were either cleared and fenced or overgrazed and abandoned, but still highly regarded

by those who remembered them as places of gathering, crafting, and education. The focus group representing the lowest potheri attendants emphasised the importance of free access to the lowu wetlands for livestock grazing, an opportunity to create additional income from animal husbandry. By contrast, the presently growing pine forest at the edge of this potheri turned into a barrier for cattle drivers, and ownership disputes made it even more inaccessible. In a context of increasing resource scarcity, land privatization and fencing were viewed as a barrier for the poorest to access potheri resources, and this was corroborated with the village actor's narratives about dramatically decreasing cattle numbers (Budowle et al., 2019).

**Conclusion**

Returning to Beatrice's question, "With what strength do you continue?", there is a need to reflect on the resilience legacy still alive and extending from African villages. It is through African villages that colonialisms want to dissipate, subdue, and homogenize with their hegemonies, while, in their locality, there are stubborn resistances. Before the August 2022 field trip to Africa, it was imagined that there was a simple answer to Beatrice's question, yet, there unfolded a strong complexity. It is not something mythic or esoteric, nor something that can be decanted in the Eurocentric intellectual/academic hegemonic modes with neatness. It is a stubborn tenacity acting/continuing with the worldly and cosmic realities. For Beatrice's African wisdom, it is "balance". Everything is in constant mobility, thus it needs to be kept "in balance", "with respect" ( (Ahiahonu, 2015) ). There is a co-mobility with realities that go beyond the perceptual/sensory range of human beings; thus, there is a need to "listen" to the things (worldly and cosmic) beyond humanic comprehension.

Various heritage traces, particularly Afrocentric ones, are considered as lenses to perceive such resilience legacies. It is acknowledged that such lenses co-travel with past colonial oppressions and impose contemporary hegemonic dirts, thus it needs to be carefully tread. Each Afrocentric heritage trace is to be a site of excavation with the utmost attention to the embedded colonial hegemony and homogeneity. It is hoped that these excavations become a path for further journeys into the resiliences legacies continuing to enrich and cultivate the world.

**References**

Ahiahonu, F. (2015). Evoking Social Resistance and Resilience Through Reclaiming and Reviving Sankofa: Black African Female Learners Experience Saskatchewan Schools. [PDF]

De Wet, J. (1992). Identity and worldview issues in rural development : a case study : reintegration of ex-street children into communities in rural Transkei. [PDF]

Koutra, C. (2005). Cultural Heritage, Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability Model in LDC's: From Theory to Action A case of Ghana. [PDF]

Lentz, C. (2006). Settlement histories and ethnic frontiers. [PDF]

Lesego Molefe, R. (2010). Spatialising African indigenous customs in Langa. [PDF]

O. Alapo, V. (2022). The Spatial Organization of Pre-Colonial African Kingdoms: The Empires of Ethiopia & Mali. [PDF]

Ndille, R. (2017). FROM PREACHING THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL TO AFRICANS, TO PREACHING AFRICAN SOCIAL WISDOM TO EUROPE: REVEALING SURPRESSED TRUTHS IN THE COLONIAL ARCHIVE IN CAMEROON. [PDF]

Beel, D. E., Wallace, C. D., Webster, G., Nguyen, H., Tait, E., Macleod, M., & Mellish, C. (2017). Cultural resilience: The production of rural community heritage, digital archives and the role of volunteers. [PDF]

Kofi Agorsah, E. (1991). Women in African Traditional Politics. [PDF]

Kevane, M. (2008). Economic Systems in Africa. [PDF]

Cameron Britton, E. (1993). Peasant Subsistence in Northwestern Haiti: Geography, Cultural Ecology, and Rural Development.. [PDF]

Kam Kah, H. (2016). The Laimbwe Ihu27neem Ritual/Ceremony, Food Crisis, and Sustainability in Cameroon. [PDF]

Danfulani, U. (1996). Rituals as Dance and Dance as Rituals. The Drama of Kok Nji and Other Festivals in the Religious Experience of the Ngas, Mupun and Mwaghavul in Nigeria. [PDF]

Jeurissen, L. (2009). Histoire coloniale et nomadisme heuristique. [PDF]

Margarita Castro, B. (2017). Ijiam: Augmented Reality Technologies for the Adaptation of Ecuadorian Intangible Cultural Heritage. [PDF]

Jane Brown, R. (2013). 'I Fall Down, I Get Up': Stories of Survival and Resistance Following Civil War in Sierra Leone. [PDF]

Nkambule, T. (2014). Against all odds: The role of 'community cultural wealth' in overcoming challenges as a black African woman. [PDF]

Keith Guthrie, W. (2000). drainage, drainage, DRAINAGE Creating Natural Disasters In Southeastern Nebraska. [PDF]

Anaele, C. (2014). Insurgency Ecology of Africa. [PDF]

Vertigans, S. & Gibson, N. (2019). Resilience and social cohesion through the lens of residents in a Kenyan informal settlement.. [PDF]

Skovdal, M. & Campbell, C. (2010). Orphan competent communities: a framework for community analysis and action. [PDF]

Budowle, R., L. Arthur, M., & M. Porter, C. (2019). Growing intergenerational resilience for Indigenous food sovereignty through home gardening. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Jane Brubacher, L., Berrang-Ford, L., Nicole Clark, S., Patterson, K., Lwasa, S., Namanya, D., Twesigomwe, S., & L. Harper, S. (2024). Place, displacement, and health-seeking behaviour among the Ugandan Batwa: A qualitative study. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

E. Mustafa Ahmed, G., Yahia M. Ahmed, E., Eltahir Ahmed, A., Hemmeda, L., B. Birier, A., Abdelgadir, T., Mosaab AhmedElbashir Hassan, H., S. A. Alfadul, E., Bakr, M., & Sadig, E. (2023). Prevalence and reasons to seek traditional healing methods among residents of two localities in North Kordofan State, Sudan 2022: A cross-sectional study. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Tsang, T. (2017). An Ethnobotanical Examination of Traditional Medicine in Ngezi Forest Reserve. [PDF]

Mangundu, M., Roets, L., & Janse van Rensberg, E. (2020). Accessibility of healthcare in rural Zimbabwe: The perspective of nurses and healthcare users. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Paris-Saper, M. (2015). Exploring Community Health through the lens of the Community Unit in Kariobangi North and the Surrounding Areas. [PDF]

Pitikoe, S. (2018). Turning the herding lifestyle into a learning opportunity: Experiences from Lesotho. [PDF]

Elizabeth Thornhill Stonier, J. (1996). Oral into written : an experiment in creating a text for African religion. [PDF]

UKAMAKA TERESA, E. Z. E. & NNIA MBA SR, I. K. E. (2013). Integrating African Indigenous Knowledge In Nigeria's Formal Education System: It's Potential For Sustainable Development. [PDF]

R. Akinwale, A. (2013). Yoruba Traditional Education System: A Veritable Tool for Salvaging the Crisis Laden Education Systen in Nigeria. [PDF]

(Carol Anne) 1961- Murphy, C. (1990). Gender constraints to increased agricultural

production faced by rural women in KwaZulu. [PDF]

Rebecca Van Dolah, E. (2018). Cultural Heritage and Climate Change Adaptation Pathways. [PDF]

Garretson, L. (2015). Storytelling as Self-Empowerment: A Case Study of AVEGA Beneficiaries in Post-Genocide Rwanda. [PDF]

Sola, P. (2005). The Community Resource Management Plan: A Tool for Integrating IKS into Natural Resource Management. [PDF]

E., S., D., K., P., C., & T., S. (2015). African Traditional Cultural Values and Beliefs: A Driving Force to Natural Resource Management: A Study of Makonde District, Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe. [PDF]

Marie Kotowicz, A. (2013). Maasai Identity in the 21st Century. [PDF]

T. AGHEMELO, A. & IBHASEBHOR, S. O. L. O. M. O. N. (2013). Africa and Globalisation: A Case for Regional Integration and Poverty Reduction - A Review. [PDF]

Benton, A. & Zulu Shabazz, K. (2017). "Find their Level". African American Roots Tourism in Sierra Leone and Ghana. [PDF]

Nicola J Bidwell, D., Thomas Reitmaier, M., & Gary Marsden, P. (2011). Situating digital storytelling within African communities. [PDF]

Skovdal, M. & Daniel, M. (2012). Resilience through participation and coping-enabling social environments: the case of HIV-affected children in sub-Saharan Africa. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

**How to cite this article?**
**Atheer Makki Alshimmary** " Heritage Of Resilience: Unearthing The Story Of An African Village by Robert Peprah-Gyamfi M.D" Research Journal Of English (RJOE)10(1),PP:129-157,2025,DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2025.10.1.157