

# Globalization and its Effects on Nso Cultural Educational Practices: A Pedagogic Retrospection

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## ABSTRACT

Before European colonization of Cameroon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Nso people had remarkable cultural educational practices. These cultural values have since experienced tremendous changes which are connected first to the colonial experience and secondly to globalisation. This historical comparative education study sought to answer the question 'What is globalisation and its effects on Nso Cultural Educational Practices?' The study presents a broad, documentary, qualitative analysis of Nso cultural educational practices and globalization. This study was carried out in Nso. Nso is located in Bui Division, in the North West Region of Cameroon. Nso cultural documentations and interviews from resource persons living in the area have been for the most part the key sources that this study is based upon. In all, from a critical point of view, globalization is an essential process that we need for the enhancement of the society. However, care must be taken to preserve cultural educational practices because cultural globalization like other types or forms of globalization has continued to impact negatively on indigenous African cultures to which Nso traditions and customs are not an exception.

**KEYWORDS:** Globalisation, Culture, Nso culture, Educational practices, Tradition

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is to show the impact or effects of globalization on Nso cultural educational practices. Before European colonization of Cameroon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Nso people had a remarkable culture which manifested in various aspects of life such as religion, marriage customs, naming rites, food customs, and music among others. These cultural values have since experienced tremendous changes which are connected first to the colonial experience and secondly to globalization. These changes have been motivated by the use of technological channels and devices such as mobile telephones, internet, televisions, radio and interactions with other foreign cultures of the world.

*The main research question of this study was: What is globalisation and its effects on Nso Cultural Educational Practices?*

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Globalization

Several authors have defined globalization in different ways. Nsibambi (2001) defines it as a process of advancement and increased interaction among the peoples, countries or nations of the world. This process has been facilitated by improvement in technology, communication, locomotion, political, and military power, interfacing of cultural values and economic system (Nsibambi, 2001).

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Globalization entails "modernization." It embodies the use of modern devices such as internet, telephone, television sets and other forms of communications which have connected the world into a global village. The use of these modern devices have enabled millions of people to consume identical cultural products such as pop music, movies, dressing styles, food customs and sporting events (Scholte 2005: 56).

Economically, globalization has demolished trading barriers. This has facilitated the distribution of goods and services among nations of the world. The removal of trading barriers has created a "borderless" world economy. This has facilitated the free circulation of ideas, goods or services across the world (Scholte 2005: 56).

From these definitions, we can generally conclude that, it is a process which connects the world, its people and activities into a global system. This process has been facilitated by improvement in technology and communication which have enabled the integration of people into the global system. Globalization has both positive and negative implications on culture.

### Culture

Culture is a way of life of a particular group of people. The manner of dressing, the way of speaking and the food we eat

defines culture (Krober, 1963: 10). He further explains that culture is not static but it is dynamic. As people evolve, culture also changes. It embodies all capabilities and habits learned as members of a society. Culture involves the patterns of the society such as arts, beliefs and behavioral norms amongst others. It is therefore the totality of ideas, concepts and values that characterize and identify a particular group of people (Kassam, 2000: 197). In order to better address the issue we will first examine some aspects of Nso culture. These include religion, marriage custom, child birth, traditional baptism, traditional communication tools, dressing and food customs.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Nso. Nso is located in Bui Division, in the North West Region of Cameroon. The area is divided into four administrative sub divisions: Kumbo (630km<sup>2</sup>), Jakiri or Dzekwa (675km<sup>2</sup>), Nkum (375.3km<sup>2</sup>) and Mbiame or Mbvem (575km<sup>2</sup>) (Njilla, 2009: 9). Nso is one of the Tikar fiefdoms of the Western grass fields of Cameroon. The Tikar fiefdoms in the Bamenda grass fields include Nso, Kom, Warr, Bafut, Wiya, Fongom, Tang, Bum, Mbem, Bambili, Mfumte, Oku, Bamunka, Bambalang, Babungo, Bamali, Bafanji and Bamesi. Their dynastic clan forefathers originated from places such as Tibati, Banyo, Ndobu, Kimi, Bankim and Rifum. These peoples recognize relations with one another mainly on grounds of dynastic origin and the general linguistic similarities shared by many of the cis Mbam peoples. The Nso described their place of origin as Rifum which is present day Bankim (Chilver and Kaberry, 1967:11).

The vernacular or mother tongue used by Nso people is called 'Lamnsò'. Currently English and French are widely spoken in the area. English and French are the official languages of the country that came as a result of the dual colonial heritage. Cameroon was colonized by the British and the French. This is a historical comparative education study that analyses globalization and its effects on cultural educational practices. The purpose of the study is to carry out a broad, documentary, qualitative analysis of Nso cultural educational practices and globalization.

The choice of Nso was because the researchers come from this area and are deeply concerned with the significant changes in cultural educational practices which are connected first to the colonial experience and secondly to globalization. These changes have been motivated by the use of technological channels and devices such as mobile telephones, internet, televisions, radio and interactions with other foreign cultures of the world.

Nso cultural documentations and interviews from resource persons living in the area have been for the most part the key sources that this study is based upon. Oral interview and historical documentations about the Nso culture were used to collect data. Interview permitted the participants to express themselves freely to provide sufficient information for the study. Eight resource persons who originate from Nso were interviewed. Each interview took about one hour. The interviews were carried out in 2015 and 2016 at the residence of each participant. The data collection process began with a presentation of the objective of the study to the participants. Information provided was recorded using a digital recorder. Each interview was transcribed. The data

collected was categorized, presented and analysed according to themes. Data collected from historical documentation was used to corroborate data from interview.

## FINDINGS: Nso Cultural Educational Practices and Globalisation

### Religion

Religion is an important aspect of Nso culture. Religion is a term that denotes the notion of divine retribution. It is act of belief and the worship of God or gods. It shows those beliefs and practices relative to sacred things. (Yinyuy, 2005: 20). The indigenous Nso people like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, believed in the existence of many gods, *Anyuy* and ancestor spirits. The people believe in life after death. Ancestors were spirits of deceased persons. They believed that their ancestors were closer both to them and to god and thus qualified to act as intermediaries between the people and God. Also, the Nso people still believed in the existence of the Supreme God who was the creator of the universe, *Nyuyombom*. Nevertheless, Nso traditional religion distinguished between God (*Nyuy*) and gods (*Anyuy* – plural of God). This distinction did not suggest any contradiction between the two terms. The name God was more of a universal concept, denoting God as the creator of the world (universe) while *anyuy* was used in reference to divine representations; be it a compound, river site, escarpment or cave. It was common to hear the lineage head or priest made incantations "to the gods of the land". The power or puissance of the supreme God was made visible in natural creations like wind, rivers, trees, caves, the sky and stones. Some of these objects were associated with myth of creation. It was assumed that some of the gods were living in some of these objects like stones, caves and rivers (Yinyuy, 2005: 20).

The sites of some of these objects were used as shrines where various religious rites or rituals were performed. Shrines were also created on the graves of the fons, family or quarter heads such as *afaay*. Traditional religious rites were presided over by the Fon, *afaay* (lineage heads), *tawong* (father of the land), *yewong*, the queen mother and the chief priest, *Tanyuy* (Lamla, 1995: 14) among others. The Fon was the Chief priest of the land. Quarter and family heads also performed similar ritual sacrifices like the fon in their spheres of influence. They offered prayers and sacrifices to the gods pleading for good health, peace and prosperity on the land. The use of objects like stones, calabashes, baskets, trees and shrines enabled European missionaries to rate the Nso people as idol worshippers. Besides, the significance of ancestors in their religious practices led the missionaries to erroneously insinuate that these spirits were worshipped. Pejorative words were used to describe non-Christians and traditional practitioners such as idol worshippers or "pagans." (Saker, 1968:67).

The Nso people equally believed in the existence of witchcraft which they regarded as a force responsible for evil happenings. Hence, when a woman died in pregnancy for instance, she was accused of witchcraft and her corpse was thrown in the bush without proper burial. Also, when a youth or someone died in his prime, it was attributed to witchcraft. The Nso people held that God made people to die only in their old ages. Natural calamities such as famine, or the outbreak of diseases and drought were also attributed to witchcraft. For instance, when locusts or some insects attacked and destroyed crops and animals, it was seen as a

curse on the land. Although the Nso people believed in the existence of witchcraft, they had no scientific knowledge to prove it. Investigations on witchcraft were further carried out by consulting a sorcerer, *nga ngam*. Any suspector the accused was severely beaten and forced to bring his or her god of witchcraft (*nyuyarim*) to be burnt, with the assumption that burning would help to destroy it (Yinyuy, 2011: 37).

Protection against witchcraft was provided through a common rite called *nguv*, which is a liquid concocted from leaves, backs and roots of trees believed to have supernatural forces. After an invocation and sanctification, the officiating priest gave each participant a share of the concoction to drink. The solemnity with which the act of drinking the concoction took place led Mbuy, (1992: 26) to describe this ceremony as the "most solemn ritual in Nso religion. It had disastrous effect on wizards and witches who drank of the sacred concoction. Any wizard or witch who drank fell dead. The missionaries condemned this act and instructed believers to use persistent prayers to defeat witches and wizards. Moreover, those who confessed their sins in the Christian faith were saved from condemnation. However, some Christians in Nsoland still prefer to undergo this ritual than to confess and renounce witchcraft.

With the advent of Christianity in Nso Fandom modern hospitals were constructed. Some of the major hospitals include the Banso Baptist Hospital and the Saint Elizabeth Catholic Hospital, Shisong. These hospitals have well-constructed buildings, good medical equipment, drugs and well trained staff including European medical doctors and specialists. The health services offered by these hospitals have greatly improved on the health of Nso indigenes as most of the drugs are given at subsidized rates. The uses of modern X-ray systems to examine patients and pregnant women have helped to dissipate the idea that some diseases are caused by evil forces (Yinyuy, 2011: 44).

Other sacrifices carried out included *Menkan*, *Ntanri* and *Kidiif*. (Veye, 2007: 96). *Menkan*, was an act of benediction destined to invoke blessings and also to prevent evil spirits from attacking the people. *Ntanri* was the sacrifice of expiation in which people accepted their wrong doings or fault on others and seek for reconciliation. This was performed when somebody was critically sick. The patient offered a goat or fowl, palm wine, kolanut, cornfufu and egusi as a ransom to the ancestors for the atonement of sin. *Kidiif* was a sacrifice of reconciliation which was usually performed to settle a serious disagreement that caused the separation of family members, families or fondoms. Generally, the Nso believe that only palm wine could be used to carry out a sacrifice. Palm wine was used especially when carrying a traditional rite where homage was being paid to the ancestor and/ or divinities when pouring a libation. Palm wine like kolanut was commonly shared by people who were in agreement. The use of palm wine symbolizes fellowship, togetherness, harmony and peace. It plays a central role during the sacrifice because part of it was poured out for cleansing and for reconciliation. It was assumed that a cup of good palm wine would make the diviner to see beyond the physical world and clarify issues correctly. Palm wine crowns the occasion especially when there was successful reconciliation, it enlivens the people to sit down and discuss other important issues. All these sacrifices were performed

to restore peace, invoke blessings on the people and ensure harmony with God and the ancestors.

Assessing activities in the pre-colonial Nso community, one is bound to criticize the colonial and missionary enterprise in Africa. It is necessary to note that most missionaries like their colonial masters from the onset undermined African culture. No doubt, some African scholars like Coleman (1958: 97) have criticized the missionary's enterprise in Africa in the following words:

*The early missionaries were inclined to feel that the African was in the grip of a cruel and irrational system from which she ought to be liberated .... In their eyes ritual murder, human sacrifice, and cannibalism were sufficient to condemn the whole system .... Hence they included among the preconditions for entry into the Christian fold the abandonment of such customs as initiation ceremonies..., dancing ..., marriage payment ..., polygyny ..., secret societies not to mention...African names, and traditional funeral ceremonies. Renunciation of the old order was a prerequisite to acceptance of the new.(p97)*

Furthermore, Falola (2000: 144-145) argues that there was no doubt that missionaries deliberately propagated an ugly image of Africa, to serve their own specific needs. To be sure, they had to justify their presence in Africa, "The darker the picture of the African barbarism, the more necessary the work of the missionaries." Indeed, by showing the deplorable conditions of things in Africa, the missionaries obviously sought to arouse not only sympathy, but also increased support for their missions. It is regrettable that missionary descriptions of African society as depraved, barbarous, and uncivilized, shaped and influenced European thoughts and action in Africa. Thus, in the eyes of early missionaries, Christianity served as "an efficient instrument to uplift the African from their barbaric nature." For this reason, missionaries perceived themselves as "messengers of liberation and civilization."

### **Traditional Baptism**

Furthermore, another important aspect of Nso culture was traditional baptism or naming rites. Before the advent of Christianity, the Nso had their traditional religious naming rite which was carried out on traditional public holidays or "country Sunday." *TwodaysKiloveey* and *Ngoiyulum* were kept out of an eight-day week as country Sundays according to Nso calendar. Country Sundays or *vishiyvebam* were non-working days as farm work in particular, was prohibited. These days were dedicated to perform traditional rites and sacrifices. (Lamla, 1995). It was assumed that the "gods of the land" were fully at work to cleanse and bless the land on such days and therefore people were not allowed to work on their farms on these days.

The "*vishiyvebam*" were also days set aside for traditional baptism. This occasion was supervised by a high priest, *Tanyuy* and/or priestess, *Yenyuy*. During the traditional baptism, a child was given an appropriate name according to Nso naming rites. During this special naming rite, ceremony blessings of good health and prosperity were pronounced on the child. He or she was provided a traditional woven raffia bag which contained a leaf of the peace plant (*kikeng*), calabash and cowries (money). It was sealed with the *kikeng* plant and incantation of progress declared on him or her as

the priest called on God to guide and protect the child. During this rite, a mixture of salt and red oil was applied on the child's body. It was believed that salt would purify or cleanse the child and protect him or her from evil spirits while red oil signifies royalty. Generally, children were given names such as *Lukong, Tumi, Shei, Wirba, Wirsungnin, Wirngoran, Ngoran, Tatah, Ntang and Biy among others*. (Yinyuy, 2005:25).

They were instructed to be loyal to their parents and to respect their elders. The fear of God helped to mould the character of the people. The naming ceremony took place mostly during the dry season because of its favorable weather (Bongasov, 2016). The ceremony ended with merry making and feasting. In carrying out this rite, the Nso believed in the supremacy of God as the Great provider of children and life.

Gradually, Nso traditional baptism is dying out as a consequence of cultural globalization. Most of the Nso men and women who have embraced Christianity now baptize their children in church with Christian names or names which glorify God. Examples of these names include Fonyuy (God gives), Yinyuy (God's doing), Berinyuy (Thanks be to God), Burinyuy (Praise God)... Fanyuy (Fear God). These names expressed the Nso acknowledgement of God grace in their lives.

Furthermore, it is vital to note that the advent of new generation churches, that is Pentecostalism or "born again" churches (Jehovah Witnesses, Apostolic and Full Gospel Mission) in Nso, has affected Nso traditional practices. These new churches generally condemned traditional practices as evil on the land. Hence, their spiritual leaders and converts organized deliverance and breakthrough services in which traditional baptismal bags and local shrines belonging to their faithfuls are destroyed with fire (Bongasov, 2016). It is commonly observed that members of these churches in Nso have a network of chained prayers with other "Men of God" or prayer warriors across the globe. This network prayers and spiritual retreats among its members have been facilitated through the use of the internet, telephone and Television sets.

### Marriage Custom

Marriage was another traditional institution where Nso culture was expressed. The society was predominantly polygamous because the number of wives a man had determined his position in the society. This explains why the Fon kept as many wives as he could. The *vibais* (traditional Lords) and *afaay* (Lineage heads) equally had more than one wife while a common man with no title could get married to one wife if he wanted. The collection of bride wealth comprised red oil, palm wine, a bag of salt, kolanuts, fried groundnuts, "bush meat" and other materials like blanket or the roofing of the bride's family house. With the complete payment of the bride wealth, the woman becomes a member of the husband's family and took up the name of her husband. She only visited her family when necessary. Each lineage head, received the bride price of his female dependents. (Banbooye, 2003: 2).

It is important to note that before the bride price was finally collected, the would-be- husband, friends and family members frequently visited the girl's family, with gifts.

During such interactions, the two families learned much about each other as they carried out investigations to inquire if their daughter or son was to be in good hands. The character of the husband or wife was equally examined by both family members. (Wiysahnyuy, 2016).

Although, Christian teachings denounced polygamous marriages, the Fon and some traditional rulers who were Christians still adhere to polygamy. The implication has been that, some traditional rulers and men practiced religious syncretism wherein they participate in traditional and Christian activities. (*Tavmfu* Kiyen, 2016). However, despite the efforts of traditional rulers to maintain polygamous marriages, many young men in Nso prefer monogamy while polygamy is declining.

On a positive note, the social media (internet, television and radio) have played a crucial role to sensitize the world on health issues, Nso inclusive. Information published on the internet on health issues has enlightened many people across the world on bad cultural practices and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases such as Human Immune Deficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), syphilis, among others. Information obtained from these channels has led to the cultural emancipation of Nso men and women from some poorly conceived cultural practices such as inherited wives (widow or levirate marriages), (Mbom, 2016). The information obtained from the Christian teachings and social media have helped some widows in Nso to denounce getting married to family members after the death of their husbands.

Regrettably, the abuse of the media through internet browsing, dating and unnecessary texting by youths is lamentable. Generally, in pre-colonial Nso community, evening hours were meant for storytelling. During this time, the youths would gather in a hearth and have riddles and storytelling with the elders. This act enabled them to know more about their culture as well as history. It is lamenting that precious time formerly spent by the youths with the elders to learn more about their culture and history has been reserved for telephone manipulation. The wrong use of telephones or internets by the youths to date and even make marriage arrangements has drastically reduced the fellowship spirit which formerly existed in Nso between family members. (Mbom, 2016). This signifies that Nso marriage custom is gradually losing its identity as some husbands while abroad call on friends, brothers or fathers to represent them and marry the wife.

Besides, cultural issues formerly held in secrecy have been displayed in the internet or announced over the radio and telephone to the public. A glaring example was seen in the death announcement of *Shufai* Sop published on internet on 4 May, 2016 by a non-family member. This information was published in the internet by a non-family member. This information was meted out without the intention of the traditional rulers and the great lords. (*Shundzev*, 2016). Considering the fact that in Nso tradition, the death of the Fon and great traditional lords is followed by certain procedures before announcements are made by those in charged, people and more especially the youths who have grown in this era of globalization should be careful with the kind of information which is published on the internet.

### Nso Traditional Dress

The original Nso traditional dress is the *Ndzynyav*. The Fon, people from the royal lineage and traditional rulers usually wore this attire. It was worn with a traditional cap and decorated traditional bags, made out of raffia. This outfit was mostly used by the Nso people during cultural ceremonies (Kumbo Urban Council, 2005). The use of traditional dress, bags and umbrella is fast disappearing in favor of western attires. Majority of the Nso men and women now dressed but in suits, skirts, jeans, trousers and shirts. Moreover most girls and women in the name of fashion now dress exposing private parts of their bodies coupled with variegated hair styles and eye lashes. This “new fashion” spirit has led to an increase in juvenile delinquency and infidelity in the community.

### Traditional communication

Pre-colonial Nso people had a special way of delivering information or announcements to the community. They used a “talking or sounding drum,” called *Ngu*. In most cases, the drum was played to summon elders and warriors, members of *Manjong*, the military club so as to inform them on any important issue that warranted the immediate assembly of the people. The sound of this drum created a haunting melody and tune which signified the death of someone or danger on the land. Whenever it was sounded, people rushed immediately to the place where it was lodged, to know what has happened. In this light, the *ngu*, had the ability to connect information and equally summon people together. (Yeika, 2016). With the advent of Christianity in Nso Fondom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries adopted the use of *ngu*, to summon Christians in the various mission stations especially for Sunday Service or Christian meeting.

In addition, the Nso people were also summoned in the pre-colonial time with the use of an elephant tusk. The elephant tusk was played by the *Gweys* (war spies). Most of them were stationed at hill tops to spy foreigners or suspects entering the territory. When any suspect was seen approaching the Nsoland, the elephant tusk was played to alert the people. It produced a sound at a high frequency that extended over a large area. The *Gwey* displayed war tactics with spears, cutlasses, firing of dane guns in a local manner. No adult male was allowed in the field without a weapon especially, a machete and scabbard. Also, there was the use of *kikeng* plant to deliver information from the Fon to the people. (Lukong, 2015). Once, the messenger took the *kikeng* plant around the market or village square, people rushed to get the information. The uses of these tools were effective and no false information was delivered.

### Food customs

Subsistence agriculture was one of the major economic activity carried out in Nso. Crops cultivated were millet, maize, beans, potatoes, yams and vegetables. Men, women and children were involved in agriculture because it was a means of survival in the community. It provided food and equally served as a source of employment to the people. Besides, the surplus items were used in local trade. The main traditional meal was corn fufu and vegetables. The people also hunted animals and gathered food such as mushroom, vegetables, termites and crickets (Lukong, 2015). These varieties of foodstuffs were highly nutritional and good for the health of the people.

In addressing the issue of food custom in Nso community, Sa,ber and Tatah, (2016) believe that, the constant application of fertilizers and pesticides on crops and vegetables have generated several health problems unlike in the past where crops were cultivated or preserved naturally. They go further to admit that the constant use of fertilizers and chemicals on crops coupled with the consumption of can- food and drinks from the western world, has been one of the causes of several diseases affecting people’s health today. Some of the diseases include diabetes and hypertension which were not common before.

In a nutshell, the issues discussed above greatly enriched Nso culture in the pre- colonial era. Even though few of these practices have survived, their influence is no longer powerful as it was in the pre-colonial era. The weakening of the Nso cultural practices is as a result of the impact of colonization and especially, globalization on the community.

### CONCLUSION

In all, from a critical point of view, globalization is an essential process that we need for the enhancement of the society. However, care must be taken to preserve cultural educational practices because cultural globalization like other types or forms of globalization has continued to impact negatively on indigenous African cultures to which Nso traditions and customs are not an exception. Thus, if this trend continues, some aspects of Nso culture might likely disappear and posterity will hold us responsible. Even though Nso traditional religion, food customs, performing of annual sacrifice and traditional marriage ceremonies still survive, their influence is no longer greatly felt by the young ones. The old ones who possess the talent and knowledge are fast passing away with nobody prepared to learn the trait from them. We wish to note that it is not everything about globalization that is bad. It is thanks to the Baptist and Catholic missionary bodies that the Nso community is endowed with modern hospitals. These hospitals have well-constructed buildings which boost the economy of the area. We should in all honesty copy what is good from the alien cultures we come in contact with and let go some aspects of our culture which are not progressive. In doing so, we should make sure that what we borrow and what we maintain in our culture will still sustain the solidarity upon which our indigenous societies existed.

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