

Lokpan Kuma

A Linguistic and Cultural Landscape of the Yakurr People in Southern Nigeria

Ebri Arikpo Okon ¹

¹ Department of Architecture, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria

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Corresponding author:
Ebri Arikpo Okon
okon.pg920108@st.futminna.edu.ng

Abstract – In ancient times, before radio, television, and telephone lines, traditional communication methods facilitated information transmission and social cohesion in Africa. This study documents the cultural landscape of communication among the Yakurr People in Southern Nigeria, focusing on the Lokpan Kuma (wooden slit drum). Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, data was collected through focus group discussions, participant observations, video recordings, and photographs. Content analysis revealed the significance of the Lokpan Kuma in Yakurr culture. Trained initiates play the Lokpan Kuma to alert the locals of potential threats, celebrate bravery, and announce the passing of community leaders. This study contributes to 'preserving the Yakurr People's cultural heritage, promoting cross-cultural understanding, and providing insights into traditional communication systems. The findings can be integrated into culturally sensitive developments and spatial planning of rural communities to preserve the distinctive, intangible cultural heritage of the People in the face of modernization.

Keywords: *linguistic and cultural landscape, traditional communication system, wooden slit drum, Yakurr People.*



I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural landscape, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2019) World Heritage Committee, is the cultural assets that symbolize the synergy between human ingenuity and the natural world. A cultural landscape is the visible imprint of the activities of human beings, animals (Alrayyan and Clements, 2022), and supernatural entities in the natural environment. Cultural landscape includes more than sheds, buildings, roads, playgrounds, shrines, and land use patterns. Cultural landscape studies in the built environment involve several disciplines from architecture to rural planning, and even to the social interactions that define a

community's spatial planning. Humans' social, cultural, economic, and political state when the visible cultural landscape was created also affects its meaning and significance. A 'people's economy, cultural practices, traditions, historical influences, architecture, land use patterns, religious sites, monuments, and transportation networks over time make up their cultural landscape (Wen and White, 2020). This junction of human and natural creations demonstrates a fundamental and enduring relationship between societies and their environment (Erşan and Çiftçi, 2016).

Linguistic landscape (LL) is an extension of the cultural landscape and refers to the prominence and visibility of languages on public and commercial signage within a certain location (Gorter et al., 2021). The dissemination of languages, visual usage of languages, dialects, and non-verbal communication has led to cultural interactions that have transformed various rural communities and urban places (Duizenberg, 2020; Seargeant and Giaxoglou, 2020). Hence, there is an interplay between linguistic patterns and cultural landscapes. Language is not only a tool for communication; it molds the identities, influences views, and represents the cultural heritage of a community (Greenfield, 2024). Ragulina (2024) further observed the interplay between linguistic and cultural landscapes as an innovative, fascinating area of study that reveals much about the societies we inhabit, spatial use of spaces, and personalities.

Every civilization needs communication. Communication involves sending and receiving information via a channel. Before radio, television, and telecommunication, traditional methods of communication spread information and bonded African society. Rural communities receive information through traditional communication. Traditional communication includes social traditions, practices, modes, and organizations beyond communication. Town criers, drummers, and the strategic placement of leaves, stone, nut, and stick signals were used for traditional communication. Ochepe and Chidozie (2022) identified traditional means of communication in rural areas, including songs, drama, talking drums, wooden and metal gongs, proverbs, folk tales, gunfire from local and dame guns, setting bushes on fire, utilizing palm fronds, ivory horns (algaita), long brass horns (kaakaki), color schemes, and dances. Ohia (2024), Udeh et al. (2024), and Zulu (2017) report that African societies employ membrane, trapezoidal, and slit log drums for communication. These drums are used in festivals, religious ceremonies, sports and general entertainment, contests, cultural processions, carnivals, dance parades, rituals, and mystical performances across Africa and beyond, in addition to transmitting signals and communicating. Playing the wooden drum has been identified as a distinctive cultural means of communicating with God (YunnanExploration, 2019). The Yakurr People call the wooden slit drum Lokpan kuma, according to field surveys and oral traditions. Due to its features and symbolic meaning in numerous nations across time, this drum is considered a cultural landscape.

Studies of the traditional cultural landscape of rural communities are still limited (Li et al., 2024) and unpopular among scholars today, maybe because of their multidisciplinary nature (Tamara Schaal-Lagodzinski and Julia, 2024). Besides, all categories of research across the globe are majorly urban-based, while rural-based studies are still unpopular and limited to date (Shou et al., 2024). The foremost literal documentation of the Yakurr People was the work of a Briton, Daryll Forde, in 1935 and 1939 (Okon et al., 2024). This foremost work was done by oral tradition and non-participant observation of some cultural festivities of the only Ugep people, but it still missed several aspects of the cultural landscape of the Ugep and Yakurr people, like the Lokpan kuma. Lokpan kuma represents the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Yakurr people over the past generations (Reshma et al., 2023; Shigeo et al., 2022). The attempt at documentation of the Ugep wooden slit drum by Ubana (2021) was from the view of poetry and the history of the Ugep People as a community relic. The wooden slit gong he documented centered on Lota Kuma is played every four (4) years during Kota cultural dance.

Furthermore, Onyima (2016) observed that in most third-world countries of Africa, there exists a litany of evidence of loss, misrepresentation, and misapplication of the traditions and culture of several Indigenous people. This is attributable to colonialism, Christian missions, the quest for modernity, illiteracy, lack of documentation, inconsistent oral tradition, deliberate destruction of statues, images, and antiquities because of religious or political reasons, unavailability of museums and libraries for preserving archives, and other works of the people. 'Currently, Nigeria still lacks the legislative and technological framework to develop and protect a community's intangible cultural heritage (Nomishan and Sani, 2023). This is thus an attempt to explore and preserve the cultural heritage value of Lokpan kuma as a traditional communication tool among Yakurr People and its spatial location in their settlements.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Traditional Communication in rural areas*

Alobele (2024) has highlighted that limited infrastructure, cultural inequalities, and low literacy levels hinder effective communication in rural areas. However, traditional communication in rural areas has been effective in mobilizing community participation (Lobelo *et al.*, 2025). In contrast, if rural power is available, modern communication through handsets, radio, and television can improve the lives of dwellers in African communities through rural-based programs (Oke *et al.*, 2020). However, regular announcements of activities, programs, and mobilization among the residents of rural communities are more effective using traditional communication methods (Ochepa and Chidozie, 2022) than the existing communication infrastructure. The studies of Bokor (2014); Durrenberger (2023); Fiskesjö (2021); Hellmann (2021); Ngonso and Egielewa (2023); Udok and Ibekwe (2020) and (Upadhyay, 2017) all affirm the usage of the wooden slit drum as a traditional communication tool used during rural community events and ceremonies. Among the Congolese, the drum is only played by trained males (Kelley, 2025). However, Abdulai *et al.* (2023) highlighted the need for the preservation of traditional communication tools. Hence, adopting hybrid communication strategies will be effective for inter and intra transmission of information among rural residents.

B. *The Yakurr People*

The Yakurr People are a block that relocated from their Akpa ancestral territory where they were neighbors with Okuni, a village in Ikom Local Government to their present location in the Yakurr Local Government Area in the central senatorial district of Cross River State in Southern Nigeria due to their default in the completion of burial rites. The migration was due to their military loss to the Akpa warriors over their default in funeral ceremonies. Thus, all Yakurr communities moved and established themselves between 1617 and 1767, except for Ekom Agoi. Ekom Agoi relocated from Agoi Ekpo as recently as 1945 because of the inhumane acts of World War II. The Yakurr communities are Ugep, Ekori, Mkpani, Nko, Idomi, Assiga Old Town, Assiga New Town, Assiga Beach, Inyima, Ekpeti, Agoi Ibami, Agoi Ekpo and Ekom Agoi (Okon *et al.*, 2024).

C. *Theoretical Framework*

The communication theory was introduced by S. F. Scudder in 1980. It asserts that every living creature communicates, albeit through varying methods. Communication theory is a suggested model that delineates communication phenomena, elucidates the interrelations among them, narrates these interactions, and provides a rationale for these three components (Wikipedia, 2024). The theory examines the channels, modalities, and messages via which individuals communicate, contemplate, and express various viewpoints on reality. Communication theory offers a framework for discussing and understanding essential events, processes, and commitments that constitute communication (Modeyin and Inobemhe, 2024). Comprehending communication theory enables us to navigate relationships more adeptly, improve our efficacy as communicators, and recognize the intricacies of human connection (Tripathi, 2024). Communication is effective when the audience comprehends and interprets the message as intended by the presenter. Thus, the code model employs tangible signals, such as sounds or markings on paper, that correspond to certain meanings. The signals and their corresponding thoughts constitute a code mutually comprehended by speakers and listeners (Mangion, 2011). This theory will guide the logical interpretation of using *Lokpan Kuma* as an effective and efficient traditional means of communication among the Yakurr People.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The hermeneutic phenomenology approach was used for this study. Hermeneutics research is a qualitative methodology based on the interpretive analysis of non-numeric data derived from the ideas, experiences, narratives, history, and oral traditions of the people being studied (Watson, 2022). Hermeneutics deals with the art and science of interpretation, especially of texts and symbolic representations (El-Kholei, 2022). It studies how people interpret or draw significance from different types of communication, analyzing the role of historical, cultural, and personal factors in this interpretative process (Acharya, 2024). As a philosophy of knowing applied in hermeneutic phenomenology, epistemology is built on the premise that knowledge-making is achievable through subjective perceptions and insights (Acharya, 2024; Godden and Kutsyuruba, 2023). Hence, this

methodology, reinforced by literature review and empirical analysis, has been used to study and document the pattern of human use of spaces, urban and rural planning, and spatial analysis of settlements based on lived experiences (El-Kholei, 2022).

An interview guide was utilized to conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) on the cultural significance of *Lokpan kuma* with four (4) selected paternal families in Ugep and one (1) each in Nko, Ekori, and Idomi. FGDs were also held with the village chiefs and council members from the Mkpani, Assiga, and Agoi Ibami communities in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, Southern Nigeria. The FGDs were held during their weekly meetings at their 'leaders' residences. The paternal families chosen were those who owned operable *Lokpan kumas(pl)* within their domains. To clarify the findings, in-depth interviews were done with the *Obol Otumise* (Village Chief Drummer) of Ugep, Nko, and Agoi Ibami. All the participants in this study are males as females are not allowed to play with or even touch this cultural asset of the people. The gathered data underwent content analysis using NVivo 12 software. Non-participant observations, video recordings, and photographs of 'people's cultural presentations were also analyzed until saturation occurred. This methodology helped the study get a thorough grasp of communication strategies among the Yakurr people. Validity was established by respondent validation. This strategy allowed the study to determine whether the original results from one community were still applicable to participants in another group before developing interpretations and themes (Okon *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, reliability was achieved by organizing the data using NVivo 12 software for continuous testing to explicitly confirm its validity (Chetty and Thakur, 2020).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the Yakurr people, traditional communication through drumming and dancing has been domesticated in their landscape, just like the Yunnan ethnic province in China. Among the Yakurr People, drumming is a regular cultural activity. Various traditional societies own smaller Lokuma (slit wooden drums) for ease of conveyance during cultural processions and displays. However, the word Lokpan Kuma as used in this work is Lokuma (slit wooden drum) which is 1.3m to 3.2 meters in length and 0.4 meters to 0.6 meters in radius. It is placed in a particular spot and not easily moved around due to its size. The biggest Lokpan kuma in Yakurr land is the Atta's square of Agoi Ibami (Fig. 1). It has a radius of 0.6 meters and is 3.2 meters long. However, the "Kong Lang Kong" wooden gong used by the Wa People in Northern Myanmar and China's Yunnan Province, is made from either Malaoying or redwood trees and has a radius of around 0.4 meters and a length of 2 meters (YunnanExploration, 2019). Hence, the wooden slit log of the Yakurr People is arguably among the biggest ever used by any society. Drum stick lengths ranging between 0.4 m and 0.43 m are used by the Yakurr People and Wa People.



Fig. 1. The biggest *Lokpan kuma* in Yakurr land at Atta's Square, Agoi Ibami

Source: Authors (2023)

A. Spatial requirements of Lokpan Kuma

The location of *Lokpan Kuma* is very strategic. The designated space within the community where it is to be located undergoes some blood ritual consecration, and the day commemorating the official use of any new *Lokpan kuma* is accompanied by feasting, dancing, and celebration. For its preservation, *Lokpan kuma* is now placed in a zinc-roofed shed with or without dwarf walls. This is to enable its full view and the drummer. The shed is to protect the *Lokpan kuma* from the adverse effects of weather. The *Lokpan kuma* is also placed on stones (Fig. 1), concrete blocks and concrete caps to lift it from the ground and reduce attack by termites and ants, as shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5. There is always an open space in front of the *Lokpan kuma* for traditional dance displays. The *Lokpan kuma* is situated beside the major *kepon* (paternal family) access path, *kepon* playground, *kepatu* (ward) playground, *kerma-kom* (community or neighborhood sit-out) (Okon *et al.*, 2024) or village square as seen in Figures 1, 3, 4, and 5. These locations are unique as the Yakurr People live in distinct *Yepon* (paternal families). A collection of closely related paternal families form a ward, and each community is made up of wards. Furthermore, it is normal to find seats arranged either to the back (Fig. 3), right, or left (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, respectively), of the *Lokpan Kuma* for the community elders and other spectators.

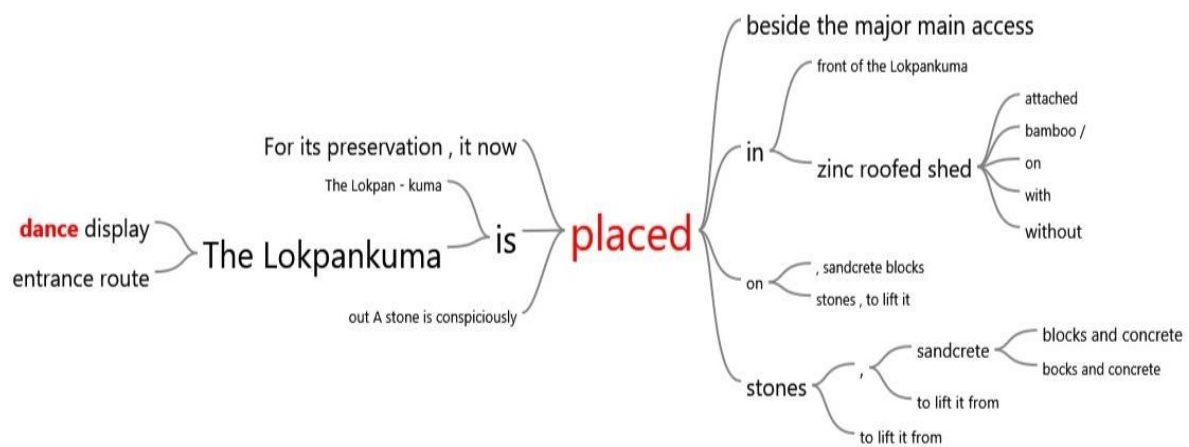


Fig. 2. Text query result of spatial requirements of *Lokpan kuma*

Source: Author (2024)



Fig. 3. *Lokpan Kuma* drumming in Nko during the 2021 *Lekobu* festival

Source: Author (2024)



Fig. 4. Drumming of *Lokpan kuma* in Ugep during 2022 Leboku
Source: Author (2022)



Fig. 5. *Lokpan kuma* in Ikpakapit ward playground, Ugep
Source: Author (2022)

B. Rites, Rituals, and Taboos Associated with Lokpan kuma

The wooden slit drum is played by only male drummers who have gone through the required rites. While playing, the drummers must be shirtless, on bare feet, and with local headgear. Playing the drum is taboo if you have not been initiated. A designated community elder often observes a pouring of libation whenever the drum is played during cultural processions. Rubbing of *ejom* (native chalk) and throwing of eggs on the *Lokpan kuma* is also a regular ritual, especially during *Kota* dance. Women and children can enjoy the sounds of the *Lokpan kuma* and even join men on some occasions to dance but it is taboo for a woman to touch the *Lokpan kuma* or play the drum.

C. Paraphernalia of Lokpan kuma

Traditional weapons of war like *yiwong* (bifurcated knife), and *yokong* (ancient war spear), deities, charms, and amulets are often displayed alongside the *Lokpan kuma* during ceremonial drumming. Water in *ledumi* (calabash) for pouring libation is also placed in front of the drum. Fresh, tender raffia palm leaves are used to decorate the shed. It is also common to see prepared oil with meat, fish, and kola nuts as food and drinks like dry gin and palm wine (Fig. 5). These edible items are first offered to the ancestors and gods of the land (Okon *et al.*, 2025) before it is served to the drummers and the elders to keep them active throughout their performance. Visitors and passers-by can be invited to share in the food entertainment. Some *Lokpan Kuma* have artistic carvings and carved inscriptions of names of people or age grades as seen in Figures 1 and 3.

D. Cultural Functions of Lokpan kuma

The drum situated in an open space in the community is played to alert the community of an enemy attack or invasion, celebrate victory over the enemy, notify the community of the death of an *onotam* (community elder), and during the burial rites of *onotam* (community elder or leader). The *Lokpan kuma* is also played during major cultural displays, processions, festivals, and ritual dances. *Lokpan kuma* is not like the normal *Lokuma* (small wooden slit drum) that is played for entertainment on any occasion and can be carried about to and fro the venue of the occasion. It is a cultural landscape and a cultural asset that epitomizes the combat readiness of the People. Every strike of a stick on *Lokpan kuma* is a coded message sent to those within the neighborhood and in the nearby farmlands. The cultural functions of *Lokpan kuma* among the People are enormous, as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

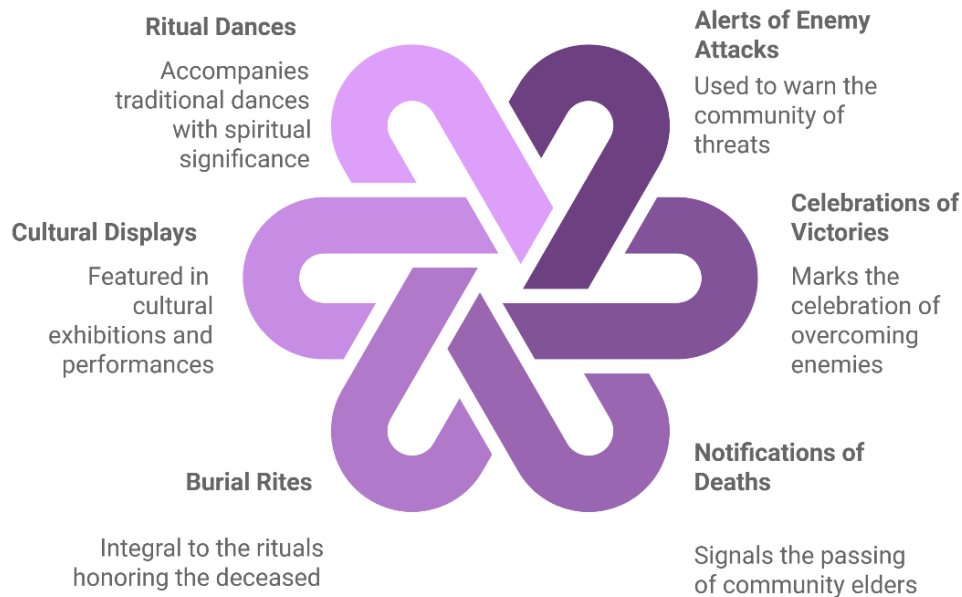


Fig. 6. Synopsis of the Cultural significance of *Lokpan kuma* among Yakurr People

Source: Author (2024)

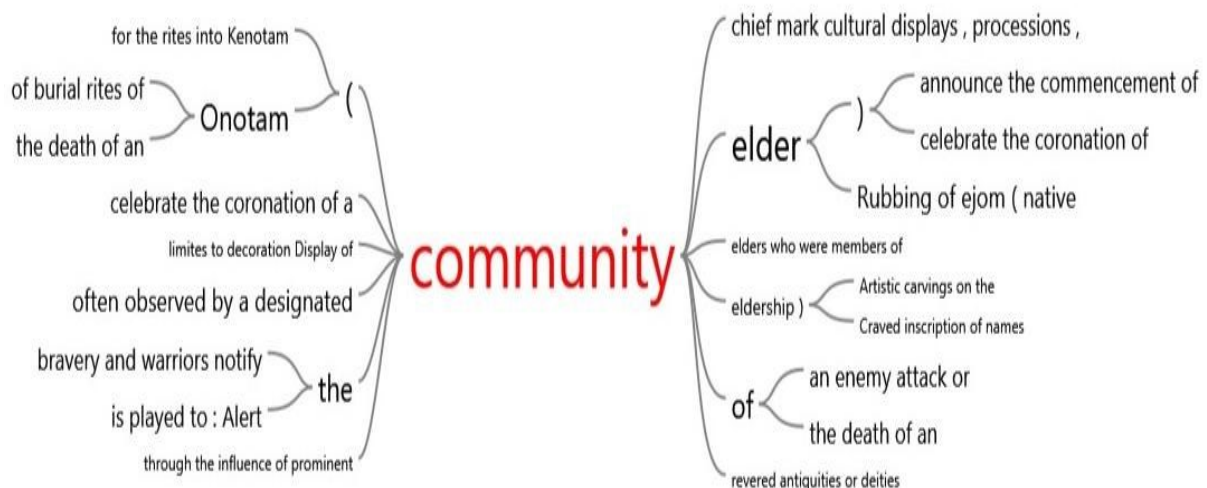


Fig. 7. Text query result of the cultural functions of *Lokpan kuma* in Yakurr communities

Source: Author (2024)

E. Sociocultural implications of ownership of Lokpan Kuma

Not all Yakurr Communities use *Lokpan Kuma*. In Ugep and Idomi, the drum is owned at *Kepon* level and located within their playgrounds. In Ekori, Mkpani, and Nko, Lokpan kuma is owned at the *Kepkatu* level and is located at the *Kekpatu* playground. In the Agoi Ibami community, one central *Lokpan Kuma* is located at the village's central playground. Assiga Old Town, Assiga New Town Assiga Beach, Ekpeti and Inyima do not own *Lokpan kuma*. None was also found in Agoi Ekpo and Ekom Agoi.

The study identified that the paternal families in Ugep and Idomi that do not own *Lokpan kuma* lacked physical strength, unity, and funding. This is because cutting such a big log of timber from the forest, transporting it to the village, and engaging an expert for the carving was not an easy task. At the ward level, a certain age grade can be responsible for providing the ward with *Lokpan kuma* to be placed at the ward playground. Hence, the effectiveness of the local traditional communication and linguistic expressions after a few years of settlement waned. Many paternal families could no longer afford to replace the old and damaged *Lokpan kuma*. Thus, effective traditional communication is just like modern-day communication and requires significant financial resources, collective investment in some cases, and skills.

Drums like *Lokpan kuma* play key sociocultural roles in the day-to-day activities of Yakurr rural communities. Hence the assertions of Bokor (2014) that drums are used in African cultures to alert the community of wars, calamities, gatherings, celebrations of festivals, marriage ceremonies, deaths, births, communal or sect rituals, and rites align with the findings about *Lokpan kuma* of the Yakurr People as shown in figures 6 and 7. This work also confirms the positions of Liao (2025), Ogunyemi (2023), and Bokor (2014) on the unique roles drums play in the religious, cultural, and spiritual lives of several African communities and beyond. Barasa *et al.* (2023) further observed that there is a steady loss of cultural heritage among Africans and the need for documentation. This field survey buttressed this position, revealing a steady decline in ward ownership of *Lokpan kuma* and the deteriorating conditions of some existing ones within Yakurr communities due to a lack of interest and the forces of modernity. However, the series of cultural events like the *Esor*, *Leboku* New Yam Festival, and *Etangala* carnival parade, among others, within the yearly traditional calendar of Yakurr communities ensure the continual usage of these unique cultural heritage elements of the People. These cultural attributes of the People consistently showcase the security resilience roles, and the *Lokpan kuma* has served the People since the 1670s.

D. Comparative analysis of the sociocultural value of wooden slit drums among African and Asian ethnic groups

The works of Durrenberger (2023), Fiskesjö (2021), and Hellmann (2021) affirmed the sacred and symbolic role the *Kong Kang Kong* (wooden slit drum) of the Wa People plays in their settlement fabric. It is a holy asset and an apparatus for communicating with deities and ascending to the heavens. Just like the vital importance of water to any settlement, the *Kong Kang Kong* plays an even more functional role in the sociocultural lives of the Wa People. This significant role of the wooden slit drum of the Wa People aligns partly with the Yakurr People. However, the Yakurr People use it to communicate with the human inhabitants within their domain and not the gods of the land. The significance of this cultural heritage is great among the Wa and Yakurr Peoples. Despite the drum being housed in open sheds within the neighborhood without security measures, it remains untouchable by anyone during ordinary circumstances. The drum is utilized solely by both ethnic groups to inform the community of oncoming attacks. It is also played during communal sacrifices, festivals, and celebration events.

According to Kelley (2025), wooden slit drums are also common among the Congolese people. Furthermore, Congolese players of the wooden slit drum are mainly male and have undergone special training. The drummers of these special heritage assets are accorded special status within the community. The language of the drum is only understood by elders and natives of the community but is alien to strangers and visitors. Information within the community about the chief, a birth, a death, and invitations to meetings and events in the specific group is achieved through the drumming of the wooden slit drum. The heritage values of the wooden slit drum also align with the sociocultural values of the Yakurr People.

Udok and Ibekwe (2020), in their work about wooden slit drums, these massive drums as *Ikolo* or *Ikoro* in Igbo and *Ikrok* in Ibibio ethnic groups of Southern Nigeria. Also, the drums in these ethnic groups are employed for communication and music. The drums also boast cultural symbolism of

strength and rituals and typically contain carvings of heads of human beings and local totems. Like among the Wa People and the Yakurr People in Southern Nigeria, the *Ikrok* among the Ibibios in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria rarely play the drum unless at special community festivals. The drum is also played to announce a peaceful solution to any ongoing communal crises. An asylum seeker also plays it as a prerequisite for receiving refuge. At the center of this topic is the fact that the wooden slit drum plays a significant role in the distribution of information and spatial organization of rural settlements. Even among the Torajan People of Sulawesi Island, Indonesia, the wooden slit drum plays a key role during their elaborate burial and funeral ceremonies (Upadhyay, 2017), just like it is used to announce the passing of an *onortam* (elder) among Yakurr communities.

Interestingly, Ngonso and Egielewa (2023) observed that traditional communication tools now have effective roles in Christian music played during church programs. This underscores the attachment Africans have to their communication instruments. These drums possess intangible heritage values that have refused to be permanently suppressed by modernity and should thus deserve preservation. This form of religious integration aligns with the position of Abdulai *et al.* (2023) that traditional communication methods should not be discarded in the face of modernity; instead, they should be hybridized through the incorporation of contemporary technologies to enhance participation, ownership, cultural sensitivity, and communication efficacy.

E. Essence of Preserving Cultural Landscape Elements

The essence of preservation is for integration into the spatial planning of rural communities with the ultimate goal of protecting the people's natural, distinctive, and cultural heritage. This promotes social cohesion and balanced sustainable economic development (Oikonomopoulou *et al.*, 2023). Caravello (2023) further observed that with the current pace of globalization, the documentation and preservation of cultural landscapes are imperative for safeguarding the cultural identities, collective memory, and cultural heritage of a people. Even Caruana (2024) also observed that rural landscapes are not given attention like their urban counterparts. Yet, they possess interesting tangible heritage like agricultural terraces, vernacular architecture, archaeological remains, and intangible heritage like folk customs, oral traditions, and social practices. These rural assets possess aesthetic and historical values and their preservation fosters cultural continuity, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging. It is thus necessary that relevant specialists examine and teach the rural residents on the best strategies to preserve the wooden slit drums and other traditional communication tools from decay

V. CONCLUSION

Lokpan kuma is a local visual timber art of the linguistic and cultural landscape of the people, patterned to communicate information to distant places where human voices cannot reach. The sounds from *Lokpan kuma* are not merely a language but a tool for traditional communication that has shaped the people's alertness, identities, perceptions, and cultural landscape. The Yakurr People have established effective and efficient communication tactics that have served them for over 400 years. These communication methods have been domesticated as cultural landscapes with items in the form of *Lokpan kuma*. The Yakurr people valued communication through *Lokpan kuma* because it is coded. Hence, deep understanding and knowledge are needed to decode the message passed from the sounds of the *Lokpan Kuma*. The Yakurr People a block that migrated to their present places due to military loss, emphasized communication as important to their existence and survival in their newfound environment through the usage of *Lokpan kuma*. Unlike their town criers that verbalize communication in the plain-spoken language of People, messages from *Lokpan kuma* are encrypted as a security strategy.

This study can help Built Environment Professionals (BEPs) in diverse areas. It will aid in understanding the history and cultural heritage of the people who need your services as Built Environment Professionals. This is because cultural landscape studies provide architects and other BEPs with insights into a 'place's historical and cultural significance. This knowledge will enrich rural 'communities' design and planning process, leading to sustainable, culturally sensitive, and community-supported projects. In the end, it is more about building environments that truly reflect the people who live there and complement their existing environment. Furthermore, knowledge shared through traditional communication often includes sustainable practices and ecological wisdom that can be incorporated into design and construction. This is important as projects that respect and integrate traditional communication help maintain the cultural identity of rural areas while fostering a sense of

pride and ownership. Cultural landscape studies can inspire adaptive reuse of historic concepts and other cultural landscape elements, giving them new life while preserving their historical significance.

Furthermore, professional designs and planning solutions that align with cultural values are more likely to gain acceptance from the local community. Design concepts for public buildings in Yakurr may incorporate the shape of the *Lokpan kuma* to preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage of the community for future generations. In addition, communities and paternal families whose *Lokpan kuma* are in temporary sheds or private houses should be encouraged to construct adequate pavilions with complimentary seating arrangements. This will boost the tourism potential of their local economy and foster social cohesion. Likewise, in planning rural communities, it is essential to acknowledge and integrate heritage routes, playgrounds, and village squares that spatially reflect the heritage values of the local population, such as those exemplified by the *Lokpan kuma*. Additionally, these spaces within African rural communities are imbued with significant spiritual, cultural and political powers that enhance the people's living culture.

Finally, not everything in African rural communities is demonic, barbaric, and steps behind. Cultural heritage conservationists, architects, and other built environment professionals can selectively integrate vernacular communication strategies and rural landscape elements into contemporary settings. This will help to safeguard the cultural identity, collective memory, and heritage values of rural communities for future generations. The past is the most assured path to the future.

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