



Oral Text as Embodiment of Cultural Heritage: An Analysis of Akan Oral Forms from Wenchi

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Abstract

Oral texts constitute foundational literary systems in African societies, functioning as primary vehicles for transmitting cultural memory, social values, and indigenous epistemologies. Despite growing scholarly interest in African oral traditions, the structural, cognitive, and aesthetic dimensions of oral literature remain insufficiently theorised in relation to cultural heritage preservation. This study examines oral text as an embodiment of cultural heritage through the lens of Orality Theory, as systematically developed by Walter J. Ong. Ong's conceptualisation of primary orality — characterised by formulaic expression, additive structure, repetition, communal participation, and situational thinking — provides the theoretical foundation for analysing oral literature as a distinct mode of knowledge production. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in oral text analysis and performance criticism, this study examines six selected Akan oral forms from Wenchi: two proverbs, two praise songs, and two fables. Findings reveal that oral texts embody cultural heritage through their mnemonic architecture, formulaic patterning, performative immediacy, and communal authorship. The study demonstrates that repetition, rhythm, symbolic compression, and audience interaction collectively ensure the preservation and intergenerational transmission of moral codes, cosmology, historical consciousness, and social identity. Contrary to evolutionary models that subordinate orality to literacy, this research suggests that oral literature constitutes an autonomous, cognitively sophisticated, and socially adaptive epistemological system. The study concludes that Orality Theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding oral texts as embodied cultural archives and recommends renewed scholarly attention to oral aesthetics alongside digital and pedagogical preservation initiatives.

1. Introduction

Across human societies, oral tradition has functioned as the earliest and most enduring medium through which communities preserve memory, transmit values, and negotiate identity. Long before the institutionalisation of writing, knowledge systems were encoded in speech, performance, proverb, song, and narrative, forming complex cultural archives sustained through collective participation. As Galloway (2009) explains, oral tradition in living cultures plays a crucial role in shaping and preserving communal memory through archival and community-based practices. Similarly, Shopes (2011) emphasises that oral history and oral tradition constitute central qualitative frameworks through which lived experience and collective meaning are documented and interpreted. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognises that oral traditions represent not primitive or secondary forms of expression, but sophisticated epistemological systems that structure communal consciousness and historical continuity.

The expansive documentation of African oral forms in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore* (Akinyemi & Falola, 2021) demonstrates the intellectual depth, aesthetic richness, and philosophical complexity embedded in African oral traditions. Equally, *The Power of Oral Culture in Education* (Eizadirad & Wane, 2023) highlights the transformative power of proverbs, idioms, and folklore tales within educational and socio-cultural contexts. These scholarly contributions affirm that African oral forms — including proverbs, praise poetry, and folktales — function simultaneously as artistic expressions, moral guides, and living archives of communal knowledge.

The relationship between oral tradition and cultural heritage is further deepened by the concept of embodiment. Cultural knowledge transmitted orally is inseparable from performance, voice, gesture, space, and communal interaction. Kenderdine (2015) argues that cultural heritage must be understood through embodiment, entanglement, and immersive engagement rather than static preservation. Wójcicka (2020) situates oral text within the framework of collective memory, asserting that oral narratives function as dynamic repositories through which communities continuously reconstruct shared histories. Ritchie (2014) reinforces this position by demonstrating that oral history is dialogic, interpretive, and socially embedded, shaping identity and communal understanding through narrative exchange.

Within the Akan context — and more specifically within Wenchi — oral forms such as proverbs, praise poetry, and folktales serve as repositories of cosmology, social hierarchy, moral codes, and historical consciousness. These texts operate as embodied cultural heritage because they are performed, remembered, negotiated, and transmitted within communal settings, encoding indigenous epistemologies that shape identity formation and intergenerational continuity.

Despite this recognition, a notable gap exists in the literature concerning the systematic analysis of local Akan oral forms, particularly those from Wenchi, using rigorous theoretical frameworks. Much existing scholarship addresses African orality at a general or pan-continental level, leaving specific community-based oral traditions understudied. This study addresses this gap by applying Ong's Orality Theory to selected Wenchi oral texts, thereby moving from global theoretical discourses on memory, embodiment, and oral pedagogy to a specific and culturally situated analysis.

Accordingly, this study pursues three primary objectives: first, to analyse the structural and stylistic features of selected Akan oral texts within the framework of Orality Theory; second, to examine how oral modes of expression function as mnemonic and cultural preservation mechanisms; and third, to evaluate the continued relevance of oral forms in contemporary contexts shaped by literacy and digital media. Through this analysis, the study seeks to demonstrate how Wenchi oral texts — encompassing proverbs, praise songs, and fables — function as repositories of cultural knowledge, moral guidance, and social identity, and to affirm their status as sophisticated, autonomous cultural systems.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Oral Tradition as Cultural Memory and Archive

Scholarship on oral tradition has evolved considerably from earlier evolutionary frameworks that positioned orality as a precursor to literacy. Contemporary research affirms oral traditions as complete epistemological systems embedded in social practice. Jones and Russell (2012) demonstrate that oral tradition and archaeology share a methodological concern with memory and material culture, arguing that oral accounts constitute legitimate historical evidence requiring systematic interpretation. Akinyemi and Falola (2021) similarly position African oral traditions as intellectually sophisticated systems encoding philosophy, ethics, cosmology, and political theory.

Within this body of scholarship, oral tradition has been theorised as a repository of cultural memory. Wójcicka (2020) argues that oral narratives function as dynamic archives through which communities continuously reconstruct and negotiate shared histories. Oral performance, in this view, is not merely reproductive but constitutive — it actively produces and sustains collective identity. This position resonates with O’Carroll’s (2018) argument that tradition archives function as memory institutions that mediate between past and present, ensuring cultural continuity across generations.

2.2 Embodiment, Performance, and Oral Knowledge

A significant strand of scholarship situates oral tradition within theories of embodiment and performance. Kenderdine (2015) argues that cultural heritage must be understood through embodied, participatory engagement rather than static documentation. This perspective is particularly relevant to oral literature, where meaning is co-produced through voice, gesture, audience response, and spatial context. Ganyi and Okpiliya (2019) extend this argument by demonstrating that the performance context and ritual dimensions of African oral tradition are inseparable from their epistemological content.

Ritchie (2014) contributes further by emphasising the dialogic and interpretive dimensions of oral history, noting that oral accounts are shaped by the interaction between narrator and audience, producing socially embedded and contextually contingent meaning. Wiredu (2009) examines the philosophical dimensions of oral tradition in African contexts, articulating a conception of personhood and moral agency that is grounded in communal participation and oral transmission. These contributions collectively establish that oral knowledge is not abstract or decontextualised but inherently embodied, relational, and performative.

2.3 Proverbs, Folktales, and Praise Poetry in African Oral Traditions

Within African oral scholarship, specific genres have received sustained attention. Proverbs are widely recognised as the most condensed form of communal philosophical expression. As Eizadirad and Wane (2023) demonstrate, proverbs function as condensed philosophical statements encoding generational wisdom, ethical instruction, and communal regulation. Dahal and Bhatta (2021) affirm that folktales convey moral messages across generations, structuring ethical imagination and social behaviour. Insaidoo (2011) specifically examines moral lessons in African folktales, identifying narrative strategies through which ethical values are transmitted and reinforced. Praise poetry, known in Akan contexts as *apae* or *kwadwom*, functions as a genealogical and political archive. Joseph (2024) traces the archival function of oral performance traditions, demonstrating how sound-based practices preserve pre-textual histories and sustain cultural identities. Gómez (2016) further demonstrates that folk narratives constitute valuable pedagogical tools for intercultural understanding, while Wu, Wang, and Mihalcea (2023) provide a cross-cultural analysis confirming the moral and values-encoding functions of folk narratives across diverse societies.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Walter J. Ong's Orality Theory as presented in *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Ong & Hartley, 2013). Ong developed the theory to explain the cognitive, social, and cultural characteristics of oral societies, arguing that oral cultures are not inferior to literate ones but constitute sophisticated systems of knowledge production, memory preservation, and cultural transmission. The theory is particularly relevant to the study of African oral traditions because it highlights the ways communities preserve history, values, and identity through speech and performance (Finnegan, 2012).

The study draws on five key principles of Orality Theory. First, primary orality refers to cultures in which knowledge is transmitted mainly through speech, memory, and performance. Second, formulaic expression involves the use of recurring phrases, patterns, and repetitions that facilitate memorisation and oral transmission. Third, additive and aggregative structures describe the tendency of oral narratives to build meaning through sequential layering rather than complex analytical organisation. Fourth, situational thinking emphasises the presentation of knowledge through concrete human experiences rather than abstract concepts. Finally, communal participation recognises that meaning is collectively produced through interaction between performer and audience.

These principles provide an effective framework for analysing Akan proverbs, praise songs, and folktales from Wenchi. Through repetition, symbolism, rhythm, and performance, these oral forms preserve moral values, historical memory, cosmological beliefs, and social identity. As such, oral texts function not merely as artistic expressions but as living cultural archives that sustain communal knowledge across generations (Akinyemi & Falola, 2021).

Importantly, Orality Theory rejects the view that oral traditions are incomplete forms awaiting written preservation. Rather, it recognises oral literature as an autonomous and dynamic cultural system. This perspective is essential for understanding Wenchi oral texts as embodied cultural heritage and as sophisticated vehicles for the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design employing oral text analysis and performance criticism to investigate how selected Akan oral forms from Wenchi function as embodiments of cultural heritage. Qualitative research is particularly suited to the study of cultural texts because it enables an in-depth exploration of meanings, values, symbols, and social practices embedded within human communication (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As Creswell and Poth (2018) observe, qualitative inquiry seeks to understand phenomena within their natural contexts and from the perspectives of the communities that produce them.

Given that oral literature exists not only as verbal content but also as performance, memory, and social interaction, a qualitative approach allows for the examination of both textual and contextual dimensions of oral forms. The study was further informed by performance criticism, which recognises oral narratives as events that derive meaning through the interaction between performer, audience, and cultural setting (Bauman, 1986; Finnegan, 2012).

The research was anchored in Walter J. Ong's Orality Theory (Ong & Hartley, 2013), which conceptualises oral cultures as sophisticated systems of knowledge production characterised by formulaic expression, repetition, additive structures, situational thinking, and communal participation. The theory provided the analytical lens through which the selected oral texts were examined as repositories of cultural memory and indigenous knowledge.

3.2 Research Site

The study was conducted in Wenchi, a predominantly Akan-speaking municipality in the Bono Region of Ghana. Wenchi possesses a vibrant oral heritage in which proverbs, folktales,

praise songs, dirges, and other oral forms continue to function as important mechanisms for socialisation, moral instruction, leadership legitimisation, and cultural continuity.

The choice of Wenchi was informed by its rich oral traditions and the continued relevance of oral performance within both traditional and contemporary community life. As Finnegan (2012) notes, oral traditions are best understood within their specific cultural environments because meaning is inseparable from social context and performance practice. Studying oral forms within Wenchi therefore allowed for a culturally grounded understanding of how oral texts embody and transmit communal heritage.

3.3 Data Sources and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling to select oral texts considered information-rich and culturally significant. Patton (2015) argues that purposive sampling enables researchers to select cases that illuminate the central phenomenon under investigation. Accordingly, six oral texts were selected for analysis: two Akan proverbs, two Akan praise songs, and two Akan fables.

These texts were chosen based on their cultural significance, frequency of use within the community, and relevance to the study's objectives. The selected genres represent major categories of Akan oral literature and collectively embody moral, historical, philosophical, and social knowledge.

The emphasis on a small but analytically rich corpus aligns with qualitative traditions that privilege depth of interpretation over numerical representativeness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selected texts were obtained through oral performances, community narrations, and locally preserved oral records. Where necessary, the texts were transcribed and translated from Akan into English while preserving their linguistic, symbolic, and cultural meanings.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through oral documentation, observation, and textual compilation. Oral performances and narrations were recorded during community interactions and traditional settings where oral forms are customarily performed. Additional information was obtained through consultations with knowledgeable community members, including elders, storytellers, traditional leaders, and oral performers.

Observation was used to document performance-related features such as vocal modulation, repetition, audience responses, gestures, and contextual cues. This approach reflects the argument advanced by Bauman (1986) and Finnegan (2012) that oral texts cannot be adequately understood apart from their performance environments. Field notes were therefore maintained to capture contextual details that could not be fully represented through transcription alone.

The study also drew on oral history principles, recognising that oral performances function as repositories of collective memory and cultural knowledge. As Ritchie (2014) notes, oral narratives provide valuable insights into how communities interpret, preserve, and transmit shared experiences across generations.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic textual analysis and performance criticism. Thematic analysis is widely recognised as a flexible and rigorous method for identifying patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analysis proceeded in three interconnected stages.

The first stage involved a close textual examination of the selected oral forms to identify structural features associated with Ong's theory of primary orality, including formulaic expressions, repetition, rhythmic patterning, additive construction, and mnemonic devices.

The second stage focused on interpreting the cultural, ethical, historical, and philosophical meanings encoded within the texts. Particular attention was paid to how the oral forms preserved communal values, indigenous knowledge systems, social norms, and collective memory. This interpretive process was informed by scholarship that views oral traditions as dynamic cultural archives and repositories of communal consciousness (Wójcicka, 2020; Akinyemi & Falola, 2021).

The third stage involved performance analysis, examining how audience participation, vocal delivery, rhythm, gesture, and communal interaction contributed to meaning-making and cultural transmission. This stage was guided by the understanding that oral literature is both text and event, with performance serving as an essential component of cultural communication (Bauman, 1986; Ganyi & Okpiliya, 2019). Findings were subsequently organised according to the three oral genres under study and interpreted through the conceptual framework of Orality Theory.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study employed methodological triangulation through the analysis of multiple oral genres. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility in qualitative research is enhanced when findings are supported by multiple sources of evidence. The use of proverbs, praise songs, and fables enabled cross-validation of emerging interpretations regarding cultural preservation and oral knowledge transmission.

Interpretations of culturally specific concepts were further verified through consultations with Akan language speakers and community knowledge holders. Care was also taken to preserve contextual and semantic meanings during transcription and translation processes. Thick description of textual and performance contexts was used to enhance the transferability of the findings (Geertz, 1973).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles governing qualitative and cultural research. Informed consent was obtained from individuals who participated in oral performances or contributed oral narratives. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the use of collected data, and their voluntary participation.

Respect for indigenous knowledge systems guided all stages of data collection, interpretation, and presentation. As Smith (2021) argues, research involving indigenous cultural heritage must prioritise cultural sensitivity, reciprocity, and accurate representation. Accordingly, the study sought to represent Wenchi oral traditions faithfully while recognising the community as the custodian of the cultural knowledge examined.

4. Discussion/Findings

4.1 Folktales and Fables as Moral and Cultural Narratives

Akan folktales from Wenchi serve as important cultural narratives through which communal ethics, cosmology, and social expectations are preserved and transmitted. Their significance extends beyond entertainment to the preservation of indigenous knowledge and social values. This finding supports Ong's (2013) argument that oral societies rely on narrative structures as repositories of communal memory and knowledge. In oral cultures, knowledge is embedded in stories that are easily remembered and repeatedly performed rather than stored in written texts.

The fable, *The Two Women and the Fruit*, illustrates how oral narratives encode indigenous philosophies of motherhood and social responsibility. Through the symbolic opposition between the "quiet man" and the "madman," the narrative communicates a culturally valued conception of motherhood as active, resilient, and socially engaged. The story demonstrates Ong's notion of situational thinking, whereby moral knowledge is conveyed through concrete

human experiences rather than abstract principles. Instead of presenting a theoretical definition of motherhood, the narrative embeds moral instruction within familiar social realities. This finding aligns with Insaadoo's (2011) observation that African folktales transmit ethical values through symbolic narratives that connect moral lessons to everyday life.

The tale's reliance on repetition, binary oppositions, and sequential events also confirms Ong's assertion that oral cultures employ mnemonic structures to facilitate memory and transmission. Such devices enable the preservation of complex social knowledge across generations without written documentation. Similarly, Dahal and Bhatta (2021) argue that folktales function as intergenerational educational tools because their repetitive and formulaic structures make them memorable and easily adaptable to changing contexts.

The second fable, *Two Friends and the Goat*, demonstrates how oral narratives preserve cultural understandings of language, identity, and social relationships. The misunderstanding surrounding the term *aponkye* (goat) highlights the culturally situated nature of meaning. This finding reflects Ong's argument that oral knowledge is deeply contextual and dependent on shared communal understanding. Meaning is not fixed within words themselves but emerges through collective interpretation. The story therefore reinforces the participatory nature of oral communication, where audiences draw upon shared cultural knowledge to interpret narratives.

The findings also resonate with Ritchie's (2014) view that oral narratives are socially constructed and interpreted within specific cultural contexts. The tale serves not only as entertainment but also as a lesson in intercultural sensitivity and communicative competence. Consequently, the fable functions as a cultural archive preserving indigenous understandings of language, social interaction, and communal harmony.

4.2 Proverbs as Condensed Wisdom and Mnemonic Technology

The findings reveal that Akan proverbs constitute highly condensed forms of philosophical thought and communal wisdom. Consistent with Ong's theory, the proverbs examined demonstrate how oral societies transform complex ethical and cosmological ideas into memorable verbal forms. Their brevity, metaphorical richness, and rhythmic structure enable them to function as what Ong describes as mnemonic devices that facilitate the preservation and transmission of knowledge.

The proverb, *Wo trim fitaa a tiamoa nku wo* ("If your heart is pure, Tiamoa cannot kill you"), illustrates how moral instruction, spiritual belief, and social regulation are compressed into a single expression. The proverb reflects an Akan worldview in which ethical conduct is closely linked to spiritual accountability. Rather than articulating a formal moral doctrine, the proverb communicates ethical principles through metaphor and symbolism. This supports Ong's contention that oral cultures favour concrete imagery over abstract exposition. Similar observations are made by Eizadirad and Wane (2023), who argue that proverbs serve as repositories of collective philosophy and moral instruction within African societies.

Likewise, *Oyansafo na edi kosua bo kaseε mu* ("It is the wise person who eats an egg inside a thorny thicket") demonstrates how oral cultures express abstract concepts such as wisdom through vivid experiential imagery. The metaphor of carefully eating an egg within a thorny environment transforms strategic thinking into an easily visualised human action. This finding confirms Ong's assertion that oral thought remains closely tied to the human lifeworld and practical experience. The proverb's effectiveness lies in its ability to transform complex reasoning into a memorable image that can be readily recalled and applied in diverse situations.

Beyond their mnemonic functions, the proverbs operate as mechanisms of social regulation. They provide guidance for ethical behaviour, conflict resolution, and decision-making, thereby contributing to social cohesion. This multifunctionality supports Akinyemi and Falola's (2021) argument that African oral forms simultaneously serve literary, philosophical, and social functions. The findings therefore suggest that Akan proverbs should not be viewed merely as

linguistic ornaments but as sophisticated instruments for preserving and transmitting indigenous knowledge.

4.3 Praise Songs as Performative Archives

The analysis demonstrates that Akan praise songs function as performative archives through which historical memory, political legitimacy, and communal identity are preserved. Unlike written archives that store information in textual form, praise songs preserve knowledge through performance, repetition, and collective participation. This finding strongly supports Ong's argument that oral societies rely on embodied forms of knowledge transmission in which memory is sustained through communal performance.

The repeated refrains *Woye ohene* ("You are a king") and *Wo firi tete* ("You come from ancient times") perform important mnemonic functions. Their repetitive structure aids memorisation while reinforcing the legitimacy and continuity of traditional authority. The songs therefore illustrate Ong's concept of formulaic expression, where recurring phrases serve as organisational frameworks for preserving historical knowledge.

The genealogical references embedded within the songs further reveal their archival function. By invoking ancestors such as Nana Abrefa Kwadwo, the performances preserve dynastic histories and connect contemporary leadership to ancestral traditions. This finding supports Joseph's (2024) argument that oral performance traditions function as repositories of historical memory and cultural identity. In the absence of written records, praise songs become living archives through which communities remember their past and legitimise their present social structures.

Importantly, the findings show that the meaning of praise songs extends beyond textual content. Audience participation, vocal delivery, rhythm, and gesture all contribute to meaning-making. This observation aligns with Bauman's (1986) performance theory and Kenderdine's (2015) notion of embodied heritage, both of which emphasise that cultural knowledge is produced through performance rather than merely represented in language. Consequently, praise songs illustrate the embodied nature of oral heritage, where knowledge resides not only in words but also in the social act of performance itself.

4.4 Language as Embodiment of Knowledge, Culture, and Preservation

The findings indicate that language in Akan oral texts functions as an active embodiment of cultural knowledge rather than merely a medium of communication. Terms such as *Okomfo*, *Honhom*, *Ohene*, and *Nana* encapsulate complex cultural, spiritual, and historical meanings that resist direct translation. Their significance lies not only in what they denote but also in the cultural worldview they embody.

This finding reinforces Ong's argument that oral cultures preserve knowledge through language forms that are deeply embedded within communal experience. The inability to fully translate these concepts illustrates how oral language carries culturally specific epistemologies that are difficult to reproduce outside their original context. Similarly, Wiredu (2009) argues that African oral traditions encode philosophical ideas within indigenous linguistic categories, making language itself a repository of cultural thought.

The prominence of repetition, rhythm, and symbolic imagery across the texts further supports Ong's theory of oral memory. These devices function as mnemonic technologies that facilitate recall, performance, and transmission. Rather than relying on written archives, oral communities preserve knowledge through linguistic structures that make information memorable and socially meaningful.

The findings also demonstrate that meaning in oral traditions is collectively negotiated. The misunderstanding in *Two Friends and the Goat* illustrates that language acquires significance through shared cultural understanding rather than fixed dictionary definitions. This supports Ritchie's (2014) argument that oral communication is inherently dialogic and socially situated. Consequently, language in Wenchi oral traditions serves not only as a vehicle for

communication but also as a mechanism for preserving collective memory, identity, and cultural continuity.

4.5 Relevance of Wenchi Oral Texts in Contemporary Context

The findings reveal that Wenchi oral forms remain highly relevant despite increasing literacy and digitalisation. Rather than disappearing, these oral traditions have adapted to contemporary contexts while maintaining their core functions of cultural preservation, ethical instruction, and identity formation. This finding challenges earlier evolutionary assumptions that literacy inevitably replaces orality.

From the perspective of Orality Theory, this continuity reflects the enduring cognitive and social value of oral communication. Ong (2013) argues that oral modes of thought persist even within literate societies because they fulfil fundamental human needs for communal participation, memory, and social connection. The continued use of folktales, proverbs, and praise songs in Wenchi supports this argument by demonstrating the resilience of oral knowledge systems.

In educational settings, the findings confirm the pedagogical value of oral forms. Folktales continue to transmit ethical lessons, while proverbs provide concise frameworks for moral reflection and social guidance. These observations align with Eizadirad and Wane's (2023) assertion that oral traditions remain powerful educational tools capable of supporting values education and cultural literacy.

The findings further suggest that digital technologies may enhance rather than diminish oral heritage. Recorded performances, online storytelling platforms, and digital archives create new spaces for the preservation and dissemination of oral traditions. This supports Kenderdine's (2015) argument that digital technologies can facilitate new forms of cultural engagement and heritage preservation.

Finally, the intercultural relevance of these oral texts is evident in narratives such as *Two Friends and the Goat*, which address themes of cultural misunderstanding and linguistic relativity. This finding corresponds with Gómez's (2016) and Wu et al.'s (2023) conclusions that folk narratives possess enduring value for intercultural education because they encourage reflection on cultural diversity, shared values, and social understanding.

Overall, the continued vitality of Wenchi oral forms demonstrates that oral traditions remain dynamic, adaptive, and intellectually relevant cultural systems. Rather than relics of the past, they continue to function as living archives that sustain communal memory and cultural identity in changing social environments.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Wenchi oral texts — encompassing folktales, proverbs, and praise songs — function as sophisticated cultural systems that preserve, transmit, and perform communal knowledge. Through formulaic expression, repetition, additive structures, symbolic imagery, and performative immediacy, these oral forms serve simultaneously as mnemonic devices, ethical guides, genealogical archives, and repositories of historical and cosmological memory. The systematic application of Orality Theory has revealed that Akan oral literature from Wenchi illustrates the key features of primary orality as theorised by Walter J. Ong, including situational thinking, communal participation, and embodied knowledge production.

The study makes several substantive contributions to the field. Theoretically, it provides evidence for the applicability of Ong's Orality Theory to African oral literary analysis, demonstrating its capacity to illuminate the structural, cognitive, and aesthetic dimensions of community-specific oral texts. Empirically, it provides a detailed analysis of six Wenchi oral texts, contributing to the documentation and scholarly interpretation of this specific oral

tradition. Methodologically, it models a rigorous, theory-driven approach to oral text analysis that attends equally to structural features, cultural content, and performance contexts.

Most significantly, the study suggests that oral literature is not a precursor to written texts but a fully autonomous and sophisticated system of knowledge production. Oral texts embody culture not merely as content but as practice: knowledge is retained in voice, performance, and collective engagement, residing in the dynamic interaction between performer and community rather than in static written archives.

On the basis of these findings, the study advances three recommendations. First, renewed scholarly attention should be directed towards oral aesthetics within literary and cultural studies, recognising oral forms as subjects of serious theoretical inquiry rather than merely historical or anthropological data. Second, oral forms should be incorporated into formal educational contexts and national curricula, leveraging their pedagogical power and cultural authority to support identity formation and values education. Third, concerted digital preservation initiatives should be undertaken to document, archive, and disseminate oral traditions in accessible formats, ensuring that the embodied cultural heritage contained within oral texts remains available to future generations in an era increasingly dominated by textual and electronic literacy.

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