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Civil Society in Cultural Preservation in Africa: Evidence from the Kambari People of Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in preserving endangered cultural practices among the Kambari communities of Kebbi and Niger States in Nigeria. It explores the major socio-cultural and linguistic factors that simultaneously weakened and sustained Kambari heritage, resulting in complex patterns of transformation in local identity and practice. Drawing on an ethnographic research design, the findings demonstrate that Kambari CSOs employ a hybrid preservation strategy that combines performative revivalism, including festivals, dances, and dramatized rituals, with documentary preservation efforts, such as archival documentation and the dissemination of digital media. These dual strategies foster intergenerational cultural transmission and reposition Kambari traditions within broader discourses of heritage and identity. Despite these achievements, the research underscores that cultural sustainability remains fragile, constrained by modernization, interethnic integration, and limited institutional support. The study concludes that a more context-sensitive, participatory, and policy-supported framework is essential to ensure the long-term survival of Kambari cultural heritage.

Keywords

Customs; Civil Society; Cultural Preservation; Nigeria; Kambari

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Introduction

The emergence of modern technologies, which have accelerated the revolution in information technology, has led to an increase in the negative impacts of globalization, particularly on endangered cultures and traditions worldwide. This has contributed to cultural amnesia and extinction in many societies worldwide. In several societies, through identity amalgamation and cultural homogenization- hallmarks of globalization (Ullah & Ming Yit Ho 2020, p. 193), folklore is becoming unpopular, forgotten, or moribund due to the negative impact of globalization's unprecedented spread worldwide (Bandyopadhyay 2013). In most local societies, especially in Africa, customs and traditions are either abandoned or viewed as outdated and outmoded by certain sections of the youth within those communities (Gande 2024).

The Kambari tribe of Nigeria presents a compelling case study for examining the dynamics of cultural erosion. Historically marginalized by the dominant Hausa culture and influenced by Islamic and Christian conversions, the Kambari face further pressure from the absence of institutional documentation, urban migration, interethnic marriages, and digital entertainment. These factors have collectively undermined communal institutions, such as nighttime meetings and seasonal festivals, which were once primary venues for the transmission of folklore. Compounding this issue, the backbone of cultural transmission – the Kambari language – is now spoken infrequently by younger generations, accelerating the decay of traditional knowledge and practices (Danjibo 2012). This local phenomenon reflects a global pattern; of the world's estimated 12,000 to 20,000 languages, only 6,000 are currently spoken, with most of these languages belonging to local communities worldwide (Zhang & Mace 2021). Consequently, the declining use of indigenous languages has emerged as a leading factor in the cultural extinction of societies like the Kambari.

In experiencing the same impact, the Kambari people face a deep threat to their intangible cultural heritage and the erosion of moral, social, and ecological knowledge grounded in their traditional practices. The lack of purposeful preservation strategies, particularly with an emphasis on community engagement, has significantly endangered the transmission of Kambari cultural identity from one generation to the next, diminishing the continuity of shared memory and values.

In this context, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have proven powerful agents of preservation, adaptation, and transmission of local heritage. These non-governmental organizations address the institutional voids created by governmental neglect and constraints of market-driven culture industries primarily through festival documentation projects and language development initiatives. However, the functions of CSOs in cultural preservation remain theoretically underexplored and empirically inadequately recorded, especially with lesser-known ethnic groups like the Kambari of Nigeria. To fill this gap and contribute to the emerging literature on the efforts of CSOs in cultural sustainability, this article explores the diverse activities undertaken by Kambari Civil Society Organizations (KCSOs) in sustaining the survival of cultural traits, safeguarding those at risk, and reincarnating traditions that have become extinct (Rajendra 2020). In highlighting these efforts, the paper adopts a descriptive and analytical approach to interpret selected cultural practices specific to the Kambari people. It draws on field interviews and community archives to reveal how Kambari CSOs serve as custodians of intangible cultural heritage. Through this process, the study identifies endangered cultural forms, such as tribal marks, traditional dresses, marriage practices, naming customs, magic, traditional medicine, boxing, and dancing, while also tracing attempts to recontextualize extinct traditions.

The analysis proceeds in four stages. First, it establishes a historical context for the Kambari. Second, it investigates the dynamics of cultural erosion, tracing the formative influences of modernization, religious conversion, and ethnic and language displacement. Third, it analyzes the institutional and practical measures CSOs adopt to preserve and document Kambari cultural heritage. Finally, the concluding section reflects on the broader implications of Kambari preservation for cultural policy, identity reconstruction, and the role of civil society in sustaining Africa's intangible heritage.

Research Methods

The areas covered by this research are the towns and villages inhabited mainly by the Kambari ethnic group in Nigeria. These towns and villages include Wara, Libata, Ngaski, Macupa, Lata, Makata'i, Birnin Yauri, and Kambuwa, located in Ngaski local government areas of Kebbi State in Northwestern Nigeria; Auna, Shagwa, Salka, and Nasko in Magama local Government; Agwara, the headquarters of Agwara local government, Borgu local government, and Kontagora in Kontagora local government areas of Niger State in North-Central Nigeria.

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing the locations of Kambari; the green-marked areas are where Kambari are found

Source: https://www.101lasttribes.com/tribes/kambari.html Reproduced with permission.

Based on descriptive analysis, this study reviewed previously published papers on cultural preservations and Kambari customs and traditions to provide an account of the already documented Kambari customs. It then conducted semi-structured interviews to solicit the various approaches taken by civil societies to preserve Kambari customs and traditions. To actualize this, the first author interviewed leaders of six significant Kambari organizations, who served as primary informants for this research work, resulting in a total of six key informant interviews. Leaders and project coordinators were selected for the interview because they are knowledge holders about collective reservation strategies, and their organizations serve as archives of their tribe's culture and traditions. Interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes.

The six civil society organizations include the All Kambari Progressive Association (AKAPA), Kimo Development Association, Laka Community Development Association, Kambuwa Community Development Association, Maburo Community Development Association, and Birnin Yauri Kambuwa Community Development Association, found in the aforementioned town and villages. The first author conducted the interviews in three phases. The first phase was conducted in March 2024, during which data on Kambari history, their current locations, and activities, including occupation, were collected. In the second phase of the interview, conducted in June 2024, data were collected regarding their cultural history, customs, and traditions, as well as their cultural decline. The final phase of the interviews was conducted in September 2024, during which interviewees were asked about the approaches the Kambari society has taken to preserve most of its customs and traditions.

After collecting data by gathering information from local accounts, and oral traditions, we applied a thematic approach combined with ethnographic analysis to interpret the data, coding each of the selected customs. We followed the six-step process of thematic analysis, which includes familiarization, coding,

generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally reporting the data by analyzing the historical and cultural significance of reviving these forgotten cultures (Naeem et al. 2023).

We identified and selected some of the significant customs of the Kambari people that are either effective or ineffective, in other words, those that are present or absent. By so doing, we familiarized ourselves with the moribund and active customs and traditions relevant to the Kambari people. Secondly, after familiarizing ourselves with the data, we focused on the key customs and categorized them into four groups: active, partially active, somewhat inactive, and inactive. Thirdly, we coded the selected customs into a table under the subheadings that include the name of the customs, their meanings, objectives, status, and the relevant efforts taken to sustain the inactive customs or promote the active ones.

The research highlights some of the significant actions taken by Kambari CSOs to promote and digitally preserve some of Kambari's ancient cultural traditions in the modern era. It highlights publications, seminars, digitally recorded interviews, dramas, cultural displays, and short films as some basic approaches to preserving those customs.

Literature Review

Multiple studies in the literature indicate that the adverse effect of globalization in the erosion of several cultures and traditions around the world has led to a number of concerned non-governmental-not-for-profit organizations taking on the responsibilities of preserving their ancestral customs to ensure the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next (Hiswara, Aziz & Pujowati 2023, p. 99). A foundational insight comes from Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) works on the 'invention of tradition', a set of practices that aim to instill specific beliefs and behavioral standards through repetition, which suggests a connection to 'a suitable past'. They focus on reinterpreting ethnonationalist symbols for social and political needs (Nagel 1985). Their perspective is crucial in analyzing preservation efforts because it emphasizes heritage-making as an active process of cultural production rather than mere passive survival. As Smith (2006) argues, heritage preservation is inherently political, reflecting deliberate acts of interpretation and valuation. Within this context, the involvement of CSOs becomes particularly significant, as they act as cultural intermediaries, curating and transmitting traditional practices within their communities. Their interventions reveal that preservation is about safeguarding material artifacts and negotiating social meanings and power relations embedded in heritage production. From the published studies, we can infer that different methods are required to ensure a successful cultural conservation. This aligns with Shanmuga, Jupally, & Vempalli 's (2025) view, who opine that adopting different methods, including modern technology, by governmental and non-governmental organizations to preserve and document customs and traditions will help save cultural originality, protect it from extinction and foster a future where indigenous knowledge is valued and protected in the digital age.

Literature on civil society suggests that its role can operate in both top-down and bottom-up dimensions, particularly as a platform through which groups disadvantaged by globalization, such as those facing cultural erosion, seek alternative mechanisms to preserve their traditions (Hearn 2001). Civil society becomes an arena of resistance and reconstruction within this framework, enabling marginalized communities to reclaim agency over their cultural narratives. As Gotsiridze and Tsertvadze (2023) argue, the safeguarding of cultural heritage constitutes a crucial element of national and ethnic identity formation, as well as collective self-determination. CSOs play a pivotal role in this process by mobilizing local participation, documenting endangered practices, and mediating between state and community actors to sustain cultural continuity. In the article by Beliakova (2019), cultural preservation by civil society is not limited to bottom-up approaches, which inform the government and international organizations of related issues. It also includes top-down approaches, interpreting the strategies and actions that will enable the new generation to see, comprehend,

and live with the experiences left by the previous generation, and in turn conserve them for future generations.

Van der Auwera and Schramme (2021) highlight the crucial role of civil society in safeguarding both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. They emphasize the urgent necessity of civil society engagement in protecting public goods, given the market's and the state's inadequacies in fulfilling this responsibility. Their argument hinges on the efforts of some European non-governmental organizations in sustaining cultures such as the Europa Nostra and Net Heritage, that assigns priority to the conservation of tangible and immovable cultural heritage; European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH), responsible for coordination of cultural associations; The Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO), responsible for keeping and promoting the importance of cultural heritage.

Just as the works of the aforementioned CSOs in European cultural conservation indicate, empirical studies of community museums, and organizing festivals across Africa provide a multi-level approach to protecting cultures by several bodies, including civil society. Acquah and Mensah (2021) illustrate the integration of music and dance into the formal curriculum by Ghanaian societies under the core subject of Cultural Studies, while Karega-Munene (2011) documents the contribution of Kenyan community museums, under the auspices of Community Peace Museums (CPMs), to the development of civic identity. These instances demonstrate that CSOs can convert marginalized traditions into acknowledged civic assets; yet, success often depends on institutional integration-connections to educational institutions, media, and policy-and on inclusive governance frameworks that prevent elite appropriation.

In a nutshell, several studies on intangible heritage preservation (Kaschula 2002) and culinary knowledge, such as indigenous food, as well as literature, including traditional music (Nyarota et al. 2022), emphasize the importance of documentation, archiving, festivals, and digitalization as methods adopted by CSOs for preserving vulnerable folklore. These methods are applicable in contexts such as Kambari communities, where many ancestral traditions, including magic, music, traditional medicine, and ritual performances, are threatened by language shift, religious change, and migration. The reviewed literature indicates that in the modern world, where cultural goods are at risk of extinction and degradation, CSOs are distinctly equipped to orchestrate multimodal preservation festivals, orthographic initiatives, archival publications, and apprenticeship programs; however, they must contend with political economy limitations and the politics of authenticity to achieve sustainable results.

Who are the Kambari?

The word Kambari is the name the people choose to identify with. The Kambari are divided initially into six sub-ethnic groups: *Awunci* (their parent stock), *Avadi, Agadi, Akimba, Agaushi,* and *Ashen*. Kambari people are mainly found in ten Local Government Areas: Ngaski, Yauri, Shanga, Sakaba, Rijau, Mashegu, Magama, Kontagora, Borgu, and Agwara (Wara 2016). The first four local governments are located in Kebbi State, while the last six local governments are found in Niger State, Nigeria. Some Kambari people are also found in Nasarawa and Kwara states in north-central Nigeria (Rabiu 2024).

There is a territory called Kambariland (Wara 2010), which is located on the east bank of the River Niger in the present Yauri (Salamone 1987) and Kontagora Emirates of Kebbi and Niger States, Nigeria. Along with Hausas, there are a few non-Kambari ethnic groups that also reside in this territory, mainly concentrated in three towns: Birnin Yauri, Agwara, and Ngaski. This territory stretched for more than fifty kilometers to the east of the River Niger (Wara 2016).

A renowned historian of the Hausa and Kambari people, Professor Mahdi Adamu, contends that one of the ancient kingdoms, which may have existed near Hausaland by 1200 A.D., was the Kambari kingdom known as Maginga, with Old Agwara as its administrative center. The political history of Yauri shows that when the Hausa began to establish their rule in the Yauri area towards the end of the 14th century, they

found the Kambari chieftaincy of Maginga, which the Hausa later dominated to date (Adamu 1982). The Kambari were the earliest group to occupy the Yauri area, settling there before the Mali and Songhay invasions of the 13th to 15th centuries (Salamone 1987). Therefore, their long-established settlement in the area could justify their claim to own the area as their own, known as Kambariland (Wara 2018). However, this claim for Kambariland is challenged by the tradition of origin of the parent stock of the Kambari people that is the Awunci, which says that they, the Awunci, were migrants from Mecca in Saudi Arabia who left that area when Mecca was conquered by the Muslim forces in the 7th century A.D. How long it took them to get to where they settled finally in the Yauri area is not given in the tradition. So, the Kambari were not the autochthons of the territory they now occupied. They were immigrants at one stage in the past (Wara 2010).

Upon their arrival, the Kambari established three significant settlements: Old Agwara as their administrative headquarters, Macupa as their commercial center, and Sawuni as their spiritual center, where the chief priest resided (Wara 2016). The dominant social institution governing the affairs of the Kambari was religion, which practiced distinct customs entirely different from those of the Middle East, where they claimed to have originated.

Approximately 80% of the Kambari reside in rural areas, with a sizable number still adhering to African Traditional Religion. However, many have adhered to Islam or Christianity (Agana, 2017); (Wara, 2018). Regarding language, Kambari has three language clusters: Salka Area Kambari (Tsishingini), Auna-Wara Area Kambari (Tsikimba), and Agwara Area Kambari (Cishingini). These three co-languages are being developed by the Kambari Language Project (KLP) (Stark 2010), an organization established in 1992, which was tasked with developing the Kambari writing system, promoting the Kambari language, and preserving its culture and traditions. Regarding occupation, they are mostly rural farmers who cultivate guinea corn, millet, rice, and sorghum. They are regarded as the nation's top farmers, residing in the country's fertile areas (Gunn & Conant 1960). They also hire some Fulbe ethnic groups to rear their animals on their behalf.

Kambari Cultural Practices

One of the dominant social institutions that governed the affairs of the Kambari was customs. Customs, like their religion, give meaning to their lives (Gunn & Conant 1960). Before the middle of the 20th century, the Kambari appeared to be one of the strictest adherents of African traditional religion and customs in Nigeria and West Africa (Adamu & Wara 2014). By the middle of the 20th century, in addition to the Islamic and Christian influences, colonialism emerged as one of the key factors that broke the iron wall of the Kambaris' strict adherence to their customs. In the midst of this cultural erosion, CSOs emerged as a panacea for the cultural decay of the Kambari cultural heritage.

Civil societies, comprising local associations and community-based cultural groups that function independently of state structures while participating in developmental and heritage-focused initiatives (Isar 2022), are now referred to as 'cultural actors' and 'ethnic third sectors' (Lalich 2010), due to their significant contributions to cultural preservation (Fisher & Fox 2001). In the Kambari communities, civil society has served as a custodian of cultural identity, especially in the face of cultural erosion. Some of the customs that have existed among the Kambari since antiquity include tribal marks, traditional dresses, marriage, child naming, burial, medical care, and witchcraft, as well as music and dances, most of which have become extinct or are endangered. Below are overviews of some significant customs of the Kambari people.

TRIBAL MARKS

Across Nigeria and beyond, particularly in countries where similar practices have been reinterpreted through aesthetic or ethnographic lenses, tribal marks are increasingly viewed as archaic. However, in the

past, they functioned simultaneously as expressions of beauty and enduring symbols of lineage, kinship, and communal belonging (Adisa et al. 2024). The Kambari tribal marks and traits are no exception to these reasons. Moreover, within the old Kambari culture, individuals are perceived as unattractive, asocial, fearful, or impoverished if they lack body marking (Bisalla 2017). To be social, attractive, powerful, showcase their richness, and differentiate themselves from other ethnic groups and their subgroups, the Kambari Akimba inscribed vertical marks on their faces, cheeks, and foreheads; this distinguished them from Kambari, who inscribed 11 and 19 thin facial marks. Besides identification, the Kambari had such marks on their bodies for inoculation, which involved injecting traditional medicine into the body to protect them from contracting certain communicable diseases (Cidawa 2024; Gimba 2024). Barashe (2024) stated that beautification is also a significant objective of tribal marks among the Kambari, for they consider it just as some people regard tattoos in the modern era. Despite its significance, by the end of the 20th century, most Kambari had abandoned their tribal marks and customs due to the influence of Islam and Western culture (Wara 2010). The majority of them now regard the tribal marks as an outdated culture. Today, such facial marks can only be seen on the faces of a few septuagenarians and octogenarians Kambaris; for this reason, we code this custom among the partially active ones.

DRESSES

Generally, the protection of the body, beautification, and cultural display are among the objectives of the Kambari's traditional dress. Like in all traditions, cultural clothes represent the Kambari clan, which the modern Kambaris barely use; in other words, the Kambari traditional garments have transcended their original functions as modernity envelops indigenous African communities. When Hausa immigrants began to settle among the Kambari in large numbers, the hosts started to adopt the dress styles of the newcomers. Lately, the Kambari and the Hausa have begun to dress alike (Wara 2016). This cultural mixture or intercultural connections subjugated the Kambari traditional dressing. They even sent it into extinction because Kambaris are now hardly seen dressed in their traditional attire, except during cultural events, one of the methods taken to revive or remember the forgotten tradition.

Figure 2. Contemporary Kambari girls wearing attire that echoes traditional dress patterns, symbolizing the continuity of cultural identity within changing social settings.
Source: https://www.101lasttribes.com/tribes/kambari.html Reproduced with permission

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

The most important social institution that occupies a place of great significance in Kambari social life is marriage. It is a significant source of internal stability and population growth, whose laws and regulations

are made and strictly adhered to. Usually, when a baby girl is born, any interested parent sends some spices, such as *Majigi* and *Aledi* oil, which are usually used to bathe the newborn baby. The gift was the first gesture that manifested courtship, and those items were accepted after some inquiries were made about the parents who brought them (Wara 2010). However, the actual preparations for the marriage began when the couple reached puberty, around fifteen years. At this stage, the groom's parents visit the bride's parents in the evening to reaffirm their intentions. However, this early marriage arrangement of the ancient Kambaris is somewhat inactive due to the conflict of ideas and the lack of a suitable match that usually arises between the families or the suitors. Most girls have rejected the boys they were betrothed to when they grew up, especially when they find passionate love for another person. For this reason, most modern Kambaris no longer accept or arrange childhood betrothal marriage traditions.

Figure 3. Picture showing how Kambari's bachelors are courting
Source: Taken by the first author

STEALING AND ELOPING WITH ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE

Another matrimonial custom and tradition adopted by the Kambari communities is the practice of stealing and eloping with another man's wife. The Awunci group started this cultural practice. The act was initiated and executed out of love between the couple, not force. It usually occurred when the initial engagement between the couple was broken, and the girl's parents were reluctant or refused to approve her new choice. This system was discarded before the middle of the 20th century, especially among the Akimba, Agaushi, and Ashen, due to its complexity, which often resulted in tragic outcomes and strained relationships, according to Giwa, the late Village Head, during an interview conducted with the first author in 2012 (Wara 2016).

This alternative Kambari traditional marriage system has been revived in modern times, despite being located in a very remote area of Kambari land. According to Danbabule (2024), a few occurrences of eloping with someone's wife by a former suitor among the native Kambaris who live in far villages have been realized in the past decade. Because such marriage traditions, which resurface in the 21st century, occur only in very few instances, particularly in Kambari's remote areas, we code them as somewhat inactive.

KAMBARI NAMING CEREMONY

For the first four days after the birth of a child, the woman typically eats tuwo, a type of solid food made from millet or sorghum, and traditional vegetable soup, which is prepared with toka, a type of water obtained by straining water mixed with ash. The meal is prepared with beef and fish, but no salt (Wara 2016). The child would be named and shown to the relatives on the fourth day. The paternal father-in-law would give the child a name. The child's birth room was swept, and the sweepings were deposited at the crossroads. A feast is made for the relations on this occasion. Generally, Kambari cultural names often reflect the individuals' personal history, including their cultural backgrounds. For instance, Azona is a name given to a child born on the farm, and female children born a day before the market day are named Ngero (Dantata 2018). Those born on the market day often took the name Tarmasu. Rodi is a child born with a big umbilical cord (navel). Those born on the feast days would take the name of the *Tsafi* (fetish). The Kambaris' feasts include Lata, Shende, and Gwazali (Blake 2018). Other traditional Kambari names were Mawani, Kunola, Doshi, Shinkana, Zuokuna, Shilaje, Apeli, and Meshili. On the fourth day after birth, the grandmother of a male child would show the child a toy bow and three arrows and would say: 'When you grow up, may you be a successful hunter.' The toy bow and the arrows were then thrown away at the crossroads with the sweepings of the room mentioned above. Likewise, a *galma* (hoe) was shown to the child with the prayer that he be a successful farmer. A fishing rod is also shown to him so that he can be a fisherman in the future (Wara 2010).

This traditional naming system, peculiar to Kambari, has been declining as the progressive religious conversion of the Kambari, particularly from the late 19th century onward, precipitated a widespread abandonment of indigenous onomastic practices in favor of Muslim and Christian names. However, in some Kambari-dominated villages, the traditional naming ceremony is still being practiced, and it is organized very effectively, attracting the attention of most Kambari, including those living in the cities, who have developed the habit of attending such naming ceremonies in the villages.

KAMBARI BURIAL SYSTEM

The Kambari believed in an afterlife wherein virtuous individuals would receive rewards and malevolent ones would face punishment. In their belief system, at death, an individual's soul immediately ascends to a designated realm known as *Ukushi* (Wara 2016), where it is united with its ancestors. A man who married a virgin would meet her again at *Ukushi,* a place where a girl re-joins her first husband in the spirit world for the continuation of life (Kirk-Greene 1972).

When death occurred, the deceased would not be buried until all his family members had been summoned to pay a farewell visit to him. After this, a pit would be dug, either in his own house or near it (Jibrin 2024). The body would be strapped, with the hands and feet tied tightly with a cord, and the head inclined upwards. Upon the death of a king or any royal family member, various drummers would be summoned to perform, each playing their drums, as the king was adorned in his finest garments before being interred (Danbabule 2024). If the deceased were ordinary, some cowries would be placed beneath his headrest after the visit from his family members. Some *maro*-(beer) in a calabash and tobacco would be placed on his side. The belief was that the deceased would use the money to buy some provisions while residing at *Ukushi* . Likewise, if the deceased was a professional hunter, his dogs, after being slaughtered, were buried with him, including his spears, bow and arrows, and his musket loaded with bullets, to assist him in his peregrinations in the other world.[1]

1 That was the type of burial arrangement reportedly practiced by the neighboring communities living along the Niger River bank, as described by European explorers like Hugh Clapperton and his servant, Richard Lander, when they visited the area around 1828.

Today, the Kambari burial trait can only be seen in their stage dramas and read in some publications. The advent of Islam and Christianity has made the Kambari, who mostly converted to the two religions, abandon the traditional burial system, as most of them considered it a fetish. Nevertheless, to preserve such norms, pictures of the previous traditions are displayed in most of the display halls of Kambari's language promotion centers or civil society branches found in Kambariland, especially in the branches of AKAPA (Jibril 2024). Moreover, in frequent short dramas typically organized by the Kambari youths in their localities, the ancient burial system is dramatized, recorded, and preserved at language project centers, and then uploaded to social media sites to promote Kambari cultural norms and traditions. According to our interview respondents, the frequent gatherings of Kambari youth at cultural and language centers, as well as communal spaces, to view these films and watch these pictures demonstrate the renewed cultural engagement and increasing significance of traditional practices in the consciousness of the younger population.

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

The Kambari believed in magic and witchcraft, and when death occurred, sometimes it was attributed to supernatural causes. The dead body would be carried around the settlement by the members of the bereaved family, who believed that its feet would guide them to the door of the murderer (Wara 2016). When such a door was reached, the feet of the dead body would push open the door. The Village Head would then confiscate the properties in the house and enslave all the members of the guilty family, except one son, who would be left behind to serve as an exemplary model to the rest of the citizens. This practice was said to eliminate enemies in society (Temple 1965). Although no specific occurrence can be recalled, many inferences have been made regarding previous occurrences of such traditions in literature and their display in current regular Kambari cultural events.

TRADITIONAL MEDICAL SYSTEM

Traditionally, the Kambari society attributed all illness to supernatural causes. Treatment, therefore, involved the exorcism of the invading spirit (*Aljani*), followed by a direct medical attack on the malady, usually using herbs and roots. Many diseases were readily recognized and identified, but since their appearance was always ascribed to a spiritual force, malign or offended, no cure could be affected until this contamination had been removed. The afflicted individual, therefore, consulted an oracle or witch doctor (*Boka*) through the power and permission of the chief priest (*Magono Kumeli*) for assistance in identifying and expelling the intruding force, usually found to be the agent of a witch's spell. However, sometimes, it might be brought about by the alleged activities of a displeased ancestor (Wara 2016).

Typically, a process of transferring the disease was introduced, sometimes withdrawing the disease from the patient's body using incantation and transposing it to an animal provided for the purpose. In other cases, sucking the affected part of the body would be done, performing the rite often at a crossroads so that the patient could proceed along one path while his malady departed by another route. The victim might then receive unique charms or amulets to prevent recurrence. The witch doctor would then proceed to the business of curing the disease itself, which would be accomplished after long hours of *Tsafi* (fetish) work, performed through the *Bori* dance, where *Maro* was consumed in large quantities (Garba 2006). These days, despite the introduction and establishment of modern medical cures and facilities, such as hospitals and dispensaries, which have been gradually exerting a far-reaching influence on the Kambari's traditional medicine, including the use of herbs and other decoctions to treat diseases, is still practiced. To prevent the decline of the Kambari traditional medical culture, herbalists, under the supervision of community organizations, typically organize local seminars where they teach the youth about different herbs, leaves, and roots, as well as how these are used to cure specific diseases, including tetanus and snake bites (Danbabule

2024). The seminars are usually organized through oral storytelling and demonstrations to pass knowledge from elders to younger generations.

BOXING (DAMBE KAYI)

The Kambari traditional boxing, also known as Dambe kayi or night boxing, is usually staged in bright moonlight. It is a show of strength and talent where young men challenge their age-mates. According to Giwa, the late Village Head, in 2012, the boxing contest was staged in three consecutive rounds, and whoever emerged as the winner by defeating the rest of his opponents would be given gifts, such as money, and even be engaged to a girl for marriage purposes (Wara 2016). This tradition has remained a source of strong family relationships among the different Kambari groups, such as the Agaushi, and even among non-Kambari groups, like the Lopawa and Busawa.

The remote Kambari societies still practice some of these traditional sports activities; civil societies organize cultural events to preserve these cultures, even among those residing in towns and cities. Every year after harvest, the city of Kambari societies usually invite traditional Kambari boxers from the villages to participate in Kambari boxing competitions. During such competitions, news agencies are invited to record the events, which are stored on DVDs and distributed to the public (Barashe 2024). Television stations that cover such events air them on their channels so the nation can see the rich Kambari culture. At the end of the events, Kamabari traditional recipes are prepared and distributed to non-Kambaris who honored the events. These kinds of events, which invite all and sundry, allow the Kambari society to promote its ancient culture to the larger society, thereby preserving it for future generations.

SINGING AND DANCING

Usually, all ceremonies among the Kambari were accompanied by special dances. Women used to sing in praise of farmers, fishermen, warriors, hunters, or the best dancers. One of the famous Kambari dances is the *Leku* dance, which originated in Avadi. Other Kambari groups also borrowed it from them. It was a competitive dance in which the male youths tried to outdo each other by displaying their stylish talents. The dance was accompanied by the drumming of different melodies (Wara 2016). In wedding ceremonies, the bride (or brides) would be carried on the shoulders of the youths wearing leg bracelets, which jingled as they danced around the arena to the delight of the spectators, as Dangado (2012) stated.

Malango, also known as *Malangwam* dance, was a traditional Awunci dance staged to mark the successful harvesting of the millet (*gero*), the staple food of the Kambari (Wara 2010). Longhorns and drums were used to provide a beautiful melody. Other groups of the Kambari later adopted the Malangwam as one of their traditional dances.

The Masanga dance was a traditional Awunci dance that other Kambari groups also adopted. Historically, it was organized to commemorate a fruitful harvest season. The young men donned headgear adorned with vibrant ostrich feathers (Wara 2016). Dangado said they would adorn their legs and hands with several leglets. Each dancer would wield a large galma-hoe, which he would toss into the air and retrieve while performing.

In the record, the Kambari cultural troupes are remembered for their benevolent participation during the 1977 rehearsal of the Second World African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos City. They cheerfully entertained the crowd with Leku, Masanga, and Malangwam dances (Wara 2015). Some of these dances can be found on YouTube channels sponsored by the Kambari civil societies to preserve their culture (DUGGA 2025).

Agili dance is primarily called 'naked dance' and was observed by the Avadi subgroups, where the young ladies appeared naked as they danced. This type of dance is usually organized after the harvest of all farm

products (Wara 2016). The dance was for a beauty contest specifically displayed by non-married women, but attended by a large crowd on every occasion. It lasts 3 to 4 consecutive days, and every Avadi settlement used to organize its own independently. The winner would emerge as Queen Miss Kambari. Both Islam and Christianity have objections to nudity, consequent upon which the *agili* dance ended. Nowadays, even the Kambari traditional religionists embrace modesty, covering their bodies entirely, a new tradition that the Hausa etiquette has since championed.

*Ugunu (*also called *Agunu)* dance or festival dance takes place two weeks before the heavy farm work commences, usually around May. A drum known as Tulu was played during the *Ugunu* dance. *Adembayo* is another dance typically performed at marriage ceremonies to enhance the event's vibrancy (Wara 2010). The Ganga drums were struck, and women, guided by their principal vocalist, Abiya, danced while bearing leaves. The Avadi group of Kambari mainly practices this kind of dance during ceremonies.

Figure 4. Picture showing Kambari men's cultural troupe
Source: https://kambari.org/en/photo-speak/pictures Reproduced with permission

A NEW DAWN: THE RISE OF THE KAMBARI CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

As Table 1 shows, many Kambari customs have begun to fade away and others are almost lost. However, efforts have been taking place towards cultural revivalism among the Kambari people (Gimba 2024).

Given the foregoing discussions that expounded on the forces of cultural decline, the Kambari have relinquished almost all their customs to the new cultural values. Contacts with people of diverse cultures, including those with Islamic and Christian influences, as well as Western education, contributed significantly to the cultural change among the Kambari ethnicity. By the end of the 20th century, the Kambari had almost become a *Hausanized* society that practiced Hausa ethics. Islam and Christianity have taken a considerable lead in their society (Wara, 2016)

By 2011, an organized Kambari union, the All Kambari Progressive Association (AKAPA), was established in Salka town, Magama Local Government Area, Niger State, where its maiden annual cultural festival was held. According to Alhaji Muhammadu Dogo Bawa Salka, the District Head of Salka, the festival aims to preserve the Kambari cultural heritage, including dances, and extend a hand of friendship to fellow Kambari people worldwide (Hamagam 2014). The cultural gathering attracted a large audience, including both Kambari and non-Kambari individuals, as well as those from beyond the Nigerian region, where ancient Kambari cultural music and dances, such as Malangwam, Adembayo, Agunu, and Leku, were showcased. According to Cidawa the ceremony rekindled the joyful spirits of friendship and love because surprising contacts had been re-established between many adults who had spent 50 years or more without seeing or hearing from each other.

Table 1. Significant customs of the Kambari, their meaning, status, and preservation efforts

Number	Significant customs of the Kambari	Meaning	Objectives	Status	Preservation effort
1	**Tribal Marks**	Marks on the face and body	For identification, beautification, and inoculation	Partially Active	Organizing cultural events where performers with traditional marks often appear in traditional costumes, and pictorial publications to document tribal marks
2	**Dresses**	They wear traditional Kambari clothes	Protection and beautification	Inactive	Organizing cultural events where performers often appear in traditional costumes
3	**Kambari marriage ceremony**	A system of marriage particular to the Kambari people	Societal sustainability, stability, and cultural protection	Somewhat inactive	Organizing short films and dramas that show the traditional Kambari Marriage custom
4	**Stealing and eloping with one's wife**	It is a marriage whereby a former suitor elopes with someone's wife.	Alternative marriage	Somewhat inactive	Organizing fake bride and villagers' day events, displaying Kambari traditional marriage customs during the modern-day wedding ceremonies
5	**Kambari naming ceremony**	Welcoming a new baby into the family and community	For the identity and individuality of the child	Partially active	Organizing an effective naming ceremony, fairy tales
6	**Kambari burial system**	Inhumation	Transition to Glory	Inactive	Organizing short films and dramas where performers depict how the Kambari antique burial system was done.

Table 1. continued

Number	Significant customs of the Kambari	Meaning	Objectives	Status	Preservation effort
7	**Magic and witchcraft**	Extraordinary power	Spiritual means to eliminate enemies	Inactive	Organizing cultural activities such as festivals where performers display magic activities
8	**Traditional medical system**	Traditional medicine	Treatment of diseases	Active	Organizing local seminars where experts transfer the knowledge of traditional medicine to the youth
9	**Boxing**	Traditional boxing	Inter-villages competitions	Partially active	Organizing cultural activities such as festivals where traditional boxers compete
10	**Dances**	Naked and harvest dances	Choosing the village beauty pageant	Partially active	Organizing short films, cultural activities, and dramas where performers dance in Kambari's antique style

Source: Prepared by the authors

Besides promoting unity among the Kambari sub-groups, cultural exchanges, and understanding, the Kambari organizations aim to revive and protect traditional Kambari practices, customs, and rituals to ensure their continuation for future generations. The movement would also promote the conservation of Kambari cultural artifacts and historical objects. Cultural sustenance would reaffirm the Kambari cultural values, traditions, and beliefs- promoting a sense of cultural identity and belonging. This movement, if continued, would empower the community to reclaim its cultural heritage through social cohesion.

This exceptional effort in cultural memorialization has been complemented by the indigenous Kambari elites and intellectuals, who have successfully risen to various civil service positions in and outside Nigeria. The Kambari, irrespective of their differences in sub-ethnic, religious or social status, come together annually to celebrate their customs under the umbrella of AKAPA. The AKAPA 2023 festival, held in Kontagora, Niger State, drew a large audience. This is dedicated entirely to the memory of the Kambaris' glorious past. The 2024 annual Kambari National Day was held in Minna City, the administrative capital of Niger State, Nigeria, on December 19, where several cultural display events took place. This yearly social gathering significantly contributes to reviving Kambari's customs in society.

Kambari Civil Society in Cultural Preservation

The effort to promote the culture and traditions of the Kambari people of Nigeria, now increasingly eroded by dominant cultural forces and globalization, centers on the initiatives of ethnocultural public associations-a form of CSOs committed to preserving Kambari identity. The Kambari associations act as custodians of collective memory, working to protect distinctive cultural expressions such as tribal marks, traditional attire, marriage practices, music, indigenous medicine, and spiritual customs from degradation and possible extinction. Their activities reveal an ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity, as they seek to adapt cultural heritage to contemporary realities without erasing its authenticity. Evidence from semi-structured interviews, corroborated by existing literature on cultural safeguarding, has indicated that these associations have achieved partial success in their preservation efforts. They have been particularly effective in performative domains, for example, organizing cultural festivals, documenting oral histories, and promoting traditional crafts-thereby ensuring visibility and intergenerational awareness. However, they face challenges in addressing the more profound socio-cultural transformations driven by urbanization, religious change, and shifting youth identities. Thus, while these CSOs represent a critical link between cultural revival and social adaptation, their impact remains uneven, demonstrating both the resilience and fragility of Kambari's intangible heritage in a rapidly globalizing world.

In situations of high linguistic diversity, such as that of the Kambari, language promotion is seen as a fundamental part of cultural survival. However, it remains one of the most difficult and challenging tasks (Chiatoh 2014). In an increasingly multilingual environment with both a substantial foreign language presence and the Nigerian lingua franca, Hausa, Kambari CSOs consider that preserving their language is crucial for maintaining their overall cultural identity. This aligns with Dantata's (2022) argument that language functions as a medium through which a community's social and cultural realities are expressed, evaluated, and reproduced, making linguistic survival a prerequisite for heritage continuity. Interviews with leaders of Kambari associations confirmed that various community-based groups have consolidated under a unified framework—the Kambari Language Project (KLP) – in promoting the use and documentation of their multiple language clusters (Stark 2011). The project emphasizes both spoken fluency and literacy development through the design of orthography and community workshops. By doing so, Kambari CSOs move beyond mere preservation toward active revitalization, ensuring that language remains a living conduit of collective memory, knowledge transmission, and cultural resilience amid homogenizing global influences.

In the Kambari culture, indigenous tattooing presents the most significant challenges for CSOs in reviving traditions under threat in an era of globalization and human rights awareness. Scarification is considered child abuse in the Nigerian Child Rights Act (Abolaji, Hussein & Ro 2019), which makes its physical application illegal. Kambari CSOs have had to redraw their lines of preservation from one of reproduction to one of symbolic conservation. Instead of attempting to revive the act itself, these organizations now focus on documenting, interpreting, and contextualizing tribal marks as cultural signifiers of identity and social belonging. Interview participants emphasized that local associations have prioritized preserving the meanings and social logic behind the markings rather than their corporeal expression. This adaptive approach illustrates the negotiated nature of cultural revival, where safeguarding heritage increasingly involves transforming practice into memory and digital archive, rather than literal continuity. In doing so, Kambari CSOs balance cultural fidelity with ethical and legal realities, ensuring that identity markers once inscribed on the skin endure as symbols embedded in collective consciousness.

Jibrin of Laka Community Development Association succinctly informed us that in response to the gradual decline of the Kambari's tribal-mark tradition, various CSOs have implemented preservation initiatives, including promoting cultural events, heritage documentation projects, and community publications. These activities are critical strategies for sustaining the symbolic and aesthetic significance of scarification within Kambari cultural identity. According to Melevu, majority of participants in the

interviews indicate that the Kambari associations, including the All Kambari Progressive Association (AKAPA) and the Kimo Development Association, have been documenting pictures of people with tribal marks in their archives (Melevu 2024). In short films and dramas sponsored by these organizations, the various facial marks associated with Kambari are typically depicted. This supports Saxena's (2023) analysis of the intricate synergy between cinema and the preservation of cultural heritage. His works regard cinema as a vital instrument of cultural preservation for local communities in an increasingly global world. In the modern era, due to ongoing social and cultural programs, an increasing number of Kambari youth have adopted the symbolic use of tribal marks during festivals and communal ceremonies. The emerging trend represents a creative adaptation of ancestral traditions, transforming scarification from a permanent identity marker into a temporary and expressive medium for cultural affirmation. By doing so, the younger generations will be kept aware of their forefathers' traditions, thereby preventing the disappearance of such customs in the current and future generations.

To sustain traditions of entertainment, such as traditional dress, singing, and dancing, the Kambari CSOs have played a vital role. They conduct yearly cultural events, where competitions are held for the finest traditional dress, the most genuine rendition of Kambari songs, and the most dynamic dances. Kambari CSOs engage in cultural exhibitions where capable young men and women wear traditional garments. Evidence from the interviews indicates that this practice serves not only to preserve the ancient dressing customs but also to educate younger generations about the authentic traditions of their ancestors. In the annual Kambari National Day, organized by AKAPA, several displays and cultural events showcase authentic Kambari traditions. Events are covered and broadcast on various channels, indicating that digital platforms can evolve into interactive repositories of cultural knowledge, transforming heritage preservation from static archival storage into a participatory and continuously expanding process (Pramartha & Davis 2016). According to the interviewees, the regular display of Kambari traditional attire at festivals and community events reflects the effectiveness of CSO-led cultural initiatives aimed at sustaining indigenous practices. They noted that this recurring visual presence functions as a living ethnography – a dynamic representation through which the Kambari people continually reaffirm and transmit their cultural heritage.

With the sole aim of avoiding contamination or being overshadowed by the overwhelming music and dance culture of the neighboring dominant ethnic group, the Hausa, the Kambari local associations have taken a step further to protect their singing and dancing traditions (Barashe & Cidawa 2024). Aside from organizing Kambari National Day, where cultural acts, including dancing and singing, are showcased, Kambari groups, mainly sponsored by AKAPA and Birnin Yauri Kambuwa Community Development Association, participate in the inter-ethnic yearly performances such as the Argungu Fishing Festival and Yauri Rigata Festival, where they perform and share their ancestral culture with the general public. In these festivals, international and national media outlets cover and broadcast the events, which helps sustain and illustrate the people's cultural values. The Kambari dance and songs are also recorded and uploaded by YouTubers, a method of preserving such traditions in the 21st century (Atiku 2025). The festivals showcasing Kambari culture have each attracted more than 500,000 domestic and international spectators (Asogwa, Umeh, & Okwoche 2012, p. 244). Therefore, the events not only promote culture but also generate local income, resonating with the notion of heritage as development, as described by Tleane (2024). These events, which feature cultural displays by the Kambari and neighboring groups, such as the Gungawa (Tour Nigeria n.d.), generate revenue while representing a significant initiative to memorialize the distinctive cultural traditions of the region.

The Kambari are one of the ethnic groups that practice two distinct marriage systems: formal and informal. While the former is the legal system, the latter is an alternative marriage system, involving stealing and eloping with someone else's wife (`*Kwanto*` *or* `*anje*`). Even though this may seem disruptive from an outsider's perspective, their cultural framework governs it. However, it is important to note that the Kambari alternative marriage tradition clashes violently with Nigerian law and contemporary understandings of

gender-based violence and consent. Thus, CSOs find themselves in a difficult position in considering the revival of this practice. As explained by Danbabule of AKAPA 'we cannot revive all our customs in this 21st century'. Moreover, Barashe of Maburo Community Development Association and Cidawa of Birnin Yauri Kambuwa Community Development Association informed us that their organizations can now only sponsor films and dramas to display the elopement traditions that were popularly practiced (Cidawa 2024). This is evidence that theatre has traditionally been an essential medium for conserving and transmitting cultural legacy, providing a vibrant stage for historical storytelling (Khan 2024), where physical cultural revival becomes cumbersome.

Today, Kambari organizations, notably the Laka Community Development Association and the Kambuwa Community Development Association, have staged dramas in many villages that depict the early marriage arrangements of the Kambari (Gimba 2024). These kinds of dramas are generally organized by the leaders of the Kambari society in collaboration with the youth at the end of the harvesting season. The records of such short films and dramas are saved in drives and other gadgets for future reference.

Another attempt to preserve the Kambari traditional marriage tradition is the incorporation of 'fake bride' and 'villagers' day' into modern wedding ceremonies. The fake bride stands in for the real bride in some traditional events. She typically wears traditional attire and performs like the ancient Kambari brides during formal rituals (Jibril 2024). Kambari and other prominent groups in Nigeria also incorporate the villagers' day into modern marriage events. On that day, the bride and groom, their families, and well-wishers dressed in traditional attire sing ancient songs and perform traditional dances after eating traditional foods. These events are typically conducted in the same way as the ancient Kambaris orchestrated their wedding rituals, so they are categorized as methods to preserve traditional Kambari marriage customs within contemporary culture. In this context, community-led ceremonies, such as cultural festivals, become vital in ensuring cultural continuity (Ponnen & Arulmozi 2025). With the efforts of CSOs such as Kimo Associations, Kambari communities effectively preserve and revitalize their cultural heritage, ensuring the continuity of symbolic practices within evolving social contexts.

Similarly, the preservation of related cultural practices such as traditional boxing, naming ceremony, traditional medicine, burial, magic and witchcraft showcase a nuanced success considering the influence of youth among the local association in what Cheng, Li, & Ma (2014) refer to as bottom-up voluntarism in cultural preservation through raising funds and support from sympathetic associations to sponsor the promotion of local traditions like boxing. Kambari CSOs, such as the Birnin Yauri Kambuwa Community Development Association, have partnered with local entrepreneurs to organize traditional Kambari boxing tournaments, which promote the unique Kambari sport. This effort has garnered governmental interest for inclusion in prominent regional events, such as the Rigata Cultural Festival and the Argungu Fishing Festival, as well as the global trend of indigenous games being rejuvenated for cultural identity and tourism opportunities. Nevertheless, integrating this practice into broader traditions may diminish its more profound spiritual importance, presenting a fundamental tension in cultural revivalism where authenticity clashes with sustainability (Alberts & Hazen 2010). The naming rituals have seen a revival, attributed to the efforts of local societies. CSOs encourage young parents to choose traditional Kambari names, rather than adopting more common Hausa or English names. They distribute brochures and hold community workshops on the importance and consequences of these names. This initiative has achieved modest success, as urban and diaspora Kambari are routinely invited to participate in traditional naming ceremonies still practiced by rural communities. Such inclusive gatherings serve as a deliberate cultural strategy to reinforce continuity between generations and to sustain the symbolic and ritual dimensions of Kambari naming traditions for newborns. In addition, fairy tales by the Kambaris also encapsulate a tradition in which the history of a clan is passed on to current and future generations. In such tales, clan traditions are narrated to the youth to educate them about the habits of their ancestors. Based on field interviews, informants reported that short dramas featuring traditional Kambari names have an influence on local youth. Evidence of this impact

includes the widespread adoption of traditional names as nicknames among peers, which in many cases have supplanted the use of their given names in social contexts.

Kambari CSOs, such as the Kimo Development Association, also sought to legitimize aspects of Kambari traditional medicine, reconciling spirituality with contemporary sensibilities. According to Gimba of Kambuwa Community Development Association, by supporting healers in recording medicinal flora and disseminating non-esoteric practices to local health facilities, we have been legitimizing and renewing elements of Kambari traditional medicine, including herbal knowledge and spiritual healing. Although some Christian and Islamic scholars criticize this development, local leaders consider it a preservation of indigenous epistemology. Scholars like Mazzocchi (2018) indicate that such integration reflects 'epistemic pluralism', where a variety of knowledge coexists and impacts the social context. Another approach of transferring this traditional medical knowledge is through master-apprentice relations, which are conducted under the tutelage of local associations. Some apprentices serve under the supervision of experts in traditional medicine for a period of up to two to three years. According to Cidawa (2024), they will work with him, offering assistance to patients while participating in the process of obtaining and preparing the medicine. By doing so, they learn the principles of such ancient medical practices and become experts in the field over time. Field interviews indicate a growing prevalence of traditional medicinal practices in Kambari and neighboring households. This trend suggests that the educational hubs established by CSOs effectively promote this tradition within and beyond the Kambari community.

The growing influence of Islam and Christianity has compelled many Kambari people to abandon traditional burial rites, as well as practices of magic and witchcraft once believed to guide the soul and safeguard the living. To prevent the extinction of such practices, local Kambari CSOs have adopted strategies to preserve them, primarily through presenting them as museum exhibits and symbolic retention amid socioreligious and legal prohibitions. As the leader of Kimo Development Association described it in an interview, 'it is difficult these days to promote and practice certain rituals without facing stigma, which make our successes in preserving them limited'. This reflection highlights the tension between cultural autonomy and religious conformity, illustrating how heritage preservation in the Kambari context has shifted from active ritual performance to archival and representational revival, constrained by the contested nature of magic and spirituality in modern Nigerian society.

Despite these challenges, the Kambari CSOs organize the Kambari National Day to display and protect their intangible heritage (Sacko 2021). Several examples, including magic and witchcraft traditions are thus socially conserved (Kambariproject 2025). This coincides with the view of Kahana (2009) on 'cultural reenactments', when culturally specific historical events are performed for educational and entertainment purposes. Moreover, the Kambari societies typically sponsor workshops and seminars where scholars are invited to present on various aspects of Kambari ethics and culture, including ancient Kambari norms and magic, which serve as avenues for promoting and preserving Kambari cultural practices. Data from field interviews suggest that the consistently high attendance of youth at CSO-led educational programs on ancestral traditions indicates that these initiatives have a significant impact on cultural preservation within modern Kambari society.

In general, however, the success of Kambari CSOs in cultural preservation is limited. Instead of truly invigorating most cultural practices, the work of these organizations is primarily focused on visual documentation and preservation, exemplifying what Schneider (2001) abstractly refers to as 'performance remains', that is, the transcription and delivery of living traditions into curated, vicarious forms for archival purposes. This strategy parallels Beel and Wallace's (2023) argument regarding the growing role of CSOs in the digital mediation of heritage, where preservation increasingly occurs through documentation and display rather than embodied continuity. Nonetheless, a few customs, particularly traditional medicine and naming ceremonies, have been reintegrated into lived practice, signaling a limited but significant revival. This development resonates with Yakubova's (2025) assertion that genuine cultural sustainability lies in

embedding heritage within contemporary life rather than relegating it to folkloric memory. Thus, Kambari CSOs navigate a continuum between archival preservation and lived cultural renewal within shifting modern conditions.

Conclusion

Evidence from the foregoing discussion has shown that the Kambari are among the tribes with numerous fascinating cultures. They are among the few preservers of African Traditional Religion and customs before the 1950s. However, AKAPA anticipated that only a few (7-10%) of the Kambari still practiced the religion and some aspects of their customs. Through their contacts with the two major religions (Islam and Christianity) in the middle of the 20th century, which persisted to recent times, some of their significant customs, like tribal marks, dress, and marriage customs, which may entail stealing and eloping with another man's wife, naming and burial ceremonies, magic and witchcraft as well as their traditional medical system have been mainly in decline.

To protect these customs and traditions, CSOs have used a number of strategies. Today, through 'performative approaches' such as organizing cultural events, and staging dramas, short films, and music, as well as sponsoring documentation and publications, the Kambari CSOs are promoting most of their ancestors' customs and traditions, which have been in decline for years. Despite these cultural safeguarding efforts, much remains to be done to ensure the vigorous reclamation of practices, and even the emulation of the rich Kambari culture by other ethnic groups in their immediate communities.

A set of recommendations to lead to active revival of Kambari cultural traditions could include the following. To ensure the practical sustainability of Kambari culture, its intangible and tangible aspects must be regenerated. In terms of the intangible, the language of the Kambari needs to be promoted beyond the group's enclaves. Kambari leaders should adopt a legal and administrative approach to ensure the language is taught in schools within their clan and is even perhaps accepted as a degree program by universities in Northern Nigeria. To further promote the Kambari language in the country, they should establish Kambari film and music industries that would popularize Kambari's music and film tradition across the country and even the globe.

Regarding the regeneration of tangible heritage, the Kambari civil societies and stakeholders should revitalize collapsed structures and monuments that are particular to them. They could also establish and construct a Mega Kambari Cultural Development Centre that would revive cultural interest among the Kambaris and the broader society through the organization of musical events, magic shows, and social practices. To facilitate the production of organized programs by the center, Kambari Radio and Television Station should be established. Revival efforts through both tangible and intangible factors would be the best approach to revive, standardize, popularize, promote, and spread Kambari's customs and traditions within Nigeria and worldwide.

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