



Toghu as Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Enterprise: Material Traditions, Identity, and National Integration in Cameroon

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Abstract: This paper examines Toghu, a traditional hand-embroidered regalia from the Grassfields region of Cameroon, as both an expression of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and a dynamic cultural enterprise that fosters national integration, cultural identity, and sustainable livelihoods. The colonial experience in Cameroon produced two dominant cultural identities—French and English—whose coexistence since the 1961 reunification remains challenged by the ongoing Anglophone crisis. Against this backdrop of division, Toghu has emerged as a unifying national symbol, bridging ethnic, linguistic, and regional divides while promoting shared cultural pride and social cohesion. Although Toghu has largely been studied as a cultural artifact and ceremonial attire, limited scholarship interrogates its triple function as a knowledge system, a women-led economic practice that sustains local artisans, particularly women and youth and economic practice capable of bridging historical, linguistic, and postcolonial divides in Cameroon. Addressing this gap, the study positions Toghu within broader debates on cultural assimilation and multicultural coexistence through the lenses of the Melting Pot and Salad Bowl theories. Employing qualitative cultural analysis, the study draws on artifact study, literature review, and ethnographic observation of Toghu production, circulation, and performance in ceremonial, festive, national, and diasporic contexts. Findings reveal that Toghu transcends its Grassfields origins to function as a site of intergenerational knowledge transmission, aesthetic continuity, socio-economic empowerment and has become a powerful symbol of national unity and cultural resilience.. Women emerge as central actors, exercising creative agency, artisanal expertise, and leadership in production and trade, ensuring both the craft’s sustainability and its contribution to household and community livelihoods. The study argues that Toghu simultaneously operates as cultural heritage, developmental strategy, and instrument of national integration. By preserving indigenous creativity, promoting inclusive identity formation, and empowering women artisans, it demonstrates the transformative potential of Indigenous Knowledge Systems to reconcile colonial legacies, reinforce collective belonging, and advance sustainable cultural enterprise. Ultimately, Toghu functions/emerges as both a material repository of memory and a contemporary instrument for creativity, socio-economic empowerment, and nation-building in Cameroon.

Keywords: Toghu, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Cultural Enterprise, Material Tradition, Identity, Women’s Empowerment, National Integration, Sustainable Livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

Across Africa, indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) continue to shape cultural identity, economic organization, and social resilience despite centuries of colonial disruption and postcolonial transformation (Olaitan, n.p., n.d.). In Cameroon, material culture plays a central role in sustaining communal memory, negotiating belonging, and expressing collective identity. Among these cultural forms, Toghu—an elaborately hand-embroidered

attire associated with the Grass fields region, particularly the Northwest and parts of the West—stands out as a powerful symbol of heritage, artistry, and social belonging (Ngome, 2016; Ngwoh, 2019; Callistus, 2026). Known variously as *Atoghu*, *Athogho*, *Thogho*, *Togho*, *Talli*, *Danchiki*, or *Bikom dress*, (Toghu, n.d) Toghu consists of multicolored cotton threads—commonly red, green, yellow, white, and orange—painstakingly embroidered onto a traditionally black velvet background. The dense embroidery typically frames the neckline, sleeves, hems, and chest, producing a visually striking and symbolically layered garment (Ngwoh, 2019). Although the term “Toghu” originally referred to the embroidered designs rather than the base fabric, contemporary cultural branding has transformed it into the name of the textile itself, reflecting processes of commodification and national popularization (Ngwoh, 2019).

Historically, Toghu functioned as royal regalia within the centralized chiefdoms of the Grassfields. It was reserved for kings, titled notables, and dignitaries—both men and women—during festivals, chieftaincy investitures, royal funerals, and other solemn ceremonies (Callistus, 2026). As a prestigious garment, Toghu signified hierarchy, legitimacy, and communal belonging. Its dense velvet texture and symbolic motifs communicated authority, ancestral continuity, fertility, valor, spiritual protection, and social honor. In this traditional setting, Toghu operated not merely as attire but as a codified visual language embedded in indigenous governance, ritual performance, and cosmological belief systems. The garment visually distinguished titled elites from the wider population while reinforcing structures of power and social order. Over time, however, Toghu has undergone a marked process of democratization, politicization, and cultural diffusion. Urbanization, internal migration, the intensification of digital media, and socio-political tensions—including the Anglophone crisis—have expanded its visibility beyond its regional origins. Social media platforms, fashion exhibitions, and diasporic networks have repositioned Toghu as a national cultural emblem rather than an exclusively royal garment (Callistus, 2026). Today, it is widely worn at weddings, graduation ceremonies, national celebrations, state functions, religious ceremonies and diasporic gatherings, where it functions as a performative expression of Cameroonian identity. Its adoption across Anglophone and Francophone communities and among diverse ethnic groups underscores its evolving role as a symbol of social cohesion and shared heritage within a historically divided postcolonial state.

Contemporary adaptations further demonstrate that Toghu is a dynamic, living tradition. Designers increasingly experiment with lighter fabrics suited to tropical climates, replace or complement the traditional black velvet with vibrant colors such as blue, red, and green, and incorporate modern tailoring styles—including fitted gowns, suits, and Afro-contemporary hybrids. These innovations expand its accessibility and appeal, particularly among younger generations, while retaining core symbolic motifs. Rather than signaling cultural dilution, such transformations illustrate what Battiste (2013) describes as the adaptive vitality of indigenous knowledge systems—traditions that evolve while maintaining continuity.

Historical and Cultural Context

Cameroon’s cultural landscape reflects layered historical processes shaped by precolonial diversity, colonial partition, and postcolonial reunification. German colonization in the late

nineteenth century was followed by French and British administration after World War I (Commonwealth Portal, 2025; Wikipedia, 2026; History of Cameroon n.d). This partition institutionalized dual administrative and linguistic systems that continue to structure contemporary political and cultural life. Reunification in 1961 formally unified the state but did not fully resolve structural and symbolic differences inherited from colonial governance (Kamagoua & Sterline, 2023; Nshom, 2025). The persistence of linguistic dualism has generated periodic tensions over identity, governance, and representation.

Cameroonian literary scholars have long interrogated these fractures. Bole Butake, through the metaphor of a “family saga,” dramatizes ideological conflict, marginalization, and the fragility of unity. John Nkemngong Nkemngasong’s *Across the Mongolo* exposes the complexities of forging nationhood from historically divergent entities, while Victor Epie Ngome metaphorically frames reunification as a marriage “God had put asunder,” indicting colonial miscalculations. These literary interventions underscore the symbolic urgency of integrative cultural forms capable of mediating difference.

Within this context, Toghu emerges as a material tradition that transcends linguistic and regional divides. Originating in the Grassfields’ centralized kingdoms—renowned for elaborate regalia and artistic sophistication—Toghu has moved beyond royal courts to become widely adopted across social strata and regions. Its diffusion represents not static preservation but cultural reinterpretation. By embodying shared cultural memory while accommodating diversity, Toghu participates actively in the ongoing negotiation of Cameroonian national identity (Ngome, 2016; Ngwoh, 2019; Callistus, 2026).

Indigenous Knowledge and Material Tradition

Indigenous knowledge refers to locally grounded systems of understanding developed through sustained interaction with environment, community, and cultural practice (UNESCO, 2025; CDRI Lexicon, 2024; Traditional Knowledge, n.d.). Such systems integrate technical skill, symbolic interpretation, and social organization, transmitted through apprenticeship and communal participation. Toghu embroidery exemplifies IK in practice. Its production entails fabric selection, intricate hand embroidery, symbolic patterning, and adherence to social protocols governing usage. These elements form a cohesive knowledge system combining craft expertise with encoded cultural meaning.

Toghu therefore operates simultaneously as object and process. The garment encodes leadership, wisdom, communal identity, and prestige, while its production sustains intergenerational learning and local economies. As Battiste (2013) argues, indigenous knowledge systems are not relics of the past but dynamic frameworks responsive to contemporary realities. Toghu’s ongoing reinvention—through fabric innovation, market expansion, and digital promotion—illustrates this adaptive resilience.

Statement of the Problem and Research Gap

Despite Toghu’s increasing national and international visibility, scholarship has largely emphasized its aesthetic qualities and regional symbolism. Studies such as Ngome (2016) and Ngwoh (2019) predominantly frame Toghu as ceremonial regalia associated with the Grassfields of Cameroon, often foregrounding its visual richness, ritual function, and status

symbolism. While these perspectives are valuable, they tend to confine Toghu to heritage display, overlooking its epistemological depth, economic significance, and social utility. In particular, there is limited sustained analysis of Toghu as a structured system of indigenous knowledge embedded in processes of design, embroidery, apprenticeship, and intergenerational transmission.

A significant gap concerns the central role of women in Toghu production. Women are the primary custodians of embroidery knowledge, operating artisanal workshops and informal networks that sustain the craft across generations. Their labor is not only technically skilled but also socially and culturally informed, linking patterns, motifs, and colors to historical narratives, communal values, and symbolic meanings. Despite their pivotal contributions, women's agency in both the economic and cultural sustainability of Toghu remains under-theorized, reflecting a broader tendency in cultural studies to underplay gendered labor in material traditions.

Furthermore, Toghu plays a growing role in national integration. Once primarily a regional emblem of the Grassfields, it has become a unifying symbol across Cameroon, worn at state functions, diplomatic events, cultural festivals, beauty pageants, and international exhibitions. By representing shared heritage and collective identity, Toghu bridges linguistic, ethnic, and cultural divides, contributing to national cohesion in a country marked by postcolonial complexities and socio-political tensions. Yet, the mechanisms through which its production, circulation, and display promote social cohesion, particularly through women-led artisanal networks, remain insufficiently studied.

This study addresses these gaps by repositioning Toghu as both a material tradition and a cultural enterprise. It examines how symbolic meaning, artisanal expertise, gendered labor, and social utility converge in Toghu production and circulation, situating it within debates on multiculturalism, decolonial epistemologies, and cultural entrepreneurship. In doing so, the study highlights how Toghu functions not merely as heritage or fashion, but as an instrument of sustainable livelihoods, women's empowerment, and national integration, contributing to social cohesion and inclusive development in plural and postcolonial societies such as Cameroon.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on the Melting Pot and Salad Bowl theories of multiculturalism to analyse Toghu's role in cultural identity and national integration in Cameroon. The Melting Pot model conceptualizes national identity as the assimilation of diverse cultural groups into a dominant culture, where distinct cultural traits "melt" into a single, homogeneous whole. Historically rooted in ideas about assimilation and cultural fusion, this metaphor was popularized in early 20th-century discourse on nation-building and cultural identity and has been widely used to describe processes that emphasise cultural uniformity over pluralism. In the Cameroonian context, this lens highlights how Francophone dominance after reunification in 1961 pressured Southern Cameroons' distinct (Anglophone) cultural identity within national institutions and governance arrangements, contributing to long-standing grievances and marginalization that would later fuel the Anglophone crisis and associated conflicts. Reunification on 1 October 1961, celebrated as Unification Day, marked the formal political union of Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, but subsequent tensions over cultural and institutional centralization reflect ongoing struggles with cultural assimilation

and identity recognition in the postcolonial state. Colonial governance in Cameroon largely operated through assimilationist logics privileging European norms. Postcolonial Cameroon, however, reflects a pluralist reality shaped by linguistic and cultural diversity (Kamagoua & Sterline, 2023; Nshom, 2025).

In contrast, the Salad Bowl model emphasizes pluralistic coexistence, where distinct cultural identities coexist within a shared national framework while retaining their uniqueness. Unlike the Melting Pot, this model celebrates cultural diversity and recognises that different groups contribute to national identity without subsuming their identities into a dominant culture. In the Salad Bowl metaphor, cultural groups are like ingredients in a salad: each component retains its characteristic qualities while contributing to the overall composition of the whole.

With regards to Toghu, the Salad Bowl perspective foregrounds how this Grass fields material tradition has been embraced beyond its regional origins to become a shared national symbol that does not erase ethnic difference but provides a platform through which diverse cultural identities are expressed and recognised. As Toghu circulates in ceremonial, festive, and national contexts, it suggests that cultural diversity and national belonging can co-exist, reinforcing inclusive identity formation rather than enforcing cultural homogenization. By juxtaposing these two models, this framework allows the study to examine both the pressures of assimilation that have shaped Cameroon's postcolonial cultural politics and the potential of indigenous cultural forms—such as Toghu—to promote multicultural coexistence, peace, and national unity in a plural society. Toghu thus exemplifies cultural resilience—the adaptive continuity of indigenous traditions within modern nation-building processes (Battiste, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative cultural analysis grounded in interpretive and postcolonial research traditions. It draws on multiple sources of data to explore Toghu as both a material tradition and a cultural enterprise that contributes to identity formation, national integration, and sustainable livelihoods. Ethnographic accounts of Grassfields cultural practices provide insights into the social, symbolic, and artisanal dimensions of Toghu, while historical analyses of colonial and postcolonial identity formation illuminate the broader socio-political context in which Toghu has evolved. Scholarly literature on Indigenous Knowledge Systems and cultural economies further situates Toghu within debates on material culture, knowledge transmission, and creative entrepreneurship.

In addition, the study incorporates publicly accessible content from social media platforms, particularly Facebook, purposively sampled for thematic relevance. Posts, discussions, and visual representations of Toghu provide contemporary perspectives on its production, circulation, and reception, especially in national, diasporic, and celebratory contexts. The analysis focuses on patterns of discourse and representation rather than individual behavior, ensuring ethical compliance and respect for privacy. This interpretive methodology is particularly suited for examining the symbolic meanings, gendered labor structures, economic implications, and integrative functions of Toghu, allowing the study to interrogate the intersection of cultural identity, national cohesion, and sustainable cultural enterprise in Cameroon. The study also engages policy literature on cultural

industries and creative economies, particularly frameworks developed by UNESCO, to situate Toghu within global discussions of heritage-based development.

TOGHU AS INDIGENOUS CULTURAL ENTERPRISE

Beyond symbolism, Toghu represents a structured indigenous economic system rooted in local knowledge and community organization. Its production involves interconnected stages: textile sourcing, design conceptualization, embroidery, tailoring, distribution, and retail. Each stage generates employment and skill development.

Unlike industrial mass production, Toghu craftsmanship emphasizes specialized knowledge, manual skill, and cultural meaning. Apprenticeship systems ensure transmission of expertise while sustaining local labor markets. The industry therefore functions as a knowledge-based economy grounded in cultural capital (Embroidica, 2025; Artisanat traditionnel camerounais, n.d.).

Women and youth play particularly significant roles in this sector. Many artisans acquire skills through informal training networks that provide accessible pathways to income generation. In contexts of limited formal employment, Toghu production offers economic autonomy and social recognition. This form of entrepreneurship differs from extractive economic models introduced during colonial rule. It is embedded within community relationships, guided by cultural values, and oriented toward both economic and social sustainability.

The socioeconomic impact of Toghu extends beyond income generation to broader processes of empowerment and social inclusion. Women artisans often control production processes and marketing activities, enhancing financial independence and decision-making power. Youth participation in embroidery and tailoring provides vocational opportunities that connect cultural heritage with modern economic aspirations. Such engagement counters narratives that portray tradition as incompatible with development.

From a sustainability perspective, Toghu production relies primarily on human skill rather than resource-intensive industrial systems. Its emphasis on durability, craftsmanship, and cultural value aligns with emerging models of sustainable cultural economies.

TOGHU AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Material culture often plays a crucial role in shaping collective identity by providing visible markers of belonging. Toghu functions as such a marker within Cameroon, symbolizing continuity with precolonial heritage while accommodating modern national expression (VisitCameroonNow.com, 2025; Wikipedia, n.d.). Its use in public ceremonies, state events, and diasporic gatherings signals shared cultural pride that transcends linguistic divisions. The garment's visual distinctiveness enables it to operate as a recognizable national emblem without erasing regional origins.

Importantly, Toghu does not impose uniform identity but offers a flexible symbolic resource. Individuals and communities interpret and adapt it according to context, demonstrating how material culture can support unity through shared recognition rather than enforced sameness.



Figure 1: Screenshots of Cameroonians from different cultural backgrounds in toghu designs

GENDERED CRAFT ECONOMIES: TOGHU PRODUCTION AS WOMEN-LED CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In Cameroon, the Toghu sector is not only a site of cultural expression and national symbolism but also a vibrant domain of indigenous entrepreneurship in which women play a central and often dominant role. While Toghu is widely recognized for its aesthetic and ceremonial value, its production system reveals a structured cultural economy sustained primarily through women’s labor, creativity, and managerial expertise.

Historically, textile production and decorative craftsmanship across many African societies have been closely associated with women’s domestic and communal roles. In the Toghu industry, this historical association has evolved into an organized economic sphere in which women function not merely as artisans but as designers, trainers, entrepreneurs, and market actors. They oversee embroidery processes, manage apprenticeship networks, coordinate production schedules, negotiate sales, and control distribution channels within local and regional markets. In many cases, women operate small-scale enterprises that integrate family labor, community knowledge exchange, and informal financial systems, demonstrating sophisticated forms of indigenous business organization.

This entrepreneurial structure reflects a culturally embedded economy—an economic system rooted in social relationships, inherited knowledge, and symbolic value rather than purely industrial or capitalist logics. Women’s authority within this system derives not only from technical skill but also from cultural legitimacy, as mastery of Toghu embroidery carries social prestige and communal recognition. Economic participation is therefore intertwined with identity formation and social status, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between culture and livelihood.

Toghu production provides accessible pathways to income generation in contexts where formal employment opportunities may be limited. Women frequently acquire skills

through apprenticeship or intergenerational learning rather than formal schooling, enabling broad participation across educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Earnings from Toghu production support household stability, children's education, and community welfare, demonstrating the craft's role in sustaining everyday social reproduction.

The sector also contributes significantly to youth mentorship and skill transmission. Women entrepreneurs often function as cultural educators, training younger generations in both technical embroidery and the symbolic meanings embedded in Toghu designs. Through this dual role—economic producer and cultural custodian—they ensure the continuity of indigenous knowledge while simultaneously adapting it to contemporary market demands.

Moreover, the prominence of women within the Toghu industry challenges conventional narratives that position indigenous crafts as marginal or purely subsistence activities. Instead, Toghu production illustrates how culturally grounded enterprises can generate value, stimulate local economies, and foster innovation while maintaining strong ties to tradition.

From a broader development perspective, the women-led structure of Toghu production highlights the intersection of gender empowerment and cultural economy. Economic participation enhances women's financial autonomy, decision-making capacity, and public visibility, thereby reshaping gender relations within households and communities. At the same time, their leadership ensures that economic growth within the Toghu sector remains anchored in communal values and cultural continuity.

Thus, Toghu production exemplifies a model of indigenous cultural entrepreneurship in which women function as primary economic agents, knowledge bearers, and social innovators. Their centrality to the industry reveals that the cultural power of Toghu is inseparable from the gendered labor systems that sustain it.

TOGHU IN PUBLIC CULTURE AND THE PERFORMANCE OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

In societies shaped by historical division, shared cultural symbols can support social cohesion. In contemporary Cameroon, Toghu has moved beyond its traditional ceremonial context to become a highly visible cultural instrument through which national unity is publicly performed and symbolically affirmed. Its growing presence across diverse national platforms—including sporting events, diplomatic engagements, beauty pageants, and state ceremonies—demonstrates how material culture can function as an active agent of integration in a plural society shaped by historical division.



Figure 2: Cameroonian from different linguistic and ethnic groups dressed in toghu

One of the most striking arenas in which Toghu has gained integrative significance is sport. Major national and international sporting events hosted by Cameroon have increasingly featured Toghu as part of official cultural representation. During tournaments such as the Africa Cup of Nations 2021, Toghu appeared prominently in opening ceremonies, cultural displays, and fan attire, visually projecting a unified national identity to domestic and global audiences. Athletes, performers, and supporters wearing Toghu symbolically reframed regional heritage as collective national pride. According to the Confederation of African Football (2021), the official 2021 Africa Cup of Nations match ball was named “Toghu” after the iconic Cameroonian attire, and accounts of Toghu’s global presence show its growing role as a symbol of national identity (237Check, 2024).

Diplomatic spaces provide another important domain in which Toghu functions as a tool of national representation. Cameroonian officials, cultural ambassadors, and delegations frequently incorporate Toghu into formal dress during international meetings, cultural exchanges, and state receptions. Its use in these contexts performs a dual symbolic function: it communicates cultural authenticity to external audiences while simultaneously reinforcing internal narratives of unity grounded in indigenous heritage. By presenting Toghu as representative of the nation as a whole rather than of a single ethnic tradition, diplomatic practice reframes local cultural knowledge as shared national capital (Puissance237, 2024; Toghu, n.d.; Toghu: A Unique Cameroonian Identity, 2023).

Beauty pageantry and cultural competitions have likewise played a significant role in popularizing Toghu as a national symbol. Contestants increasingly showcase Toghu-inspired designs during cultural parades and national costume segments, presenting the garment as an emblem of elegance, heritage, and modern creativity. These performances are especially significant because they operate within highly mediated cultural spaces that shape public perception and national imagination. Through pageantry, Toghu is aestheticized, modernized, and broadcast as a collective cultural signature, reinforcing its status as a shared visual marker of national identity (Embroydica, 2025; Toghu: A Unique Cameroonian Identity, 2023; The role of social media in promoting transnationalism of Cameroon’s culture, 2024).

Beyond these formal platforms, Toghu has become embedded in everyday symbolic practices that articulate national belonging. Its use in national celebrations, academic

ceremonies, artistic performances, and diasporic gatherings reflects its transformation into a widely recognized cultural shorthand for unity in diversity (Embroydica, 2025; VisitCameroonNow.com, n.d.; Toghu: A Unique Cameroonian Identity, 2023; Ndifor et al., 2023; Ngome, 2016; Lemi, 2024).

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VISUAL ANALYSIS OF TOGHU AS SYMBOL OF CULTURAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The five figures collectively provide a layered visual narrative of Toghu as both a cultural marker and a national emblem. Through ceremonial display, performative adaptation, diasporic circulation, and artisanal production, the images demonstrate how material culture operates as a visible and embodied site of identity formation.



Figure 3: Toghu as a State Ceremony

Government Officials and the National Ballet Dressed in Toghu

Figure 3 depicts political leaders and cultural representatives dressed in elaborately embroidered Toghu during a national state ceremony. It visually situates Toghu within the formal architecture of the nation-state. The prominence of Toghu in this formal governmental setting visually affirms its elevation from regional regalia to national emblem. The garment's presence in a governmental setting transforms it from regional attire into an officially sanctioned national symbol. The dark velvet fabric, densely embroidered with vibrant motifs, communicates prestige, authority, and continuity with precolonial heritage. When political leaders and cultural representatives appear publicly in Toghu, the visual message is clear: indigenous material culture is not peripheral but central to the symbolic construction of Cameroon's national identity. The image reinforces the argument that Toghu operates as a shared symbolic resource capable of transcending Anglophone-Francophone divides, embodying unity without erasing its Grassfields origins.



Figure 4: Toghu in Cultural Festivals and Beauty Pageants

Figure 4 shifts the visual focus from institutional authority to performative identity worn by contestants in a cultural festival or beauty pageant. Here, Toghu becomes an aesthetic language through which cultural pride is staged and celebrated. The stylized presentation of Toghu—particularly in women’s gowns—demonstrates how tradition is reimagined within modern cultural platforms. This performative context underscores Toghu’s capacity to foster multicultural recognition: participants from diverse regions embody a shared national aesthetic without relinquishing individuality. The image foregrounds cultural agency, especially women’s role as both wearers and cultural ambassadors who reinterpret heritage for contemporary audiences. how Toghu promotes multicultural recognition by allowing participants from diverse regions to embody a shared national aesthetic while retaining individuality. It further highlights women’s central role women’s role as both wearers and cultural ambassadors who reinterpret heritage for contemporary audiences by preserving, modeling, and reinterpreting indigenous material culture.



Figure 5: Diasporic Display of Toghu

Figure 5 captures members of the Cameroonian diaspora wearing Toghu during an international gathering. It expands the analysis beyond territorial boundaries. In diasporic contexts, Toghu functions as a portable emblem of homeland identity. Visually, the garment anchors dispersed communities to a shared cultural memory, transforming it into a transnational marker of belonging. The repetition of Toghu in international gatherings reinforces collective identity across geographic space, demonstrating how material culture sustains national consciousness beyond state borders. This image affirms that national identity is not confined to territory but can be embodied and performed globally through symbolic attire. The image further demonstrates how Toghu facilitates national integration not only within Cameroon but also among diaspora populations, strengthening symbolic unity across geographic divides.



Figure 6: Toghu during sporting events

Figure 6 moves to the sporting domain to represent toghu as a symbol of national integration and unity by transforming a historical regional cultural symbol into a shared national emblem performed before mass and international audiences. The images particularly in relation to the African Cup of Nations, the Olympic games demonstrates how toghu has moved beyond ethnic specificity. When athletes, performers, and supporters across linguistic and regional divides wear toghu, it ceases to signify only grass field identity and instead becomes a visual shorthand for Cameroon as a nation, a shared cultural marker across Anglophones and francophone communities, a unifying aesthetic during moments of collective national visibility. Stadium events generate intense emotional solidarity. Stadium crowds, television broadcasts, and global media circulation create what Anderson (2006) describes as an “imagined community” when toghu appears in opening ceremonies, cultural parades, fan attire and athletic appearances, it visually stitches together diverse populations into a single symbolic body. Citizens who may differ historically, politically or regionally are temporarily united under one aesthetic identity.

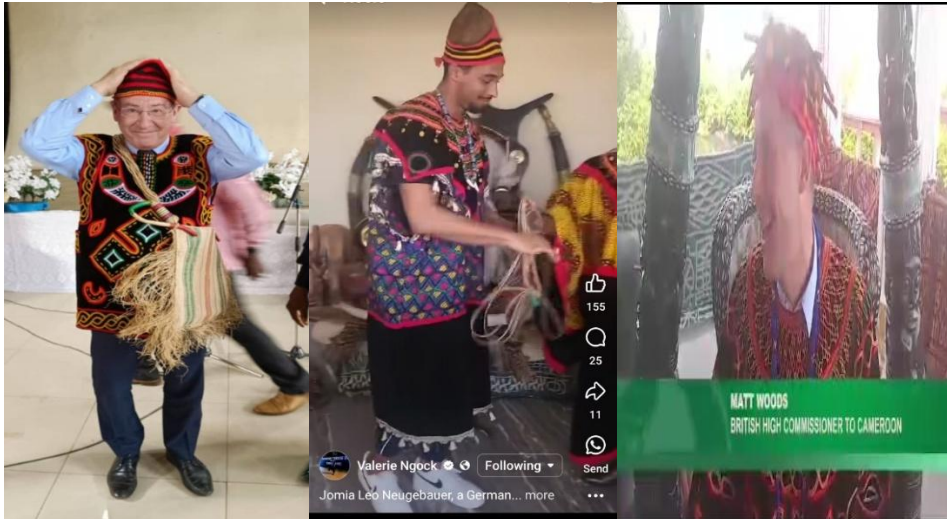


Figure 7: Togh in Diplomacy

Figure 7 represents toghu as a national cultural emblem when diplomats and foreign representatives wear toghu. When the attire appears in diplomatic settings, it moves beyond ethnic identity and becomes a visual symbol for Cameroon itself. By incorporating toghu into official appearances, cultural heritage is foregrounded in state representation, indigenous knowledge is legitimized within global political spaces and national identity is articulated through material culture rather than Western formal wear alone. This transformation reflects a deliberate act of cultural diplomacy, cross cultural exchange rather than one directional representation and bringing of colonial histories through share symbolic participation. The diplomatic setting transforms togho to cultural capital in global spaces where togho becomes a marker of authenticity, a soft-power instrument and an cultural brand for Cameroon. Rather than appearing as a peripheral cultural artifact, toghu is staged as sovereign cultural capital within international relations.

Collectively, these images demonstrate that Toghu operates simultaneously as heritage, performance, enterprise, and national symbol. The visual documentation confirms that material culture can reinforce collective identity through visibility, embodiment, and repetition in public space. Rather than imposing cultural uniformity, Toghu's adaptable forms across ceremonial, festive, and diasporic contexts illustrate pluralistic integration consistent with the Salad Bowl model of multiculturalism.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Recognizing Toghu as both heritage and economic resource has important policy implications. Cultural industries based on indigenous knowledge can contribute to employment generation, tourism development, and cultural preservation.

Supportive policies/measures might include skills training programs, access to microfinance for artisans, protection of intellectual property, and integration of traditional crafts into national cultural promotion strategies. Such measures would strengthen the economic viability of Toghu production while safeguarding its cultural integrity.

International frameworks emphasizing creative economies and cultural diversity provide useful guidance for these initiatives. Aligning local practice with global cultural policy can enhance visibility and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Toghu exemplifies the transformative capacity of indigenous knowledge systems to sustain identity, generate livelihoods, and support national cohesion. As material heritage, it preserves historical memory and cultural symbolism. As cultural enterprise, it provides economic opportunity and social empowerment. As national symbol, it fosters unity within diversity. The study demonstrates that indigenous traditions are not relics of the past but dynamic resources that bridge colonial legacies, support inclusive development, and reinforce cultural resilience. By integrating cultural continuity with economic innovation, Toghu illustrates how material tradition/heritage, economic innovation, and social cohesion can intersect by can bridging colonial legacies and contribute to inclusive national futures., positioning indigenous knowledge as active social and economic capital rather than symbolic relic. The study highlights that indigenous traditions are dynamic resources that bridge colonial legacies, support inclusive development, and reinforce cultural resilience.

Understanding Toghu in this way invites broader recognition of indigenous knowledge as a foundation for sustainable development and social integration. Cultural heritage, when valued and supported, becomes not merely symbolic inheritance but active social and economic capital.

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