

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57183

Title: POPULAR CULTURES AND THEIR LINKS: THE EVOLUTION OF MEANS OF EXCHANGE IN THE CROSS RIVER REGION,

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The research article titled "Popular Cultures and Their Links: The Evolution of Means of Exchange in the Cross River Region" provides an innovative interdisciplinary analysis that situates the history of currency within the broader framework of popular culture. By examining the Cross River region—a geographically and ethnically diverse area spanning parts of modern-day Nigeria and Cameroon—the author argues that money is not merely a dry economic instrument but a dynamic "culture of the people." This study effectively demonstrates how the evolution of exchange mediums reflects the shifting interactions, collective identities, and technological adaptations of a heterogeneous population over several centuries.

The narrative begins by redefining popular culture beyond its typical associations with entertainment or fashion, positioning it instead as the "daily practices and interactions" that define a society. The author expertly identifies the exchange of goods and services as the most fundamental of these interactions. This theoretical groundwork allows for a compelling reading of currency evolution: from the early days of the barter system to the adoption of commodity currencies. The discussion on the limitations of barter—specifically the "double coincidence of wants"—provides a clear economic rationale for why the Cross River people developed more sophisticated, mutually acceptable mediums of exchange.

A significant strength of the article is its detailed historical survey of indigenous currencies used in the region prior to and during the early colonial era. The author explores the use of "primitive" yet effective currencies such as salt, cloth, livestock, and most notably, copper rods and Manillas. The analysis of the Manilla—a horseshoe-shaped currency—is particularly insightful, as it illustrates how a medium of exchange can become a symbol of status and a repository of cultural value. By tracing the transition from

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these localized commodities to the "unified" currency system introduced by the British, the author highlights the profound impact of colonial administrative needs on the region's traditional economic "culture."

The paper further evaluates the twentieth-century shift toward European coins and paper notes, led by the West African Currency Board. The author provides a meticulous account of the introduction of the Penny in 1908 and the eventual establishment of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 1958. This transition is framed as a pivotal moment in the evolution of a "collective identity," as the diverse groups within the Cross River region were brought under a single, standardized financial system. The discussion of the move to the decimalized Naira and Kobo in 1973 adds a necessary layer of post-colonial economic history, showing how the new nation-state utilized currency to assert its sovereignty and modernize its popular culture.

The article concludes with a forward-looking analysis of digital currency and cryptocurrency as the latest phase in this evolution. The author argues that just as the copper rod once facilitated trade in the Cross River markets, digital assets now represent the "global culture" of exchange. This connection between ancient commodity money and modern blockchain technology is handled with academic rigor, suggesting that the underlying principle remains the same: the need for a shared, manageable, and handy medium to sustain human interaction. The narrative effectively argues that money is the "means of attaining and sustaining popular culture," making it an indispensable subject for cultural historians and economists alike.

In summary, this article offers a sophisticated and highly readable account of the relationship between economic tools and cultural life. It moves beyond traditional financial history to provide a deep inquiry into how money shapes and is shaped by the people who use it. The author's ability to link the regional history of the Cross River area with global trends in digital finance makes this a significant contribution to the fields of economic history and cultural studies. It is an essential read for scholars seeking to understand the enduring link between what we value and how we trade.

Recommendations for Minor Revisions

Conceptual and Theoretical Refinements

- **Popular Culture Definition:** While the paper successfully links money to popular culture, it would benefit from a more explicit engagement with the "material culture" subfield. Discussing the physical artifacts of exchange (like the Manilla) as objects of material culture would strengthen the interdisciplinary link between economics and sociology.

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- **The Barter Debate:** The author cites the traditional view of barter as the predecessor to money. It would be academically advantageous to briefly mention the "debt" or "credit" theories of money (e.g., David Graeber's work), which argue that social credit often preceded barter in small communities. This would add a more critical layer to the historical narrative.

Regional and Empirical Specifics

- **Ethnic Nuance:** The Cross River region is home to groups such as the Efik, Ibibio, and Ejagham. The article would be strengthened by briefly mentioning if certain currencies were more prevalent among specific ethnic groups or trade guilds (like the Ekpe society), providing a more localized cultural context for the "collective identity" mentioned.
- **The "Manilla" Transition:** The author mentions the transition to European coins. Adding a brief mention of the "Manilla Redemption" project of the late 1940s, where the colonial government actively recalled and melted down indigenous currency, would provide a powerful example of the "clash" between traditional and colonial popular cultures.

Technical and Structural Adjustments

- **Digital Currency Context:** The conclusion mentions "crypto" as the latest evolution. To ensure the paper remains grounded in its regional focus, a brief mention of Nigeria's "e-Naira" or the role of mobile money in modern West African "popular culture" would provide a more contemporary and localized conclusion to the digital section.
- **Citations and Bibliography:** Ensure that the transition from secondary source analysis to the conclusion's discussion on digital currency is supported by recent scholarship on fintech and digital sociology to maintain the same level of academic rigor found in the historical sections.

Recommendation: Recommend for publication with minor revision.