Interaction of Secularism and Religion among Ibibio ethnic group of Ibiaku Itam Community, Nigeria: Documentation and *Living Libraries*

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Abstract:

This paper is based on a survey conducted by the author covering between 1990 and 2010. The survey was geared to find out the extent of Christian influence and education on cultural modifications and the social system in Ibiaku Itam community of Akwa Ibom State, Southern Nigerian. The community as noted had previous Scottish missionary encounter decades ago, though there were no primary data sources on their latter's impact within the period covered in this study. Through preliminary findings made, only key persons in the community and significantly Heads of families could offer reliable information in that respect. Accordingly, participant observation and direct interview was the medium of data collection with four categories of indigenes: Chiefs, Family heads, clergymen and a former governor of the State. It was found that Christianity and 'modernization' were main factors to cultural modifications other than education for the fact that resident indigenes took high cognizance of their cultural values and customs. The experience however re-established that in documenting local information, events and experience in traditional African setting, observation and oral sources (living libraries) are still commonly relevant.

Keywords: Education, community, social change, Christian religion, leaders

Background: The cultural heritage of a people is often valued though with interjection of other forces of change such as religion which is an immensely important dimension of a society, may amount to some aspects of culture becoming sublime. In Ikot Obio Atai/ Ibiaku Itam community in Itu local government area of Akwa Ibom where the author served as a volunteer information worker, it was found from that after over a century of civilization and urbanization brought about by influence of education and the domiciliation of Christian religion , indigenes of the area still adhere graciously to their age long traditions and cultural

practices into the 21st century, hence the essence of this survey being to ascertain if and how interactions of the religious and secular life have impacted upon cultural modifications in the last 20 years covering 1990 - 2010, while taking into cognizance that a people's way of life must unavoidably experience some changes over time. The study therefore addresses the need for librarians to explore documentation of ethnographic and historical account from 'living libraries' being human sources / people capable of providing orally a witness and experiential account of events, which was a major methodology to this study. Kretzmann and Rans (2005) identify some lessons for librarians and other information experts in this regard:

- Get outside the doors: successful community/ library relationships are proactive.
- Find the leaders: a concerted effort to discover who's who in a community makes all the difference.
- Be creative about what the library (or librarian) can contribute.
- Discover and contribute to the unique capacities and conditions of the community
- Create a community-minded culture among library staff and volunteers
- Support local businesses and institutions
- Support (library) investment that jump start community re-development efforts.
             (parenthesis mine).

Rational and assumptions

Ibiaku Itam particularly Ikot Obio Atai villages I and II where this study was focused, has rich Christian mission history. This became one of the propelling factors that instigated the author having previously engaged in literacy work in the community for about six years, to undertake a survey aimed at ascertaining educational cum religious influence and other development factors on any form of cultural modifications and the traditional system of Ikot Obio Atai twin villages in Ibiaku Itam community, Akwa Ibom State. Preliminary findings by the author at various theological colleges in Akwa Ibom state have that there is dearth in current literature on related research, particularly within the period covered therefore the need to carry out this investigation. With education and the church being one of the tools for social transformation, it probably meant alterations in the pattern of traditional institution, interactions and consequently social behavior at large. The foregoing rests on the premise that humanity as a whole is not static while societies and communities are being affected socially, economically, politically, spiritually and educationally by the emergence of western education, Christianity and modernization. The ongoing discussion as to whether culture is influenced is based on a premise that it does not operate as independent entities rather as Kirkman *et al.* (2006) argue, culture influences an individual's perceptions, behaviour and beliefs.

 As development brings modifications and inputs into a society, the way of life of that society becomes gradually outmoded especially among educated persons and those influenced by other cultures (Awolalu and Dopamu 1979), thus resulting in new social and ethical consciousness. These occurrences however may appear to be significantly slower in rural communities where agrarian practices and petty trading are imminent.
 The extent of cultural modifications arising from interactional influence of education impact, Christianization and urbanization of Ikot Obio Atai/ Ibiaku Itam communities is yet to be fully determined between the year 1990 and 2010 which is the essence of this study for documentary purposes, as Neyer & Harzing (2008) contend that a precise and comprehensive

understanding of the questions 'how and when' culture influences cross-cultural interactions is still lacking.

Conceptual framework: secularism, interactions and integrations

Various principles and ideas have been raised to throw more light on this ethnographic study which considers accompanying factors such as culture, knowledge and development issues brought about relatively by intervening factors, predictable and non-predictable through the interaction and integrations by change agents at varying levels.

Beginning with culture which is the totality of a people's way of life peculiar to them, it is a whole system of living in terms of what a society practices and adapts to. Some conceive that with secular knowledge and modern way of life, the Ibibios in Nigeria like other Africans may have lost traditional and communal ways of life such as group solidarity, morality, respect for the elder and faith in the supernatural world. Kato (1976) submits that 'culture is what makes a people homogenous for instance, a change in religion necessitates a re-adjustment in culture, though to adjust to an aspect of culture does not however mean the whole culture which is the lifestyle of a society is not adhered to, while Schein (2004) examines culture in simple terms to be 'patterns of assumptions, values and taken for granted routines'. Macionis and John (2010) speak of culture to be either material such as physical artifacts created by society and the intangibles such as customs, norms, values, etc. which are usually the referent of the term 'culture' while Philip (2000) asserts that culture is enlivened through languages (oral expression), symbols (signifiers), norms (community standards), values (that which importance is attached is attached to) mores and folklores (stories and myths for life's lessons).

But no culture is static, for every custom and practice which makes up culture and heritage of a society is changing, as such the line which separates religious life from the secular may not necessarily be of significant note. Secularism in this instance are of temporal or earthly things which are non-religious as inferred in Christian circles such as general knowledge and day to day occurrences be they political, social and economic (production, distribution and consumption) and how these interact to influence an ethnic society's way of life through other forces of change such as civilization, education, migrations, urbanization & modernity. A community often comprises any group of persons with common basis for interaction such as locality, groups and clusters of people. Philip and Abia (2012) resounds that there is a possibility that with the overlapping of western knowledge and influence, persons in a given community may not be conversant with the culture and age-long traditions of their local communities. Culture modifications (acculturation) of a group of people occur with the adaptation or borrowing of some traits from another culture. More so, when persons associate with one another from neighborhood to a larger sphere result in transaction, inter-relatedness and sharing of meaning & values in the social system. Like a vicious cycle, the formulation of normative to patterned behavior, makes culture in existence. It is therefore not strange to find that there would be certain ways of behaving that are acceptable for some, while to others such receptivity tends to conflict with their socio-cultural life but once a way of life

receives consent and has been standardized for succeeding generations, becomes culture. The relative adjustment and/or the degree of integration in this respect are issues this paper examines through people's experiences amounting to knowledge which requires sharing, else may be lost. Indeed every reasonable thinking person is capable of holding some knowledge within them, being tacit knowledge. This is the information of people held inside their heads, subjective insights and intuitions fall into this category. De Long (2004) asserted that deep tacit knowledge is the collectively shared beliefs, mental models and values that determine what individuals view as important and even what they define as relevant knowledge. It is usually transferred unconsciously hence, the most difficult to acquire and usually through a set of practices unique to the individual or organization. In other words, this is the soft information that we store in our heads and is highly personal and hard to formalize.

Conversion between forms of information by the interaction of human beings creates new knowledge coupled with the ability to take an action. There are processes on the path to knowledge creation ranging as follows:

*Tacit-to-tacit (socialization) being the direct exposure, testing and acquisition of information between individuals even to watching someone.
*Tacit-to-explicit (conversation): the articulation of personal information into defined, decision-producing form e.g. to write something and the knowledge becomes captured & presented in form of say report.

From the foregoing, oral history could be established through the recording of historical information obtained e.g. by interview. The former preserves a person's life history or eyewitness account of past experience and helps bring out stories from the past in terms of how individuals and communities experienced the forces of history, particularly of changing pattern and what has stayed the same overtime (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2014).

Later, sense is made of the human or social world including experiences of ourselves, other people, social relationships, and social institutions which is the social perception process particularly important for communication because people base their communicative behaviors on their perceptions of others' conduct, qualities, roles, intentions, and dispositions (http://haghsefat.edublogs.org/explicit-and-tacit-meaning). Clark (2011) adds that social interaction plays essential role in cognitive development and acknowledges the roles it plays with culture onto knowledge creation. Whereby an individual dies without passing forms of knowledge to next generation, the knowledge ceases and may never be regained. To understand culture of a people in the light of prevailing situation, it becomes important to explore the prevailing conditions in the light of foregoing issues raised using stakeholders directly involved to give a present account of the Ibibios in Ikot Obio Atai/Ibiaku Itam local community which was documented. Documentation among experts is the preparing, recording and organizing of knowledge (and the source) systematically and by various means (Chopra, 2000). By this, cumulated store of learning is made available for the further advancement of knowledge.

Historical perspective on Ibibio societies and kinship

Nigeria is broadly made up of Northern and Southern regions following its amalgamation in 1914. Southern Nigeria comprises of South – west, South – east and South – south geopolitical zones. Those from Southern region are predominantly Christians having embraced the form of worship from period of the Western missionary's coming to the nation about 150 years ago. All geopolitical zones have states and each state comprises local government areas (LGAs) with clans comprising several villages. Akwa Ibom state is in the South – south region with 31 LGAs with Itu being one of them, while Itam clan is the biggest under Itu where Ikot Obio Atai in Ibiaku Itam (the community under discussion) is located.

In understanding a people's manner of life or conduct, there has to be an insight into aspects of their idiosyncrasies, particularly their traditional/ religious belief system. Ekong (1988) describes a stateless society which lacks a centralized system of political organization with a king. However, there are traditional rulers/ chiefs which preside over community affairs. In kinship, Ibibio family is often viewed from the larger (extended) family *Ekpuk* perspective where each person is a part by origin rather than choice. Each *ekpuk* is headed usually by the oldest person who represents them in giving information (Offiong, 1991). Ideally, the study of Ibibio ethnic group is complete without an indication of the supernatural world. Religion, law and justice are intricately interwoven and believed to be handed down from the spirit world comprising lesser deities *Ndem* as agents of an all-powerful *Abasi* (God) through ancestors deemed to be benevolent and equally vindictive on those who neglect to give offerings and libations (pouring of local gin on the ground with incantations). As such some families or groups used to maintain shrines *Nwommo* and still practice traditional oath taking *Mbiam* (Offiong, 1991). Laws promulgated by elders in Ibibio communities are enforced oftentimes with sanctions by the popular *Ekpo nyoho* masquerade cult symbolizing male supremacy The Ibibios are largely engaged in farming, fishing and trading and are predominantly Christians by identity like other ethnic groups from South-south Nigeria, though many still believe in the efficacy of pre-Christian practices (Philip, 2000).

Educational history:

Education has been a society's formal mechanism for aiding the process of socialization (Chester, et al 1981) and social change. Whether at the formal or informal level, education develops literacy skills, talents and increases productivity generally in order to curb certain vices such as ignorance. The integration of education into the way of life of the Ibibio ethnic group which Ikot Obio Atai/ Ibiaku Itam community is part of, was witnessed between the 19th and 20th century (1840s to 1920s). The development came through the entry of Western Christian Mission groups such as the Roman Catholics, Methodist and the Presbyterian Mission. The latter group was prominent in Itu /Ibiaku Itam area where the heroic account of the legendary Scottish missionary Mary Slessor took place. During the period of the missionary activity, the advancement of Christian religion and education went hand in hand, with an effort to do away with certain socio-cultural practices and traditional beliefs (Freud, 1955) and Ayandele (1966). This study is **not** intended to undermine traditional values, rather takes into cognizance literacy benefits which when adhered to could furthermore project socio-cultural values more meaningfully, while bearing in mind the development indices which often are a product of education. Acceptance in this respect was initially hesitant but

progressed with the establishment of mission secondary schools, a general hospital and a leprosy camp (defunct) named after the late Scottish missionary Mary Slessor. The misgivings were that the school and formal education system may lead to the extinction of Ibibio dialect with no attempt to learn, write or produce literature in this dialect, particularly as local words of wisdom and proverbs. Educational efforts however, later brought about the establishment of other community secondary schools still in existence in the area.

METHODS:

To establish systematic investigation, the following procedures were undertaken to generate and document data on the prevailing issues which this paper seeks to address. The methods discussed are as follows:

-Data gathering procedure: Assistance was sought from some residents in the community whom the author had earlier established rapport with to meet with main enlarged family head to schedule contact. Each of them and other respondents were met on separate days and weeks within one month period, in which case none of the respondents knew what remarks the others made, or whom the investigator (author) could have me for discussion. This was to accord some degree of anonymity and to avoid unwarranted referrals. They were given enough time as they desired to enable them express freely both in English and vernacular to capture meanings described. This process is supported by Harzing et al. (2005). Information gathered was transcribed accordingly in writing in order not to miss the intended meaning and context. to checkmate discrepancies, inaccuracies and bias, the research findings were vetted by an academic expert from the department of religion and cultural studies, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

-Investigative tools: People's experiences and personal occurrences need to be gathered, documented and preserved for posterity else such information is lost with the passing away of the individual bearing the information. Fact gathering tool for the study was a semi – structured question format administered through direct interview with the respondents and is useful when one may not be able to read or write, or is advanced in age not to comprehend easily. (Denga and Ali, 1983) while Herzog (1996) supports that the method is useful in behavioural research for data and relevant information that would otherwise have been difficult to collect through written or closed ended question type. Initial documentation was through writing which accompanied the series of interview rather than using recording equipment which could appear intimidating to the average local aged interviewee/respondent. Data was also derived through participant observation by the author within a period of six months while carrying a personal literacy programme.

-**Sampling technique:** Purposive sampling was employed in selecting respondents which comprised four categories of front-line indigenes resident in the community for about 30 years for most of them and usually oldest persons with first-hand knowledge and understanding of their family's way of life from Ikot Obio Atai/ Ibiaku Itam community. Two family heads, two clergy men, two village heads/ chiefs and an ex-governor. Choice of two selections in each category was not intentional but rather incidental. These were respectable leaders in the community with respect to their various roles which is further highlighted below.

-Respondent's characteristics:

The four categories of respondents who served as key informants were as follows:

i)   Two chiefs serving as village heads of Ikot Obio Atai village I &II in Ibiaku Itam community. Village heads by tradition are generally are the custodians of culture and preside over community affairs, such settling disputes according to customary and statutory laws. They also responsible for maintaining peace and order in the community.

ii)   Heads of extended families/kindred: in the village, five of them were identified and these precide over the five enlarged families which make up the village spread. They were the oldest in their families though only two were able to respond in this study.

iii)   Two clergymen, one of which was the longest serving cleric in the community. They pastored two of the largest and long serving churches in the Ikot Obio Atai village where majority of the indigenes had contact with Christianity. Clergymen generally are influential in the Nigerian Christian system as they are deemed to be God's 'oracle' and representatives, particularly those having large membership.

iv)   A retired former State Governor: with wealth of experience in governing Akwa Ibom State and as an elder statesman being a resident in the community of his origin, was well positioned to provide information.

All respondents/ interviewees were seven males between ages 64 – 80 except a clergy who was in his 40s based on interaction and observations made. These served as *living libraries,* being living people as oral source of information to portray account of how social forces of interaction basically Christian religion, education and civilization have impacted on traditional values and cultural practices in Ikot Obio Atai/Ibiaku Itam community. The usual protocols which accompany the visit of a community leader/ elder were waived such as the giving of drinks before consultation.

-Limitations: Total population of family heads was five. However, one of them to be interviewed was bereaved during the period of research investigation and could not respond due to the untimely occurrence and no other family member could provide the required information for obvious solidarity with their head; more so some of the elderly ones were not really comfortable about being asked many questions even when the interview could have be rescheduled at their convenience. The author in consideration to research ethics had to let go, leaving only three family heads to discuss and conduct interview with. Gluck and Patai (1991) states that an interviewee may not respond because the person may not be used to telling his/ her story publicly, therefore becomes afraid of giving private or personal information. The second family head could not be accessed due to travels to attend to farm lands, while the third was not favourably disposed due to health challenges thereby leaving just two heads of families to respond to interview. Other family members could not grant interview on behalf of their heads based on their notion that they were not in a position to do so.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS:

Data from respondents were coded and interpreted as narrative analysis based on thematic issues under discussion which are on cultural modifications arising from integration of Christian religion, education/ civilization and urbanization primarily. Each set of questions during interview were slightly tailored to fit each category of respondents' status, though basic issues in question were constant. Family heads interviewed communicated in vernacular while other respondents preferred to use both English and vernacular (Ibibio dialect) to enable cordial interaction with the investigator who speaks same dialect. The respondents are indicated by their status in the community with names withheld while their answers are stated in tables 1 – 3 below, while fourth account is reported in narrative form.

Table 1: Response of village heads to cultural modification in Ibiaku Itam community, Southeast Nigeria

ISSUES	VILLAGE HEAD/ CHIEF- 1	VILLAGE HEAD/ CHIEF-2
Years of service	10 years	15 years
Community lifestyle	o Nothing peculiar, same as with other Ibibio communities.	o Indigenes live contented lives are o not easily moved.
Culture prior to missionaries	o Special streams to be visited on particular days, o mother of twins barred from certain streams, o special eye contact signifying caution o father of girl in fattening receives gift o adulterous woman fined a big goat.	o Use of non-verbal communication to mock or abuse someone; o jubilation over the visit of an illustrious son; o traditional oath taking (with evil consequence upon defaulters), o the belief in many gods and superstitions.
Current cultural practices	o There are cultural modifications but o none outstanding as compared to the past, except that monkeys not being eaten is still upheld.	o Very few are in practice now. o As a chief I don't indulge in any traditional practice such as pouring libation (to ancestors).
Why culture modification	Civilization	o Christianity; one could be educated & still indulge in certain traditional acts.
Attitude of the literate	o The literate do not support traditions but violates or practices them without prior consent from a family elder	o Not many educated persons visit their villages
Education vs. tradition	Enlightened people do not adhere to age-long traditions.	Those who value tradition and cultural practices are less of the educated
Training modes	o Formal, o agro-based and o vocational; o combination of both	o Vocational, followed by Agriculture

Source: Field survey

Findings from table one clearly indicates that educational influence has mellowed the recognition and practice of age-long communal traditions, particularly for the enlightened, while indigenes involve in agro-based vocation for sustenance.

Table 2: **Response of family heads to cultural modification in Ibiaku Itam Community, Southeast Nigeria**

ISSUES	FAMILY HEAD- 1	FAMILY HEAD – 2
Headship	Born and bred in community over 60 years	Seven years (from death of previous head)
Community lifestyle	No peculiar lifestyle due to influence of other cultures	Boisterous people are detested and regarded as showy.
Vocation in community	Predominantly agriculture and trading	o Commercial bike riding and o vocational apprenticeship
Vocation by age group	20 years below: Trading and commercial bike riding; 21-40: Agriculture and trading, 41-60: Local/petty trading at home	20 years and below: Many are in school 21-40: pursuing education, 41-60: farming.
Cultural Festivals/ practices	o *Ekpo* masquerade still fierce and dominant; o folk songs, moonlight games, female circumcision, etc.	Farmlands cannot be cultivated by any individual except *Okoku* (oldest person) gives directive to do so
Christianity and family	o Many go to church but one cannot know their commitment level. o No open or public rituals anymore.	o Only some are Christian-like, though fetishism has reduced
Education / Civilization	Civilization affected cultural practices through adoption of Western lifestyle	Christianity rather has made impact on culture more than education.

Source: Field survey

Data presented in table two above is relational to that in the first table with indications that cultural modifications have been experienced in view of Christian influence and by virtue of urbanization and consequently the adoption of other lifestyles. With modern telecommunication devices commonly owned by the average adult from Akwa Ibom state even those resident in the rural areas, there is likelihood of being influence by a wider global community without physical boundaries.

Table 3: **Response of clergy to cultural modifications in Ibiaku Itam Community, Southeast Nigeria**

ISSUES	CLERGY- 1	CLERGY- 2
Service in community	43 years, from 1964	Four years, but I attended secondary school in the community.
Community lifestyle	*Ekpo* masquerading, palm wine tapping and palm fruit harvesting.	The people are loving, warm and hospitable
Vocation in community	o Small scale farming and palm oil production	o Agro- based industries like food processing; o they are enterprising farmers
Vocation by age group	20 years and below: Vocational skill acquisition and practices, 21-40: Nearer home to fend for self, 41-60: Attend village meetings and spend much time whiling away at the **Pubs**	Education among active age groups
Cultural Festivals/ practices	o Traditional wrestling and *Ekpo* masquerade; o eating of monkey is forbidden o navel of a baby placed under plantain, o baby boys' foreskins kept under palm wine tree after circumcision. o Many still do these things.	*Ekpo* masquerading.
Christianity and culture	o Christianity has brought modifications and changes in cultural practice o some traditional/cultural practices are done in secret	o There is improvement in Christian worship compared to the past but o a lot still needs to be done because o some of the people are not still receptive to the gospel. o Spiritual life cannot be exactly determined as o some practices are in secret
Education / Civilization vs. culture	o Among indigenes are a mixture of church goers and traditional worshippers because o in secret or at night, rituals are still done	o Education has brought changes, o less people still adhere to cultural values and traditional beliefs.
How many indigenes in church	All my members are from Ikot Obio Atai / Ibiaku Itam community.	Three-quarter are indigenes of Ikot Obio Atai / Ibiaku Itam community

Source: Field Survey

Findings from table three above attest that though Christianity has made impact in the lives of Ibiaku Itam people to their being identified as one, the extent of commitment to the faith cannot be ascertained. Ekpo masquerade involvement is still a celebrated tradition among indigenes and similar account was equally rendered in the previous table.

Response from fourth interviewee:

The last respondent being previously the number one citizen in the state, preferred to give a general response to the entire issues raised:

> Though the people of Ibibio may claim to be Christians, traditional religious practices are still in their minds because this is what they had grown up with and are accustomed to. The spirit of free-will worship among our people was killed because missionaries compelled them to accept Christianity. Youths and adults are fairly into self-supporting ventures but attend school alongside.
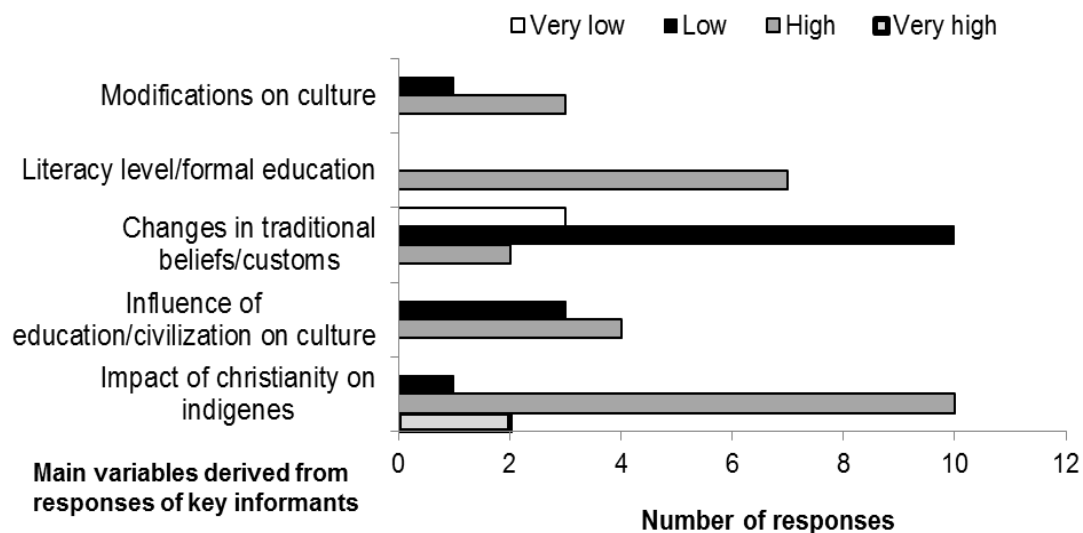
Summary of findings illustrated:

Fig. 1: Graphical representation of impact of christianity and modernization on Ibiaku community of Southeast Nigeria (based on resonses of six key informants).

PARTICIPANT'S OBSERVATION

The following were observations made personally by the author on Ibiaku Itam community within a period of six months set aside to carry out same as follows:

Socio-cultural lifestyles: there are socio-economic groups which demonstrate their sense of belonging through seasonal festivals and events marked as major celebration for such groups. They draw together members with similar interest to fulfill certain obligations for their economic advancement such as cassava processing and other special commodities locally produced for
sales.
Periodic festivals such as wrestling tournament and seasonal outings of entertaining masked cultural troupes are not left out.

Leisure time at drinking spots are usually by adult male and often the elderly after a day's work, particularly for those in retirement.

Unlike other communities, Ikot Obio Atai/Ibiaku Itam area is populated youths who prefer to be independent in every possible way.

Tradition: major tradition still held unto is the deification of the revered and equally dreaded *Ekpo nyoho* masquerade which makes unexpected physical appearance in their pairs or groups. A female is not required to walk past it if encountered on the road but to would be aided by any brave male as a covering to do so. This masquerade appearance are generally tied to some taboos e.g. change of soul from aged to youth, farm yields or some other reasons. They are sometimes given money by passers-by to let go and to welcome if they venture into any someone's house or at compounds where people are.

Literacy influence: A bit on the average among the youths who seem to be interested in manual work around the community as means of sustenance such as building, off-loading of items for a fee, sales of farm produce on market days and other forms of unskilled labour. It was found from observation that despite the citing of a major University in the state and a private polytechnic few miles from the community with the intermingling of foreigners and students from the tertiary institutions, indigenes seemed to adhere yet strongly to their traditions and cultural practices. This paper takes for granted that with such academic advantage, high literacy rate would have been experienced among Ikot Obio Atai/ Ibiaku Itam indigenes particularly, as some off-campus residents both staff and some students are scattered throughout the community. This however was a personal submission.

Influence of urbanization: indigenes still adhere strongly to their local norms and indigenous lifestyles.

Christian influence: the active and working age groups as observed do not readily respond to church-related issues and expressed same verbally to the author during interactions. No particular cognizance of Sunday worship days.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The study has showed that what previously were regarded to be 'appropriate' forms of cultural expressions and practices have been influenced and undergone some modifications by reason of not only the Christian faith, but other overlapping yet embracing social forces such as education, civilization and urbanization which Bird and Stevens (2003) attribute as being significant to cross-cultural interactions. The foregoing resonates with Jefferson (1962) who posits that only by transmission of knowledge by each succeeding generation can civilization maintain itself and make advance upon the knowledge of the past.

 Humans as first-hand information resources particularly at sub-urban community levels are no doubt invaluable 'living libraries', as the content embedded in them (tacit knowledge) can only be shared as desired or willed by the person(s) in possession of the information content, without which may become entirely lost if untapped or their existence on earth terminates. This study has further established that stories that define the community serve as heritage resources for identity emerges out of a value system defined, sustained and transmitted based what has been accepted or laid down, thereby leading to identification as in the case of Ibiaku Itam community that could still reckon with their values and norms, even though may not be publically in practice as previously done. This however supports an earlier submission that

the 'weaker' state falls in line with a seemingly or relatively 'stronger' one. Any influence arising from interactions as with Ibiabu Itam community have no doubt been seemingly gradual, quite unlike the critical experience discussed by Fink et al. (2006) which holds that when behaviour or an action is taken according to prevailing norms guiding behaviour of the actor, leads to unexpected outcomes or trigger unexpected reactions by counterparts.

Lessons learnt from local community research involving generating data on indigenes of an area, require consulting and involvement of family heads as they have firsthand knowledge of the principal persons- the research subjects. In this regard, cross cultural training for competence is recommended. Also, having to stay or interact with residents in the community enables blended communication experience particularly in understanding the intricacies of cultural behavior. This was the major advantage which plausibly aided the author/investigator at various stages of contact during findings.

While oral history interviewing collects information about the past from observers and participants involved in that past, interactions prior and during the interview have established that when dealing with local community people, much patience is required as they are more comfortable with felt time than spatial time schedules and hurried dates; may require being involved actively (or passively) in their activities to observe them.

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