

## **TRADITIONAL INFORMATION COMMUNICATION PRACTICES OF THE ANNANG PEOPLE OF IKOT EKPENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

By

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### **ABSTRACT**

Information plays an important and significant role in every society. Prior to modern civilization, there had been in existence clear-cut systems and processes of communication among people of various ethno-cultural background different from the technology-based, sophisticated forms provided by modern media. The experience of Ikot Ekpene people has not been different. This study therefore investigated the traditional information communication practices of the Annang people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design using questionnaire as instrument for data collection. A cluster sample of 180 respondents from twelve villages were involved in the study. Findings show that there exists a basic, informal, social communication process which is intimately related to the general social processes of the people. It depends on and derives from the oratory tradition of the people, hence its oral-based mode of content generation and dissemination through speech, songs and miming, as well as the use of instruments. It is still being deployed, propagated and preserved through speech, performance, exemplification, and in the traditional institutions of the people. It is presently facing threats of extinction from modernization, predominance of modern media of communication, western education and Christianity. It is here recommended that these indigenous modes of communication of the people be given prominence during local events and functions.

**Keywords:** *Communication Practices, Oratory Tradition, Traditional Information, Ikot Ekpene LGA, The Annang People, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.*

### **Introduction: Traditional information, Meaning and Modes**

Right from primitive days, information has been an indispensable aspect of great value to both the individual and the society as a whole. All categories of information that have ever been generated have therefore carried with it contents that had informed and passed particular messages

to those concerned. Every human being has therefore always needed information for the purposes of awareness and enlightenment on the happenings around them (Akpan-Atata, Akwang, Akai, & Eyene, 2015; Mfon & Uford, 2024). It is on this premise that it is incontrovertible that traditional information has always been in existence, especially when considering the postulations of Berlo in Nweze and Ugwuona (2011) that “the way we behave, speak, stay silent, or greet people...send out a multiplicity of messages to those around us.”

Traditional information therefore exists as an “oral process which depends on the effective use of the human auditory and visual systems” (Wilson, 2005). It is something indigenous to a people and is employed in most rural areas as well as in rural-urban settings. It is basically an informal, social process which is intimately related to the basic social processes of the people. It is for this reason that it is described as “the people’s media” because it is people-oriented in nature, and exists primarily to serve the economic, social, religious and political functions of a particular community, as are determined by the leaders of the community at a given time (Wilson & Unoh, 1991; Wilson, 2005; Nweze & Ugwuona, 2011).

The critical point here is that traditional information depends on and derives from the “oratory traditions” or what Wilson (2005) describes as the “oracy culture” of the people. In essence, it is an ‘oral-based’ mode of generating content, disseminated through speech, songs and miming or by use of instruments such as ‘awolom’ (‘obodom’), ‘ikon’, ‘ntakrok’, etc. to inform and pass messages for the purposes of awareness and enlightenment of the people of the community. It is therefore pertinent to note that traditional information is not limited to the human voice as objects made of wood or metal are used to not only amplify the human voice in the same way microphone is used in contemporary times, but as musical instruments, media (Uford, 2018), channel or message. According to Wilson (1990) this practice has very ancient origins and has continued to be so used till date.

However, though traditional information exists primarily as oratory, symbols, music, images, artifacts, drawings, songs, paintings, sculptures, etc. all make up both the messages and the means (media/channels) through which they are disseminated; in what MacBride et al (1981) describes as “two faces of one reality.” Thus, contrary to misconceptions and postulations in some quarters, traditional information is available and is communicated and preserved through speech, folklore and songs, miming, and in the festivals, dress codes, and other cultural architecture that reflects in the palaces, shrines, village/community halls, and in the indigenous institutions of the people.

Also, in contemporary times, scholars from various ethnic extractions have come up with innovative methods of conserving knowledge of their culture and have made same available as information resources in order to meet the information needs of individuals, institutions and organisations (Akpan-Atata, Akai & Jimmy, 2024). These exist in various formats. For instance, among the Ibibio people (found mostly in Akwa Ibom and parts of Cross River States of Nigeria). Okon, Simon, and Akai (2015) observe that “different dimensional cultural rendition” have been packaged and made available through diverse resources - books, journals, video cassettes/discs, thesis/projects, etc. - in an effort to awaken interest in the Ibibio culture. This approach is neither peculiar to the Ibibio scholars nor exclusive to them. Their contemporaries from other ethnic extractions - Annang, Efik, Igbo, Itshekiri, and Yoruba, to mention but a few - have also embarked on such scholarly adventures in an effort to preserve their traditional and cultural heritage.

## **Scope and Methodology of the Study**

This study concerns itself only with the oral aspects of communicating traditional information, with particular emphasis on its modes of preservation and dissemination among the Annang of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It is therefore an assessment of the traditional information system and practices of the people of the area using the descriptive survey method to ascertain the prevalent situation. This method is considered appropriate because, in line with the postulations of Nwagbara (2006, p.111), the study itself is about conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects and trends that are evident as far as communication of traditional information among people of this ethnic extraction in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area is concerned.

The instrument deployed in data collection was questionnaire. The sample drawn from the population of study was 180 respondents. The number is composed of 15 respondents each, from 12 villages that were randomly selected at an interval of four. The local government area has 45 villages in all, spread across two clans: Ikot Ekpene (Urban), 27 villages, and Amanyam, 18 villages. 180 copies of the questionnaire were administered based on the cluster sampling technique. This approach was considered necessary because of the need to work with those who are reasonably versed with knowledge of the traditional information system and practices of the people, and who can thus easily understand the meaning, intent and purpose of this study.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are:

- i. to ascertain the availability of traditional information communication practices in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria;
- ii. to identify the oral modes of traditional information communication available in the local government area;
- iii. to find out how the oral modes of traditional information is preserved in the local government area;
- iv. to find out the ways oral modes of traditional information is disseminated in the local government area; and
- v. to find out the challenges of preserving and disseminating traditional information in the local government area.

### **Brief Overview of the Area of Study**

Ikot Ekpene is both a village and the name of one of the 31 local government areas in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The local government has a political structure of 11 (eleven) Wards, two clans (Ikot Ekpene and Amanyam), and 45 villages; with a population of 143,077 according to 2006 census, but currently put at 340,732, based on +3.82% annual growth rate of 1991-2006. It is popularly known as “The Raffia City” and believed to be the political and cultural capital of the Annang ethnic group in Nigeria. Occupying a total landmass of 116square kilometers, it is located on the A342 highway that parallels the coast between Calabar to the south east and Aba in Abia State to the west, with the state capital, Uyo, on the same road to the east (Nair, 1972; Udoh, 1983; AKSG, 2019).

Ikot Ekpene is known as a regional centre of commerce, with notable exports of palm products, especially palm oil, palm kernels, raffia products, including raffia fibers and its wine, and group crops of yam, cassava, taro, and corn. The people’s significant exports include basket weaving, sculpture, and most notably, raffia cane furniture. They have distinguished themselves through their indigenous crafts, with a long history of transforming the raffia fiber into cloth used

in making shoes, hats, handbags, mats, and with distinctive cultural carvings made out of wood. These unique arts and crafts trades have continued alongside traditional agriculture.

The people of Ikot Ekpene are predominantly Annang in ancestry and thus share similarities in culture and practices throughout the 45 villages that make up the local government area. This is particularly noticeable in such areas as cuisines, dressing, dances, songs, rituals, folklores, beliefs and myths, among others. Embedded in the culture of the people is a rich mix of communication media that is intertwined and as such, not easily distinguishable from the cultural practices.

### **Preservation and Dissemination of Traditional Information**

Generally, the messages and ideas which form the body of traditional information are preserved and disseminated by means of itinerant dance and mime groups, puppet shows, images, songs, drawings, paintings, sculptures, sport, etc., which serve not only to entertain but to influence attitudes and behaviour (MacBride, *et al*, 1981; Wilson, 2006). These constitutes what Okon, et al (2015; p.187) describe as the "richness and quality" of a people's cultural expression which are "subsumed in the complexity and staggered diversity of the people's tradition." This description is succinct, for as simple and facile as it appears to be, traditional information communication process is complex. Despite this. its most common means of preservation and dissemination however remains speech, performance, and example; as well as in the institutions of chieftaincy, marriage, secret societies such as 'ekpe' and 'ekpo' cults, etc. (Wilson & Unoh, 1991; Wilson, 2006; Enebong, 2007).

In a UNESCO study on "Communication and Society", it was observed that far back in time, laws and prescriptions for ceremonial rites and observances, designed to express and to ensure the continuity of the community, were durably recorded on clay tablets, stone carvings, or scrolls. The credit to this, the report stated, was due to the development of writing, which "permitted the preservation of the most meaningful, symbol-laden messages, those ensuring the community's permanent existence" (MacBride, et al., 1981, p.4). This position equally obtains in the nature of communication of traditional information among the Annang in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State as well as in other traditional or indigenous communities as there are evidences of cryptic writings, especially those deployed by secret societies or cults such as 'ekpo', 'ekpe' masquerades, etc. that are clearly meaningful and can be 'decoded' or 'deciphered' by the initiates of such societies/cults (Wilson & Unoh, 1991; Enebong, 2007).

With regards to the various communities that constitute Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area, traditional information and media, especially in terms of its oral modes, have been in existence since pre-colonial times and have endured till present. Some aspects of it, especially those associated with modes of worship, beliefs and dress styles, have been influenced and shaped by the different ways in which other cultural, legal, moral and religious institutions have evolved; but its basic modes and symbols subsist (MacBride, *et al*, 1981; Wilson, 1990 & 2006; Enebong, 2007). This is treated in more specific but elaborate terms in subsequent sections of this study.

### **Presentation of Data**

The data for this study were gathered through administering structured questionnaire. A total of 180 (one hundred and eighty) copies of questionnaire were administered on respondents in 12 randomly selected villages (out of the 45 villages) in the area of study. Out of 180 copies administered, 173 copies, representing 96.1% were duly completed and returned and were found

useful for analysis. To analyze the data, they were computed and interpreted, and are here presented using frequency tables, simple percentages and mean values in order to ascertain whether the objectives of the study have been achieved.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age and Educational Background/Qualifications**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender Distribution</b>		
Male	129	74.6
Female	44	25.4
<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age Distribution</b>		
40-49	54	31.2
50-59	47	27.2
60-69	35	20.2
70-79	22	12.7
80 and above	15	8.7
<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Educational Background/Qualification</b>		
No formal education	9	5.2
FSLC	22	12.7
GCE/SSCE/NECO	41	23.7
OND/NCE	33	19.1
HND/Bachelor's Degree	58	33.5
PGD and above	10	5.8
<b>Total/Overall Percentage</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1** shows the distribution of respondents' demographic data by gender, age, and educational background/qualifications. The gender distribution of the respondents indicates that there were 129 or 74.6% male respondents as against 44 or 25.4% female respondents. The age group that constituted the respondents was in the age brackets of 40-49 years with 54 (31.2%); followed by 50-59 years with 47 (27.2%) respondents. The age groups 60-69 and 70-79 years were 33 (20.2%) and 22 (12.7%) respectively. The age group with the least number of respondents was 80 years and above with 15 (8.7%) respondents. Other pieces of information from the table shows that 9 respondents (5.2%) had no formal education; 12.7% (22 respondents) had First School Leaving Certificate; 23.7% (41 respondents) had either GCE/WASC/SSCE or NECO; 19.1% (33 respondents) were holders of Ordinary National Diploma/National Certificate of Education; 33.5% (58 respondents) had Higher National Diploma/Bachelor's Degree; and 5.8% (10 respondents) were holders of Post Graduate Diploma and above.

**Table 2. Respondents' awareness of availability of Traditional Information**

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	173	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>

In **Table 2**, all the 173 respondents affirmed their awareness of the availability of traditional information either as a concept or practice.

**Table 3. Respondents' awareness of availability/usage of traditional information in Community**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	168	97.2
No	0	0
Not certain	5	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3** indicates that 168 respondents (97.2%) were aware of the availability of traditional information in the area of the study; 5 respondents (2.8%) were not certain about its availability.

**Table 4. Respondents' knowledge of particular form(s) of Traditional Information**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Speech	-	-
Incantations	-	-
Storytelling	-	-
Miming/songs/dance displays	-	-
Foliage	-	-
Visuals	-	-
Graphics/symbols	3	1.7
Instruments	-	-
All the above	170	98.3
None of the above	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>

In **Table 4**, 170 (98.3%) respondents had knowledge of the various modes of traditional information while 3 (1.7%) had no knowledge of traditional graphic representations/symbology.

**Table 5. Deployment of village messenger ('Town crier')**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	151	87.2
No	3	1.7
Not certain	19	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5** shows that 87.2% (151) of the respondents were aware that a town crier was still deployed in communicating important information to the people. 11.1% (19 respondents) were not certain about it while 1.7% (3 respondents) said they no longer hear from them.

**Table 6. Deployment of traditional instruments in Community**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	168	97.1
No	1	0.6
Not certain	4	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>

According to **Table 6**, 97.1% (168 respondents) had knowledge of the deployment of traditional instruments in communicating traditional information in the area of study; 2.3% (4 respondents) were not certain about its usage while 0.6% (1 respondent) said instruments were not used.

**Table 7. Traditional Information system used in Community**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Speech	-	-
Incantations	-	-
Storytelling	-	-
Miming/songs/dance	-	-
Foliage	-	-
Visuals	-	-
Graphics/symbols	3	1.7
Instruments	-	-
All the above	170	98.3
Non of the above	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>

The data from **Table 7** shows that 170 (98.3%) respondents said the various modes of communicating traditional information were being used in the area of study while 3 (1.7%) respondents said traditional graphic representations and symbology were not in use.

**Table 8. Respondents' understanding of message content when instruments are used**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Always	170	98.3
Occasionally	1	0.6
Not at all	2	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>



Data in **Table 8** reveals that 170 (98.3%) respondents understood message content when traditional instruments were deployed; 2 (1.1%) respondents said they did not, while 1 (0.6%) understood occasionally.

**Table 9. Communication of traditional Information**

Communication of Traditional Information	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Communication of traditional information is mostly by speech	120 69.4%	53 30.6%	0 0%	0 0%	3.69	Not Significant
Communication of Community mores and codes, doctrines, reprimands, etc.	72 41.6%	98 56.7%	1.7%	0 0%	3.69	Not Significant
Communication of traditional information through instruments	83 48%	87 50.3%	3 1.7%	0 0%	3.46	Not Significant
Traditional information on modes of worship of the people	135 78%	37 21.4%	1 0.6%	0 0%	3.77	Significant
Traditional musical instruments as media of communication	151 87.3%	22 12.7%	0 0%	0 0%	3.87	Significant
The community messenger ('Town crier') as channel of communication	170 98.3%	3 1.7%	0 0%	0 0%	3.98	Significant
<b>Summation (<math>\Sigma</math>)</b>					<b>22.46</b>	
<b>Weighted Average (Significant at) = 3.74</b>						

In **Table 9**, three out of the six communication of traditional information constructs were found to be significant, their mean scores were greater than the significant mean value of 3.74. The community messenger ('Town crier') as the mouthpiece of the community vested with the primary responsibility of conveying the decisions of the leaders of the community to the people, with a mean value of 3.98 remains the highest mode/media for communicating traditional information in the area of the study. Communication of traditional information through the use of instruments recorded the least mean score at 3.46.

**Table 10. Preservation of Traditional Information**

Preservation of Traditional Information	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Preservation of traditional information by speech, performance and exemplification	160 92.5%	10 5.8%	3 1.7%	0 0%	3.9	Significant
Preservation of history/genealogy of the people are by storytelling and legends	118 68.2%	52 30%	2 1.2	1 0.6%	3.65	Significant
Preservation of mores and codes, doctrines, etc by folklores, songs, etc.	67 38.73%	103 59.54%	3 1.73%	0 0%	3.36	Not Significant
Preservation of traditional information by institutions and practices	142 82%	31 18%	0 0%	0 0%	3.82	Significant
Preservation of traditional information through anniversaries/ceremonies	87 50.3%	86 49.7%	0 0%	0 0%	3.5	Not Significant
Preservation of traditional information through cultural displays and instruments	148 85.5%	25 14.5%	0 0%	0 0%	3.85	Significant
Preservation of traditional information through initiation rites	81 46.8%	92 53.2%	0 0%	0 0%	3.46	Not Significant



<b>Summation (<math>\Sigma</math>)</b>					<b>25.54</b>	
<b>Weighted Average (Significant at) = 3.64</b>						

The result of the mean value analysis from **Table 10** shows that of the various constructs on the preservation of traditional information in the area of study, 4 were significant - their mean scores exceeded the weighted average of 3.64. Accordingly, speech, performance, and exemplification with a mean score of 3.9, followed by the various cultural displays and deployment of traditional instruments with a mean score of 3.85; traditional institutional practices with a mean score of 3.82; and history and genealogy of the people through storytelling and legends at 3.65 all contribute significantly to the preservation of traditional information in the area. Communication of community mores and codes, reprimands, warnings, etc through folklores recorded the least mean score below the weighted average at 3.36; this is followed by initiation rites with a mean score of 3.46; and traditional anniversaries/ceremonies at 3.5.

**Table 11. Challenges of Preserving and Communicating Traditional Information**

<b>Challenges of Preserving and Communicating Traditional Information</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Predominance of modern media of communication over traditional modes	155 89.6%	14 8.1%	3 1.7%	1 0.6%	3.86	Significant
Advent and influence of Christianity on traditional information processes	91 52.6%	61 35.2%	16 9.2%	5 3%	3.37	Not Significant
Western education and elitist consciousness towards traditional information processes	126 73%	40 23%	7 4%	0 0%	3.68	Significant
Government's approach to documentation and propagation of traditional information	101 58.4%	50 29%	15 8.6%	7 4%	3.41	Not Significant
Attitude of indigenous communicologists, historians, etc towards documentation of traditional information system and practices	68 39.3%	96 55.5%	7 4%	2 1.2%	3.32	Not Significant
Incorporation of indigenous information processes into modern theatrical performances and cultural displays	76 44%	81 46.8%	13 7.5%	3 3%	3.32	Not Significant
<b>Summation (<math>\Sigma</math>)</b>					<b>20.96</b>	
<b>Weighted Average (Significant at) = 3.49</b>						

Based on the significant mean value of 3.49 as indicated in **Table 11**, two constructs posed significant challenges to the communication and preservation of traditional information in the area of study; these are the prevalence of modern media of communication with a mean score of 3.87; and the elitist consciousness that has been created by Western education, at 3.66. Commitment to documentation by indigenous communicologists, historians, and social anthropologists and low level of incorporating indigenous information processes into modern theatrical performances and cultural displays posed the least threat at 3.32 each; advent and influence of Christianity and Government's policy approach to documentation and propagation of the culture of the people each scored 3.37 and 3.41, respectively.

## Discussion of Findings

Responses gathered from the field survey affirm the availability of traditional information in its various forms and modes and the fact that they are still in use among the Annang people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. First, all 173 respondents (Table 2) affirmed their awareness of its existence either as a concept or practice. In Table 4, for instance, 170 respondents, representing 98.3% were able to identify the various forms and modes of traditional information available in the various communities involved in the study, while 3 or 1.7% said it is only traditional graphics and symbology such as ‘nwomo’ (traditional shrine), ‘nsadang’ (decorated bamboo rind), etc. that they had no knowledge of its availability. These findings corroborate Wilson (2005) and Nweze and Ugwuona’s (2011) positions that traditional information has always been in existence and as a people-oriented process, is still being employed in most rural as well as in rural-urban settings.

Another Important observation is the data in Tables 5, 6, and 7, which are on the deployment of village or community messengers (‘Town criers’), traditional instruments, and some select modes in the communication of traditional information. Data from these tables reveal that town criers (87.2%), traditional instruments such as ‘ekpuut’, ‘awolom’, ‘akere’, ‘ntakrok’, etc. (97.1%), and select modes such as incantations, storytelling/folklores, foliage, etc. (98.3%) are still being deployed in the various communities.

Another instructive fact revealed in the study is that despite the seeming dominance of modern media of communication 170 respondents (98.3%) still understand the message content even when traditional instruments were deployed while 1.1% (two respondents) said they do not understand; one respondent (0.6%) understood the messages only on some occasions.

## Communication of Traditional information in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area

As data in Table 9 indicates, traditional information is still widely communicated by speech among the Annang people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area. In other words, storytelling/folklores are still prevalent in the various communities that constitute the local government area. This is linked directly to the culture of the people where idioms are used in driving home salient points during deliberations, counseling, or during conversations. Another perspective to this is the use of local or indigenous poems, often rendered as songs, for example, ‘ntang ikpaoisong’ which remains an integral part of certain cultural displays. However, at a mean score of 3.69 it is not considered significant as the study reveals that the Town criers, with a mean score of 3.98, far above the weighted average of 3.74, remain the most credible sources of information on ‘official’ position of the community on issues of community importance, as well as from Government at all levels. In various communities for instance, the Town criers play major roles in mobilizing members of the community for sanitation exercises, national immunization exercises, voters’ registration exercises and during actual elections, etc. by informing/reminding residents of these Government activities, including the consequence of non-compliance.

Also, most aspects of the ceremonies pertaining to traditional institutions such as marriage, chieftaincy, masquerade/secret societies are avenues for communicating traditional norms on the mores of the community as far as such institutions are concerned. These are embedded in the traditional marriage rites, coronation rites of the heads of the communities - chiefs and village heads; and the initiation rites into secret societies such as ‘ekpo’ masquerade, etc. In other words, these traditional institutions’ rites represent something other than the obvious songs, dance and

miming that accompany the ceremonies; they communicate the beliefs, customs, rituals, etc. that had been the practices among the people from ancestry and are deeply rooted.

Communication of traditional information among the Annang of Ikot Ekpene LGA is not limited to speech; it is also done through ‘music’ in the songs and sounds produced by the various instruments that are deployed in cultural displays. In other words, the people’s cultural displays are not just for entertainment but vehicles for spreading and propagating existing ideas, doctrines, attitudes, etc., of the community. They are therefore used beyond being sources of entertainment for encouraging the people to examine their personal behaviours, make changes to their behaviours and attitude if necessary. An important point to note here in the deployment of instruments is that not all are used in cultural displays. For instance, there is a particular type of wooden drum known as ‘awolom ubong’ that is only ‘beaten’ by a designated/authorized person and is only deployed on very important matters concerning high ranking chiefs, such as the Village or Clan Head and Paramount Rulers, mostly during coronations and death or passage rites. Also, the instrument used by the ‘town crier’ who operates under the authority of the village head/village council, is often different from those used by others such as cultural groups and age grades for men, women and the youth. Each of these groups use different instruments whose sounds are easy to differentiate both from that of the town crier and from other groups.

Furthermore, in their relationship with the ‘supernatural’ or Supreme Being traditional information among the Annang of Ikot Ekpene LGA take the forms of incantation, chant, ritual, prayer, sacrifice, invocation, conjuration, etc., as well as the graphic forms of obituary and in memoriam notice, tombstone messages, etc. Wilson (2005) describes this mode of communication as “Extra-mundane” and is believed to take place between the living and the supernatural. In both its graphic and other forms, they are available and still in use in various forms in the communities that make up Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area.

### **Preservation of Traditional Information in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area**

Among the Annang people of Ikot Ekpene, there are several means or methods of preserving traditional information, but the most common remains speech, performance, and exemplification as revealed by the study findings. These methods made a total mean score of 3.9, far above the weighted average of 3.69. In other words, in the stories and folklores of the people, their ‘supposed’ superstitions and beliefs, etc. that are told from generation to generation, the history, genealogy, doctrines, values, etc. are being deliberately and inadvertently preserved and propagated.

Traditional information is also preserved through and by the various cultural displays and the instruments deployed, which, as earlier stated also propagate ideas, doctrines, etc. beyond just the music and entertainment; it made a mean score of 3.85. This is so because traditional information is not easily distinguishable from the means of communicating them; the whole process is intertwined and embedded in the culture of the people. This is why Wilson (2006) describes it as a “complex system, though simple in operation.”

There are also traditional institutions, especially those of chieftaincy and marriage, which serve as avenues for the preservation of traditional information. It is therefore obvious from the study findings that with a mean score of 3.82, above the weighted average of 3.64, the traditional institutions of chieftaincy and marriage remain as relevant and potent in preserving traditional information today as it had been in historical times. This is because the rite and rituals associated with chieftaincy coronations and traditional marriages in contemporary times still retain the

essential norms and values of leadership and community/home building, which is what these institutions represent.

The study findings also revealed that storytelling and legends are still being used to preserve the history and genealogy of the people despite the documented evidence available through the works of historians, social anthropologists, and Government gazettes, among others. This method made a mean score of 3.65. These all made significant mean scores as proven means and methods of preserving traditional information among the Annang people of Ikot Ekpene.

However, other identified means of preserving traditional information among the Annang of Ikot Ekpene exist. They include various anniversaries/ceremonies, birth and death or passage rites, at a mean score of 3.5; initiation rites into masquerade/secret societies such as ‘ekpo’ and ‘ekong’, at 3.46; and the folklores at 3.36. That the mean scores of these methods were not found to be significant does not imply that they are not relevant in preserving the indigenous communication system of the people and thus providing a resource base for passing same to newer generations because they are still very much in use among the people.

Other means of preserving traditional information that are worth mention here, though not weighted are foliage and visuals. Foliage include such means as ‘eyei’ (the young/yellow palm frond), described as “nwed ikpaisong” (Wilson, 1991), which is deployed primarily as an injunction, restraint or summons; and ‘okono’, a particular local plant that is deployed in demarcating boundaries in the same way beacon stones are used in modern times. Visuals can be described as “pictorial communication” (Gomtas, 2017). Visuals involve the deployment of certain colours – black, white or red, often times in cloth forms, to depict and communicate general emotions, moods, warnings, ceremonies, attitude, etc. of the community on particular occasions. These means and methods of preserving traditional information are prevalent and very much in use in the various communities that constitute Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area; and their meanings and symbology remain as potent today as they had always been amongst the people.

### **Challenges of Preserving and Communicating Traditional Information in Ikot Ekpene**

Communicating and preserving traditional information among the Annang in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State has been bedeviled by modernization, especially with the advances in information and communication technology (ICT), giving rise to new media. Thus, as data in Table 11 indicates, the prevalence of modern media of communication poses the greatest challenge at a mean score of 3.87, above the weighted average of 3.48. This is because online media - newspapers, social media, satellite television, etc. all engage people’s attention and because of its ease of access, ‘sophistication’ and popularity among the younger generation, has gained predominance and is fast becoming the preferred means of getting information among the people, and thus gradually relegating traditional means further background.

Another factor that poses a serious challenge to communicating and preserving traditional information in the area is Western education. At a mean score of 3.68, modern or Western education has created an ‘elitist consciousness’ which makes the people of the Ikot Ekpene, especially the younger generation, to shy away from traditional information and communication system and processes. The people tend to see the traditional methods as being “too primitive” for the modern world and thus prefer the contemporary forms of information generation and sharing at the detriment of the indigenous forms and processes.

Also challenging the communication and preservation of traditional information in the area is Government's lackadaisical approach to policy formulation and implementation on the documentation and propagation of the indigenous culture of the people. As had earlier been stated in some other section in this study, traditional modes of information and communication gives a glimpse into the lifestyles, speech or oral modes, music, dance, dress codes, behaviour, and the general idiosyncrasies of the people, hence it is described as "the people's media" or "people-oriented media." Based on this, the seeming lack of interest in its preservation and propagation on the part of Government constitutes a major threat to its continued existence and practice among the Annang people of Ikot Ekpene. This factor made a mean score of 3.41 as depicted in Table 11.

Other factors that militate against the preservation and communication of traditional information in the area include the advent and influence of Christianity which have caused many to 'abandon' some aspects of traditional information processes, branding them as idolatory. Following this is lack of commitment towards documenting traditional information system and practices of the people by communicologists, historians, and social anthropologists; as well as low level of incorporating indigenous communication processes into theatrical performances by movie producers, and others. These factors had mean scores of 3.37, for the first, and 3.32 each, for the last two respectively.

### **Conclusion**

As has been established, the Annang people of Ikot Ekpene have always had clear-cut systems and processes of communication different from the modern elitist forms and approaches, but very potent in serving the economic, social, religious and political functions of the various communities that make up the area. It has been found to be rather simple in its operation and depends on the "oratory traditions" or "oracy culture" of the people, and thus very peculiar and deeply-rooted in the indigenous practices of the people as depicted in their instruments, which are basic and locally fabricated; their dress codes; in the different cultural architecture that reflects in their institutions and adorn the palaces, shrines, village or community halls; and in the various festivals, ceremonies and observances of the people.

However, the whole gamut of this traditional information and communication system, as they are known by the people, faces debilitating challenges from modernization; because just in the same ways other cultural, legal, moral and religious institutions and systems have evolved, and being influenced and shaped, so also has traditional information been among the Annang in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. But, despite these threats, especially the seemingly insurmountable obstacles posed by the prevalence of modern media of communication, western education, and Christian religion, these practices persist, and are still being deployed, propagated and preserved through speech, performance, exemplification, and in the traditional institutions of the people.

### **Recommendations**

The people of Ikot Ekpene are primarily Annang people with their distinct ways of life, therefore the indigenous aspects of the people's modes of communication should be adopted and promoted in all local events, functions and ceremonies in the area.

Also, the guiding tenets of the traditional institutions of the people, such as chieftaincy and marriage, should be 'jealously' guarded; its ideals and values respected, as they remain the primary institutions for the building of a morally upright and productive family and society.



Furthermore, indigenous historians, social anthropologists, and communicologists should increase their research and documentation of the traditional information and communication systems and practices of the people, to forestall any impending threat to its existence.

In addition, the younger generation should be encouraged to utilize the social media to showcase the indigenous communication modes and forms as depicted in the cultural ceremonies and festivals, traditional institutional rites of chieftaincy coronations and marriages, etc. of the people.

Finally, Government should make it mandatory through policy formulations and implementation, the increased inclusion of those aspects of life of the people that are deeply-rooted in the customs and beliefs, attitudes, norms and values of the people which are inseparable from the general culture and way of life of the people as this is what gives the people of the area a unique identity.

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