

HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN ESANLAND, NIGERIA

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Abstract: The Esan is a unique ethnic group in the Edo Central Senatorial district of Edo State of Nigeria. This work gives a detailed account on the nature of the people's indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) which is eclectic and transdisciplinary. Within this transdisciplinary framework, is the (w)holistic conception of knowledge that pays no heed to the decompartmentalization of knowledge as conceived in the Western sense. Today, this age-old tradition is threatened not just by Western forces of acculturation, but by the same indigenous people who now feel that anything indigenous is fetish, heathenistic and retrogressive. In this study, review of relevant literature, interviews, observational techniques and group discussions were used in eliciting data. Although there are specific Esan practices worth propagating, commodifying the arts and crafts of the Esan race will require censorship lest we run the risks of commodifying our arts and crafts and dehumanizing humanities.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Cultural Industries, Esan culture & Ethnomedicine.

Introduction

In this paper, we would like to adopt a simple style of presentation so that we all will be carried along in a coherent form. This subject is reasoned to connect everyone to some degree. Basically, a salient set of questions will be raised to guide our focus lest we stray; consequent on this, we would within the remit of this presentation ask the following questions: Who are the Esan people and how old are they? Do they have distinct cultural practices; if yes, could you tell of some? Are these practices still palpable in their everyday life? If not, why is it so,

and what should be done to resuscitate them? How do we employ human resource application in preserving the people's cultural heritage? What if we apply the principle of progressive traditionalism in the development of Esan-derived cultural industries? These issues should be the concern of the Esan people because everything should not be left to foreigner investigators to help us out of this quagmire more so because after six decades of independence, we should be seen to be truly culturally independent. Relying on external help has its attendant consequences because where any of such help comes, it will rather repudiate what we treasure and demean our highly esteemed heritage. This position is not akin to the Esan alone. According to Dinielou (1970:1)

The problems which face the art of music in the countries of Asia and Africa today are of a general order problem that has grown out of the uncontrolled development of an industrial society in which no precautions were taken to protect the culture, the crafts, and the arts. The latter have tended to become mere consumer products, independent of the social context. The freedom of expression, which was the source of their constant renewal, no longer exists.

Earlier Danielou (1970) remarked that numerous foreign travelers who ever tried to make some documentation of our arts have brought back diaries and memoirs filled with negative impressions: the gestures of the dancers seemed like the antics of clowns, while the music was nothing more than a discordant and thundering din. The issue of noise, untuned musical instruments and illogical melodies dot their reports. If between the Orient and the Occident, such misrepresentation abounds, what impressions do you then expect of such people with reference to the Esan race?

Esan studies started quite as early as the visit of the missionaries to the land in 1900 and the subsequent introduction of Western education in the area. For example, the anthropologist, Thomas (1909) took photographs of carved doors at the palaces of Ubiaja, Irrua and Agbede monarchs. Sadly, this documentation came after the palace of HRH Abumhenre Ebhojie II was burnt in 1902. Many decades later, precisely in 1980, Ann Carol Lorenz started her study on house posts in Uromi and Ubiaja. As an Art historian, she studied Esan carving traditions. The contributions of Okojie (1963 and 1994) are noteworthy. Until about two decades ago, some of these palaces retained their old structures with many courtyards. The reason for their many courtyards is not far-fetched because according to Ahianba (2013:17), 'The traditional,

psychological and anthropological concept of the courtyard is that it characterizes the social status, wealth and integrity of family size....’

Elsewhere, he revealed that a monarch’s house is usually taller and bigger than those of his subjects and the building walls are uniquely decorated to enhance aesthetic sense. In the field of fine arts, history and architecture, some degree of work has been done. Beyond history, anthropology and art, there appears to be a paucity of information and documentation in other spheres of ‘Esanlogy’.

Methods and Materials

In this study, ethnographic method of data gathering was used and it included interviews, observational techniques and group discussions. The study area was stratified into five zones in line with the local government arrangement. Esan is made up of thirty- five kingdoms which are grouped into five Local Government Areas (LGAs) for administrative convenience. Three towns each were selected from the local government areas and each administrative headquarters were chosen along two other kingdoms for investigation. Informants were drawn from a widespread spectrum of some monarchs, chiefs, elderly (males and females), youths (males and females). Armed with audio recorder and already prepared questions to guide interactions on the field, a total of fifteen towns were investigated. Out of the fifteen towns, five were urban and ten were rural. These other towns were selected based on specific factors such as areas where indigenous cultural practices could still be gleaned and areas that were safe to visit considering the current security challenges in the locale of investigation. Addedly, a review of relevant literature was done to strengthen the study.

The Esan in Historical and Geographic Sense

Whenever and wherever used, the term Esan conjures two meanings. It is nomenclatural for a territory occupied by a people who occupy a landmass of about 2,814 square kilometres (Oseghale, 2019), that are found in the Edo Central Senatorial District, whose neighbours are the Benins, Owans, Etsakos and Igbos of Delta State and across the river Niger. Esan is also a language spoken in the locale already delineated above. From a historical perspective, the Esan is generally believed to be of Edoid extraction (Okojie 1994 and



In this paper, we will be using the terms, indigenous knowledge and African indigenous education interchangeably. This is so depending on the context and perspective of the presentation but put simply, we feel that a very thin demarcation exists between them if any.

To Mushi (2009), African indigenous education is a process of passing among the tribal members and from one generation to another the inherited knowledge, skills, cultural traditions norms and values of the tribe. Indigenous knowledge which is our major concern is today seen as somewhat ersatz and something that should not be spoken of in the light of superior and standard practices. It is this background that informed the observations of Ocholla and Onyancha (2006) and Bruce and Baloyi (2017) when they remarked that “For a very long time, indigenous knowledge systems have suffered a high measure of neglect”. While an uninformed person may tilt towards blaming the missionaries, imperial and other forces of acculturation for the wilt of IKS, the indigenes under whose watch the people’s collective art has vanished into oblivion have questions to answer for this grave ineptitude. Some Africans have found themselves in the messy mire of believing that indigenous knowledge is nothing but the conjuration of ancient mysticism and everything profane. For those in this category, the opinion of Emeagwali (2014:1), will be helpful in fine-tuning their thoughts. According to her, Indigenous Knowledge Systems are not confined to the material sphere but are often interconnected with spiritual and non-material realms of existence. We need to emphasize ab initio that African indigenous education is a unique knowledge transmission system that encapsulates all the spheres of human endeavour hence the duo, Emeagwali & Shizha (2016:6) observe that:

Scientific knowledge in whatever form, definition and cultural context it may exist, is found in all societies. Each society has its own way of categorizing and labelling types of knowledge. However, in African indigenous communities, knowledge is often treated as a holistic body of knowledge. African indigenous knowledge systems which are based on the natural environment and human practices for human sustainable development, are intrinsically interrelated.

To have a near-good idea of African indigenous knowledge, and indeed the indigenous knowledge as it is in Esan, we need to basically grow in the understanding that as the world is spherical so is the Esan construct of knowledge and this reasoning enables us not to dichotomize or demarcate boundaries in holistic knowledge acquisition. Hence an Esan man who is a farmer is also an herbalist, diviner, musician, drummer, rainmaker, good storyteller, orator, an adept of proverbs and aphorisms and the other a farmer, palm wine tapper and

harvester of palm nuts, hunter, traditional morbid anatomist, catcher and trainer of parrots, livestock rarer, etc. Among the women, we find them being farmers, native doctors, traditional birth attendants, surgeons, palm oil processors, traders, singers and dancers, priestesses and healthcare deliverers.

The Strands of Indigenous Knowledge in Esanland

The contribution of Abah, Mashebe and Denuga (2015) is quite insightful when they acknowledge that indigenous knowledge systems constitute the core of community–development processes in agriculture, the preservation of food, collection and storage of water, animal husbandry and ethnic veterinary medicine. It also forms the basis of indigenous interpretation of meteorological and climatic phenomena, orientation and navigation on land and sea as well as in the management of natural resources. The Indigenous knowledge system is also very helpful in local primary healthcare, preventive medicine and psychosocial care as well as the role of procreation. Having observed the absence of dichotomy in the body of knowledge in the Esan of old, it may be somewhat antithetical to swiftly return to or bow to the contemporarities evident in today’s subject structure. However, for your own sake and that of convenience, we will talk of five subsegments which are as a matter of fact, interconnected and whole. Below is a diagram of my own impression of the Indigenous knowledge web in Esan worldview which is not in anyway sacrosanct.

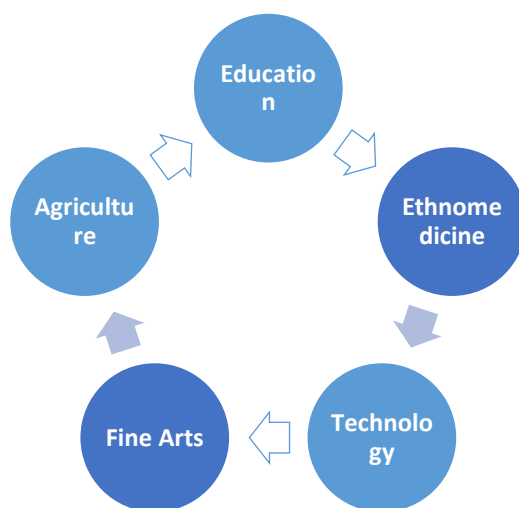


Figure 2: A diagram of indigenous knowledge web in Esan

Here I intend to cursorily discuss the diagram above using apt esoteric Esan proverbs so that we may know how old some of our practices are.

Education

Odiale no bhiye men, Odiale my brother,
a ha rekhan adia when one follows a straightforward person
adiale one will be straightforward

Apprenticeship was a major technique in education. This technique was borne out of caste system where the native doctor's child was not expected to be a novice to the father's craft at best should know a few herbs to treat stomach ache. Names of the land, neighbours, rivers and hills in the environment. Family history, lineages, taboos, dos and don'ts. How to exchange pleasantries, elementary hygiene, and how to conduct oneself in public. What kinds and parts of food, meat and vegetables to eat. For example, the antelope may be eaten but it is not advisable to process its intestines for food. Pumpkin leaves may be eaten but it is not expected that we have anything to do with its roots and this same principle applies to *Ihieghie* (myrica theus Arborus). On moon lit nights, children were told didactic stories, and other brain teasers like *Agbido- Ale*, similarities, dissimilarities and the dangers of confusing them. This whole gamut formed the educational basis and foundation of a well-groomed Esan child.

Ethnomedicine/ Ethnomedical Practice in Esan

Ai zu uhomon bo ni ihe kholor No one abandons self because divination is cataclysmic.

Where etiological investigation was necessary, divination through Osiru, Ukpabor, Oguega was done. Oguega has a plethora of amazing poetries pointing to good health habits.

Herbs have always been used in the treatment of different kinds of maladies. Under traditional healthcare delivery are traditional birth attendants and surgeons, priests and priestesses, healers and native health extension workers who preach about good health habits. Recently, the duo, Aluede and Okakah (2022) discussed Esan indigenous models like talking while eating, techniques of cutting pounded yam, eating late dinners, expelling catarrh with force from the nose, the habit of chewing clothes, and Ota in daily Esan living and their health implications.

Today it is almost anathematic for an Esan child to be given antidotes for snake bites and scorpion stings or convulsions but we find it fashionable to travel from faraway Oria to Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital (ISTH) in search of anti-snake venom injection which is ever hardly available and anti-epileptic drugs which may not be too affordable to the poor to arrest convulsion. Early in time, the Esan race had a full grasp of the mind-body connection in illness causation, defined their scope of types of illness causation, knew multiple variables in illness causation, and understood social dysfunction as illness.

Technology in Esanland

‘Ogun Agbede,	Agbede blacksmith
Ukpo kpia ogbigbi	brief and thick man
oru uwedin gbe emon	who uses buttocks to match ashes
obha gbo mi ozolua.	if he has not killed Ozolua’s child
ole bha se yo okhon	has not gone to battle field

The poetry above talks of the blacksmith who is a maker of tools that are valuable during conflicts and community crises. They make innumerable household items too. Very early in Esan existence, Ojiogun and the manufacturing of implements like guns, cutlasses, knives/ Elo (a variant of knife), Oya (rubber tapper’s tool) and swords evolved. This evolution was in part to create tools which would make work easier and to make dangerous ones for battles of expansion and protection of one’s territories. With different kinds of tools, carvers of elephant tusks and wood to make Okor (wooden mortar), Uro (wooden tray), Ukpabor (smaller wooden tray) was realised. Traditional artists expanded their creativity from drawing, painting into ceramics, sculptures and textile technology. This background gave rise to the production of Esiso (a woven bag which farmers use in conveying farm produce home), Uталиwe (farm clothes) and Igbulu (Esan homemade fabric for ceremonial outings). Farmers also went beyond land cultivation to the making of Ohen-udin for climbing tall palm trees and strong bamboo with branches for climbing palm trees of moderate heights (Ohalin). They created Ugbi-udia (fly whisk or fly-swish) to chase away or kill tsetse flies. As communal endeavour, the While men were involved in the technology of setting Ulubu, Ugbagbe, Ufi, Akpobe and Ogholo,

1. Ukpe ha ru, If at the end of a year
Okpea bha da ze e jo a da mun ugbo, a man does not mark out where he will farm
ole re egbole lu elimin ese. It means he freely gave himself to his ancestors
2. Egbodia, Being in one place
omen no Ojie, is good for the king
Oimen no Oka it is not good for corn
Oi men ni enyan it is not good for yam
Aha re min ko obha jie, when a planted crop fails to germinate
ohanmen ki gbo oria. hunger will be upon the land

¹ A constellation of three stars in the East with one burning like a flame. It normally appears around late March to signal the planting season and this phenomenon eclipses in early May after which Alukihimojie which is at times the precursor of the moon then takes an eminent position in the sky.

1. The cotton plant from which cotton is extracted could be as raw material could be sold or financial gains.
2. Cotton is used to make clothes.
3. The tender leaves are washed into native orange to produce pinkish solution that is believed to be a good herbal treatment for the stomach.
4. Cotton seeds when grinded into a paste is used in making soup of Egusi status

Fine Arts in Esanland

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Ukpon no fua | The white cloth |
| O le le ejie bha akun | is a king around its wearer's waist |
| | |
| 2. Odafen di igbon | A rich man bought a slave |
| Igbon da de elo | the slave also bought elo |
| Igbon da we | the slave then said |
| ole mo emin obole | he has his own property |

Historically, the five main aspects of fine arts were painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance and literature. Put side by side other cultures around Esan, the creative ingenuity of the Esan is unsurpassed. From the carved doors, wall paintings, house designs to sculptural pieces in designated palaces and shrines, one sees creativity at work. As part of fine arts is oral literature in Esan where again the people have a corpus of poetries that are esoteric, mundane and erotic. You may wonder too that there are erotic poetries. This is not because the Esan race is licentious; but that as part of pastime, senior citizens enjoy them when they are together. Erotic poetry is not peculiar to the Esan nation alone. For Example, Alain Danielou (1992), documented the complete *Kama Sutra* which is the world's oldest and most widely read guide to sexual life in Vedic culture that includes subjects like marriage, adultery, prostitution etc. Esanland has a similar collection which is littered everywhere, wasting away and crying for documentation. With deference and your anticipated kind permission, I dare to share a few:

1. A bha ne abẹ edin ai ho ọ le. Without foreplay no meaningful sex can be achieved
2. Okhọ nọ so okhuo rẹ re egbe no okpea, The mind that permits a lady to mate a male

- ọki sọ rẹ fí akun rẹ khańlẹn. should enable her to twist her waist along
3. Okpẹa ha si so okhuo If a man visits a lady
 ọbha da sa anyudin without gifting her palm wine
 ọ bho, ọbha sẹ yo. He hasn't visited the lady
4. Ọnọ ri okhuo bhi udu ọ le ẹhi ọle. He that is on a lady's chest is her angel
5. Eba ọle okhuo re si okpea ke egbe. With food a lady draws a man close
 Ekue ole okpea re si okhuo ke egbe But with penis, a man draws a lady close
6. Ekei men okpea When a man is unhappy
 ai muọ ọmọn jọ bho oduwa a child is not taken to him in the bedroom
7. Egbe rebhe ole a re lui ilomon okhuo It is the entire body that is used in sex

Cultural industries Defined

Cultural industries (sometimes used synonymously with creative industries) are economic fields concerned with producing, reproducing, storing and distributing cultural goods and services on industrial and commercial terms. In other words, this industry is one that engages, on a large scale, with goods and services that are cultural in nature and usually protected by intellectual property rights-along economic considerations rather than for the purpose of cultural development. (<https://www.definitions.net/definition/cultural+industry>).

According to Spacey (2017), cultural industries are products or services that are based on the culture of a civilization, nation, society, group, or place. Expounding this subject further, he identified nine: Tourism, Events, Publishing, Fine Art, Entertainment, Sports, Crafts and food. Stacey's position is quite insightful here and we intend to discuss them in relation to the Esan scenario.

The Contemporary Esan Scenario

Relying on Spacey's model, we will discuss the current situation of Tourism, Event management, Publishing, Fine Art, Entertainment, Sports, Crafts and food in Esanland.

Tourism in Esan at the Moment

Are there tourist and potential tourist sites in Esanland? This question is vital in realization of the fact that through cultural tourism, tourists are led to sites of attractions such as urban environments, historical sites and museums. Is there any known museum currently in Esan? How have we preserved our historical sites? Would you now say that cultural events in the form of festivals (religious or social) are still in place? What has happened to Ibhialimingbe and other related carnival-like festivals? Esan towns are blessed with a plethora of scholars who are probably not yet thinking of giving back to their land of birth? Not much has been captured in the form of published works such as literature and magazines, documentaries and photo stories? There are waterfalls, shrines, rivers with ancestral boundary demarcations made of exotic plants in Esanland and there are hills and valleys linking kingdoms creating inter-visibility sites. As at today, these sites are under developed.

Wither Fine Arts in Esan?

In this paper, we would also like to mention that in search for modernity, the supposed custodians of these arts have on their own destroyed them. Between the Esan monarchs and the Catholic churches in Esan, we are unable to reconcile who has been the greatest agents of cultural erosion. For want of finesse, under their watch, the first church ever built in Esanland was destroyed and the various palaces of our forebears were also destroyed. But for the kings of Ewatto, Igueben, Ugboha, Ebelle kingdoms and perhaps a few others one would have said that an attempt at studying Esan palaces will be in a state of irreversible paralysis.

The Esan idea of fine arts is unsurpassed. From the drawing, paintings, the architecture of temple walls, we can glean their creative construct. Today we are living witnesses of Esan

music and dance whose vestiges we still see. Whither Esan minstrelsy (Umalemon)? Chief Umobuarie Ugberase of Ewu and Obeto Atine (Amojo) are dead. Is the art of Umalemon still alive or asphyxiated? Where are the Esan war drums? And where can they be found right now? In the area of commercial art, right from time up to the last three decades there was a bustling art market at Ivue in Uromi. Okojie 1994:344 specifically reported the pot market in Asukpodudu in Uzea in his book. What is the fate of that market right now? What is the fate of Igbulu- Ododo? Who now weaves them? Sacred Heart Convent in Atani-Uromi and Shomorika in Akoko-Edo area are today its major producers.

How is Our Entertainment?

Is anybody sponsoring programmes on the radio, television or any other media to propagate Esan-derived arts? If yes to what degree? Currently, we have some Esan people who are experimenting with Esan radio, comedy, philosophy, proverbs, music, music drama and others on YouTube and other media. Esan entertainment needs enhancement and we will address this elsewhere shortly.

Do We Have Sponsors of Indigenous Sports?

Today we can buy fuel to power our power-generating plants to watch Arsenal and Man United soccer tournaments but in our tinted vehicles we watch toddlers do cartwheels, banana jumps, summersaults, hand and headstand stand, standing on one hand, forward and backward rolls- these are components of Esan Igbabonelimin without rolling our windows down to appreciate them or work out ways to promote it. What about wrestling and climbing?

Are Our Crafts Alive or Moribund?

Esan traditional and contemporary crafts making is on the downward slide. In the 1970s pupils in local authority primary schools were encouraged to make baskets, small and big pestles, ((Obhi-Okor and Ulumun-Obor), make ropes as part of handwork. The best sets of such products were often sold to the public. All these are today monetized and craftsmanship is on

the decline. No doubt, that's the present situation in our schools and in our communities, craftsmen have died without finding inheritors of such traditional arts. Lack of patronage, support and encouragement is the bane of this present situation.

Esan Food?

Food in culture is a global phenomenon and some are unique to a geographical environment. For some others, they need cultural approval. For example, the fish called salmon is served rancid in Germany just as the Ikpakpa is better served and appreciated rancid in Uromi and many other Esan towns. Esan people have some foods which have unique cultural characteristics such as Masa from Ewu, Osisinakpo, Eka -Igali, Amen-Oriri, Kpekele (Eka-Oka) Omon-ebe (black soup), Ikpi-Ukoko, Ikpogi, Irerele, etc. What has happened to breadfruit production in Esan? Kpokpo -Gari (Garri flakes) that was probably introduced by Urhobo and Kwale riverside dwellers in Esanland. How have we made any of such foods presentable or exportable? As we speak right here, is there any Esan restaurant where we can eat these delicacies?

The Journey So Far in Esan

If not considered superfluous, it is believed that we know the gains of strengthening our cultural industries. There is financial benefit should our cultural industries be revived. If well-packaged to exportable levels, foreign exchange will be earned. At the local level forgotten towns will be known once again and in the course of tourism, local foods, crafts, and all other outfits tangential to the hospitality business will have full patronage.

The Esan nation cannot operate outside the Federal, State and Local governments. According to Kwarson (2023), The Department of Cultural Industries is divided into three divisions: Cultural Industry, Heritage, Innovations & Entrepreneurship. The Cultural Industries and Heritage Department is mandated to initiate and support the process of job creation, wealth generation and empower the vulnerable groups. The department is also expected to develop heritage activities for economic growth and opportunities. Beautiful as this blueprint may be,

not much is seen at the grassroots. At the heritage level, the division is saddled with the responsibilities of promoting Nigerian foods and delicacies, Nigeria's Cultural Festivals and special publications on harmful and negative Cultural practices. If the structures are not nurtured, to talk of fostering innovations for entrepreneurship and wealth creation is flim-flam. As we think of the gains associated with this enterprise, we also need to know that it is not going to be possible for the arts to remain in their age-old original state. This is so in that culture is dynamic and so is musical culture. This therefore means that there may be some modifications. In this regard the opinion of Emielu (2018), on the theory of progressive traditionalism is insightful. In his article, he challenged the notion of rigidity and fixity by showing in his study of Edo people how specific dance bands are redefining traditional music through innovations. This therefore means that musical practices can never be static as what was a one-time traditional music has been upgraded into highlife and other musical genres. Aside the principle of progressive traditionalism is human resources application.

Quite a good number of those charting the course of today's cultural renaissance in Esan may have had their trainings outside the region. This then means that, such persons would need to be reintegrated to the arts of their people to be able to rely on and use local examples from their area. To do this, the persons need to apply themselves diligently. As we strive to make a good case for indigenous knowledge and cultural industries, much care is required in commodifying the arts and crafts of the Esan race. Whether we know this fact or not, we must consciously strive to put things right ab initio lest we run the risks of commodifying our arts and crafts and dehumanizing humanities. For example, the present experiments in Esan is beset with irregularities and misrepresentations. In the Esan home video, *Isighele*, an Esan daughter is seen cursing her parents and of particular note is that the young girl wished her mother to be a butterfly that will wallow endlessly from one new farm to the old one. In a similar vein, the Esan proverb maestro popularly known as Oyo-oyoyo has in his work remarked that 'excuse me, just a minute' is the haste that leads to a teacher's untimely death through motor accident. The desire to make people laugh or to introduce comical elements in the work of art and craft should be done within the confines of the people's cultural realities. Among the Esan, there is social control and traditional mechanisms for censorship. This is of course why male phallic symbols worn around the waist by females during a given festival is not worn after the festival. Even in Christendom, everyone knows that the Biblical Mary mother of Jesus had other children for Joseph but who has seen an image or painting of

the Mary kissing Joseph or they holding themselves so intimately? There is the need to learn from available models or set standards by Ndigbo who sent a delegate to Nollywood over the irregular use of red cap in filmmaking.

As an Esan man, one often gets accosted by friends outside Edo State who curiously want to know much about Igbabonelimin and what has happened to it. This to me is indicative of the fact that they love it and would like to see more of it. This inquisition applies to all the creative arts in Esan. Sadly, in the past century, not much has been achieved in the area of cultural industries in Esanland. Once upon a time some Esan persons thought of reviving some aspects of Esan culture and decided to give some support to a faith-based institution -CERDEL in Glorious University, Ogwa. This to me was a laudable feat but my utter chagrin was why it was a faith-based they chose to collaborate with when indeed there were some government-owned tertiary institutions in Esanland with adequate manpower that should have manned it. The five local government Secretariats in Esanland have cultural units that are moribund and the royal fathers of the kingdoms who are patrons and custodians of the arts are tardy in this rescue mission.

Conclusion

Ologho bha yole ole da di uwai, Erosion has not said that it will wash off a house *ono nyan uwa ole ha na len fia*. The onus is on the landlord to channel it off.

In this study, we gave a general background of the traditions of origin of Esan people and their geographical location. Given that foundation, we examined African indigenous knowledge systems and related them to Esan worldview. In this effort, we discovered that there is actually no dichotomy in subject fields in Esan as it is conceived in the West. This is so because knowledge is (w)holistically sought and acquired in this culture area. Thus, it is possible to find one person who is a dancer/singer, farmer, palm wine tapper, and bone setter or a trader, traditional birth attendant, surgeon, priestess and a diviner. These age-old features are gradually waning unless frantic attempts are made to safeguard them. At this critical time in Esan's socio-political history, it is important that we take seriously the threats to our existence which is more self-orchestrated than any of those induced by external forces. In one accord, let us channel off what appears to be cultural erosion that is poised to wash away our indigenous knowledge and its associated cultural heritage to move the Esan race forward.

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