



ANAAÑ CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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CHAPTER 9

TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION IN THE AGRARIAN SOCIETY OF ANAAN NATION

By

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Definition of Traditional Communication and Agrarian Society

The traditional communication in agricultural production and marketing refers to the use of traditional symbols as means of communication in the farming process, farm security and in the marketing of agricultural produce. Mathematical symbols, computer symbols and symbols in written English are means of communication.

In Annang nation, the founding fathers were strong agrarians. The agrarian tradition began at home when man planted his first seeds and tamed his first animals (Udo, 1999). About 200 years ago, over 99% of the Annang populace depended on farming as means of earning a living. Today over 60% of Nigerians rely on agriculture for livelihood. Cultivation of crops, rearing of animals, fishing, hunting and trapping were the main engagements in the past for a livelihood. They were very few people who could read and write. Fingers were used for counting, traditional symbols were used for communication and farming systems were purely indigenous.

In this agrarian society properties such as land, crops and farm produce were secured. Such securities were communicated to the passers-by using symbols. The symbols were used as means of communication to maintain law, order and respect of ownership. The symbols were understood by all the passers-by. The father taught the children the various symbols of their land and their implications, while the mothers held their children by ears to bear in mind that law observed is life preserved.

Traditional Communication is a form of learning. The use of symbols for communication in Annang Nation is a form of informal learning. Ememem (1988) views learning to include not only the acquisition of subject matter, but also that of habits, attitudes, perceptions, interests, social adjustments, skills of many types and ideas. He further said that man learns in every circumstance in life – at home, on the way, and in fact in

every sphere of business mentally, physically and otherwise.

Careful study, memorisation, and repetitions are the learning techniques in the study of Annang symbols. The conflict of retroactive inhibition and proactive inhibition are minimised through the use of specific symbols for communication. Hence retaining and recalling are good companions in the use of symbols in the learning process.

LIST OF SYMBOLS as means of traditional communication in **Agricultural** Production and marketing in Annang Nation.

Symbols in Annang Language

Explanation in English

Ayei

Usenn

Awat

Nkong mkpo Inwang ke enyong

Mkpok isip oyop mme Nkyanri

Itomo

Okono

Ndak ukot ke enen

Usin ntan ke nto iko nim ke enen

Mbom mfromkpo ke usung

Nkum

Atak urok

Nkong ekpene ke inwang mme ke ikot

Nfaknkpo ke uten.

IJnim etok abang ke ikot
Leaflet(s) of oil palm spear

A red piece of cloth

Palm frond with only one sided leaflets

Hanging of farm produce on crop plant within the farm

A coconut shell with sharp arrows

New bouldia laevis

Dragon tree (Dracaena arborea)

Pinning of leaflets of raffia palm (Raffia hookeri)

Display of small bottles full of sand

Display of flowers of tree or arable crops on the road or paths

A piece of black cloth

Non functional and old weeding hoe

Hanging of bottle with contents in the farm or in the bush

Any object attached to a tender oil palm with ripe fruits

Small clay pot in the farmland or bush.

Indications and Implications of Traditional Symbols in Agricultural Production and Marketing

AYEI: Cultural uses of Ayei cannot be overemphasised in authority, and peaceful coexistence in the society. Its uses in agricultural production and farmland security are many and cannot be exhausted. Its use was very intensive and popular before the advent of Western education in Annang nation. The common situations whereby Ayei is still very popular in communication among the Annang are:-

Hanging of Ayei commonly at the centre of a farmland or bush visible to the passers-by is an indication that the farmland or the piece of land is in dispute. The traditional council of the clan or village is entrusted with the power to hang the 'Ayei'. In some villages Okuku was appointed to place injunction in a disputed piece of land and thereby informed the village

council immediately. The Ayei is used in the then Calabar province to effect injunction in disputed land pending settlement (Etukudo 2000). The injunction can be placed in oil palm plot, cocoa and rubber plantation. Any defaulter is usually dealt with culturally or legally by traditional authority. Other uses of Ayei and the associated implications.

Ayei

Implication and disciplinary measures

Ayei: Banning the harvest of palm fruits in a village. In this case all the village heads (Mbong Ekpuk) are summoned and Ayei is given to each of them. However, the town crier will announce the ban through the authority of the traditional council, while Mbong Ekpuk should control their domain to abide by the order.

Any fruit tree or economic tree or dead tree with Ayei either it is mounted by the unit head or village head places authority and order. The economic tree can be (i) Eben; African Pear (*Dacryodes eludis*)

Oyop (Oil palm; *Elaies Guineensis*)

Ekom (Coula; *Coula edulis*)

Uruakaya (Orange; *Citrus spp*)

Ukot (*Raffia hookeri*)

- Ayei hanged by the path across a farm

Ayei tight around the stem of plantain, raffia palm, pear plant, oil palm and other edible fruit trees including coconut.

Any defaulter will be disciplined and forced to obey the payment of the levy on him before the ban is lifted. A big she goat, yams, and drinks are usually included in the levy.

The fruit of the tree or the wood should not be harvested until further notice if there is any dispute. If there is no dispute the rightful owner is only permitted to do harvest or otherwise.

This signifies no thoroughfare. In case of any danger the farm owner may be exonerated. In addition any defaulter can be caught and accused of destroying the crops.

This indicates that the tree crop is sold outright or by pledging. Therefore family members should be aware of the sale. If the order is violated the defaulter should be considered as a thief. However, tying of Ayei to an object may mean different things to other ethnic group. In Owerri tying Ayei to metal gong (Nkwon) and beating continues indicates that the passers-by should divert the road because of funeral procession (Echezona, 198)

Hanging of Edible Crop Plants or Farm Produce

Many farmers in Annang Nation do hang their farm produce or crop plant in their farm to show that the crops are stolen by the thieves. The hanged items are usually made visible to all passers-by. This appeals to the passers-by and the neighbours to be very vigilant of people entering and leaving the farm.

Sometimes, the hanging of the edible crop plants or farm produce indicates that destruction is carried out by goats or crop plants are used as fodder. This serves as warning to the owners of the strayed animals and to those who use the crop plants as fodder. Any defaulter can be charged for damages or may be disciplined according to the tradition.

ITOMO (*Newbouldia laevis*) and Okono (Dragon tree)

Newbouldia laevis is easy to propagate by stem cutting. It has many cultural values. The leaves are used by the idol worshippers to serve as plates for presentation of food to the ancestors. Adeyoju (1981) reported that the leaves of *Newbouldia laevis* are used for the coronation of an Oba and signified that the old life is no longer to be exhibited.

In agriculture, *Newbouldia* and Dragon tree are used to signify that the land is bought outright and all traditional rites have been duly performed. The trees are usually fixed at the corners of the farmland by the family elders of the seller.

SYMBOLS FOR TRADITIONAL SECURITIES FOR FARM PRODUCE

Sometimes symbols are displayed to signify danger if crop plants are stolen. Some of the common symbols are:

Use: This is a piece of red cloth. In many situations red signifies danger. In a farmland it means that thief will endanger his life. The symbol can also be hanged in the crop plantation or attached to a particular tree crop. The cloth does not possess any power but it only indicates that there is a diabolic power and so be informed and warned.

Nkum: This is a piece of black cloth. This can be hung within a farmland to indicate danger. Black cloth generally signifies mourning. Its symbol warns individual to steer clear from the farm produce to avoid mourning. However, it is not the cloth that brings the expected sorrow but there is a diabolic power that will perform the act. Nkum also means spiritual torturing.

Atakurok (Old and non-functional weeding hoe): Hanging of 'Atakurok' indicates that there is a diabolic power that will force thief to perform weeding operation until the owner arrives.

Nkyan (Short and strong arrows): In this communication, few arrows are displayed to show that there is danger or physical injury to be suspended by the arrows once human feet are set on the surface of the farmland. In this case everybody is warned not to enter the farmland.

Etok Aban (Small clay pot): The display of 'Etok Aban' in a farmland signifies that there is a diabolic power that would cause the body of the thief to swell like the pot. In this case the pot carries the message and the contents perform the act. 'Etok aban' specifically signifies 'mbiam'

Nkong Ekpeme (Hanging of a bottle): Hanging of a bottle indicates diabolic power that will end in death of the thief. It is popularly suspected to be 'mbiam' (spiritual killer).

OTHER SYMBOLS

MFAK NKPO KE UTEN (Fastening of material to fruit bearing tender oil palm): The fastening of material to fruit bearing tender oil palm signifies that someone has already intended to carry out the harvest of the ripe fruit any time the ban is lifted.

Ubon Ntok Ekpeme ke Enen:

Small bottles filled with sand and display for the passers-by indicate that powdered tobacco (snuff) is available for sale.

Ubon Ndak Ukot ke Enen

The display of raffia palm leaflet pinned at the entrance of ones compound signifies that palm wine is available for sale.

Awat

Awat is a palm frond whose side carries leaflets while the other side does not. It carries traditional information and communicate same to the passers-by. If a farmer pins one or two or more **awat** along his farmland or bush, the information is that the bush will be cleared soonest and defaecation should stop immediately.

Indication of **awat** on a narrow path signifies that the path created across the farm should be abandoned. **Awat** is also used to indicate that path made into a bush would end up with traps. The warning prevents anybody from using the path for any purpose. If someone sets a trap in someone's farm there should be a sign to the farm users and more commonly **awat** is used for such communication.

The Problem of Traditional Communication in Annang Nation

The traditional approach in the reconstruction of philosophy advocates the need to evacuate and retain what may be called the **ancestral** postulates of traditional African beliefs and produce in their **pure form** (Ojong 1999).

He further said that the fear of the traditionalist exponent is basically that if traditional African world view is not guarded and greatly popularised and entrenched in the minds of contemporary Africans, there is the likelihood that alien cultural values engrained in foreign world – views which are being raised to a position of world dominance, might eventually drown traditional African Culture heritage and its world view.

He further made reference to the case of science in its modern form which is the exclusive pressure of the Western Culture. He is of the opinion that western man developed the method of modern science and has universalised it for non-western cultures to mimic and adapt to suit peculiar existential situation.

The problems facing the use of traditional communication in agricultural production are based on the fact that foreign culture has almost engulfed African tradition and traditional communication is not exception. The problems of non popularity of traditional symbolic communication are listed below.

Dependence on oral communication in the reconstruction of African tradition

Dogmatic acceptance of scientific explanations and total abandonment of African experiences.

Conflicts of religion in symbolic communication. The Christians give different meanings to traditional symbolic communication. A farmer may decide to hang crop plants in his farm to alert the passers-by of the theft activities. This action can be misinterpreted as diabolic which the farmer finds it difficult to defend himself.

Western Education views African thought to have no logic. This position helps to dampen to minds of African on their natural way of life.

The problem of misconception of African traditionalism world-view. The problem of promoting African culture beyond African territory. The neglect of earliest traditional symbols of communication which the present generation relate it with civilisation. Adoption of foreign languages and pride attached therein.

Deteriorating of African native way of life due to uncritical acceptance of urban life and Western values.

CONCLUSION

The present generation should maintain Annang cultural heritage that are worthy or should be modified to compete with the western values. There is need to arouse curiosity in the minds of Annangs for the perpetuation of traditional-symbolic communication each of these symbols needs screening to ascertain uncritical acceptance and uniformity of adoption in Annang Nation.

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