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Full Length Research Paper

An ethnographic study of Igbo naming ceremony (*IBA NWA AFA)*

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In 2002, as part of a larger study, the present researcher undertook an ethnographic exploration of the Igbo naming ceremony. The aim was to identify the vector quantities implicated in the practice of this ceremony as well as the symbolic and mimetic acts and fixed expressions that constitute the fabric of the ritual process of the ceremony. The second aspect of the study was to gain a hermeneutic perspective on the ceremony, with a view to understanding the people's goals and intentions in conducting the ceremony as well as their religious interpretations of its meaning and significance in the life of the child. Also explored were the principal myths underpinning its practice and the extent to which the study of that ceremony could be used as a ladder into achieving a holistic understanding of the basic tenets of Igbo religion. This article presents the key findings of the study. The result showed that it is by means of this ceremony that a newly born Igbo child gets to become defined as an individuated human being through the ritual act of being assigned a name by which to identify him or her in the course of his or her earthly existence. The result of the study also showed that the cultural practice of Igbo naming ceremony encompasses a six-stage process: announcement, preparation, presentation/naming, feasting/communion, and departure stages. The importance of the ceremony for gaining a full understanding of the basic tenets of Igbo Religion also emerged from the results of the study. Hence, the findings of the present study confirm Horton's assumption that the benefit tenets of African Indigenous Religion could be discovered through a comprehensive study of the important rituals and ceremonies of the various African peoples.

Key words: Igbo, Nigeria, Igbo indigenous religion, naming, ceremonies, rituals.

INTRODUCTION

Igbo naming ceremony is one of the Igbo birth rites[1]. The others include: the cutting of the placenta and the umbilical cord, the seclusion and the purification as well as the circumcision rites. Both boys and girls are involved in this practice although circumcision especially for the girls is performed at a later age to come closer to their puberty rite. Among the Igbo, these rites hold the same significance as suggested by Gennep (1960: 62) who indicated that, "They are intended not only to neutralize an impurity or to attract sorcery to themselves but to serve as actual bridges, chains or links – in short, to facilitate the changing of condition without social disruption or an abrupt cessation of individual and collective life".

Among the Igbo, the ceremony of giving a name to the new born child is one that comes immediately after the

seclusion and the purification rites are performed. Such a ceremony, as seen by Obiego (1984), is the concern not only of the agnate (*umunna)* but also of the whole village. It brings together relatives and friends from other villages and even from outside the village group. Parents and grandparents are the principal actors concerned in the naming of the child. Hence, the naming ceremony, among the Igbo, is a type of peace offering in which the community comes together to pray for the child and for the health of the parents.

Research questions

The principal questions the researcher investigated in relation to this ceremony are as follows: (a) What is this ceremony really concerned with? (b) Why, according to the Igbo, must a name be given to a child? (c) What is (are the myths regarding) the consequence of omitting it in the economy of the child's life? (d) And when (in terms of time after birth) is it performed? Who make up the officiant/s and the participants (witnesses to the ceremony)? (e) What processes and procedures are followed in its practice? (f) What ritual objects are implicated? (g) What kinds of prayers (pattern and content) are used in the process? (h) Who gives the name to the newborn?(i) What kinds of names are involved? And (j) What are the indigenous Igbos'religious interpretations of its meaning and significance in the life of the child?

These are important questions that needed to be answered to improve our holistic understanding of the meaning and significance of this ceremony among the Igbo people of Nigeria. To gain answers to these questions, some relevant Igbo elders in the two communities studied were purposively selected and interviewed. Their various responses to them are summarized in the later part of this report.

REVIEW OF RELATED OF LITERATURE

To determine the conclusions of previous investigators in relation to the above mentioned questions and others related to them, studies and/or writings by Ubah (1982), Nwoga (1984), Ekwunife (1997), Mere (1973), Obiego (1984), Anozie (1998), Arinze (1970), Okafor (2001), Uzukwu (1981), Ezekwugo 1973), Ejizu (1987), Echeruo (1979), Achebe (1989) and Uchegbue (2010) were reviewed. The result showed that it was only the study by Uchegbue (2010) which had focused specifically, like the present one, on the ritual naming of the newborn in an Igbo (Asaba) community across the River Niger. Similarly, while the study by Uchegbue (2010) focused on the naming ceremony among the people of Asaba, in the Delta State of Nigeria, the present study targeted the practice of naming ceremony among the Nri and Ihiala (Igbo communities) in Anambra State of Nigeria.

However, one thing that is common to both studies was that they were both concerned with understanding the practice of naming ceremony among the Igbo people of Nigeria (Uchegbue's, among the Asaba Igbos, and the present study*,* among the Nri and Ihiala Igbos of Nigeria*).* Yet, while Uchegbue's (2010) study was largely concerned with understanding the actual meaning and significance of the ceremony of naming a new born among the Igbo of the Delta State of Nigeria,the present study (with participants drawn from among the Nri and Ihiala Igbos of Anambra State, located in the Eastern part of Nigeria), was in addition designed to find out the extent to which the goals, spiritual agencies, and attitudes of the people to the spiritual agencies of Igbo Indigenous Religion (IIR) could be understood through the study of their naming ceremony.

Furthermore, the review conducted revealed that none of the other studies or writings was comprehensive enough as to be able to garner answers to all the questions of interest to the present studyearlier stated. However, reviewing those previous studies cited above was found illuminating as most of them in one way or the other showed that the experience of having a child is an important event in an indigenous Igbo's life. And most of them, like the study by Obiego (1984) and Uzukwu (1981) agreed that giving a child a name marks a milestone (as will be explained later in this report) in his or her life. Some of the studies such as those by Arinze (1970) and Uba (1982) also provided some important clues regarding what could be said to constitute the principal spiritual agencies of IIR. On the whole, however, the need for the present study had largely persisted despite the results of the respective studies by these investigators.

The theoretical framework

The key theoretical framework of the study is that of Horton (1995) who proposed that the basic tenets of any indigenous religion could be determined through the field study of the principal rituals and ceremonies of the people professing the religion. Following this framework, the present study of Igbo naming ceremony was undertaken to explore the extent to which the basic tenets Igbo Religion (its goals, spiritual agencies; key officiants and the attitudes of the people to the spiritual agencies of the religion) could be discovered through the study of this ceremony. The research is therefore meant to serve as a field test of the validity or invalidity of Horton's assumption set above.

Design and Methodology

The culture area methodology

The research methodology adopted for the study was the "Culture Area Approach". This approach was considered pertinent since this

is an emic study in which the researcher shares the same culture and language as the people to be studied. To implement it, the researcher applied the participant observation method (POM), which made it necessary for her to engage in the actual field-study of the said ceremony. The participant observation method that was resorted to involved the study of the Igbo naming ceremony (INC). It was believed that only in this way can one achieve what Maxwell (1992) refers to as descriptive validity, or 'reportage accuracy', as well as 'the interpretive validity of the research report'. Two Igbo communities were included into the actual study process: Nri and Ihiala Igbo communities both located in the Eastern part of Nigeria as earlier mentioned.

Sampling procedures/ instrumentation

Three levels of sampling procedures were adopted in the study. They included purposive, quota and snowball sampling procedures. Purposive sampling was used to target only Igbo Naming Ceremony (INC) in the two communities studied. Quota sampling was used to ensure proportional representation of the issues of study across sex lines, village variation, age and ideology of respondents. The snowball sampling technique was adopted in locating and chasing the critical incidents of interest to the study and in reaching the pertinent people for the interview. Six men and women elders (aged 60- years and above), who take part in the ceremonies were interviewed, in each of the two communities. In this way, the total number of elders interviewed, when stated mathematically, stands as 6 x 2 = 12, i.e. 6 elders from each of the two communities were interviewed. Here, the decision to interview six participants (through a focus group process) was guided by the position credited to Willig, (2001:29) who "suggests that focus groups should consist of no more than six participants. This is to ensure that all participants remain actively involved in the group discussion throughout the data collection phase. Also, it is extremely difficult to manage or accurately transcribe a group discussion of more than six participants."

In addition to the use of the (focus group) interview process, two other approaches were used in the study: (a) Observation instruments, (namely the participant observation method [POM], and (b) Documentary sources.

To effectively use the POM in the study, an observational schedule was constructed. This guided the field observation of the ceremony that was made. An opportunity was created before the observation of the ceremony started for the researcher to introduce herself and her research assistants to the congregation in attendance. This process was necessary to prevent the people being scared by the presence of the researcher and her assistants among them.

Pilot study

The pilot stage of the study yielded information about Nri as the most pertinent community in the Igbo culture area under-study where this particular ceremony had resisted a drastic change despite the influence of Christian religion and technological development in their midst. On the other hand the decision to include Ihiala as the second (Igbo) community for the study was taken to indicate one example of places where changes in the pattern of practice of these ceremonies are taking place due to the influence and dominance of Christian religion in their midst. The need to introduce such a triangulated community model in the study arose from the data emerging from the pilot study.

Data collection technique

The technique of methodological triangulation guided the

researcher's data collection strategy. Three major aspects of methodological triangulation, relevant to the present study's design were used: space triangulation, time triangulation, and investigator triangulation (Cohen and Manion, 1992). Space triangulation methodology was involved because the research was conducted in more than one Igbo community (Nri and Ihiala). And even in each community studied, observations were made in more than one village within that community. Time triangulation was involved because a diachronic study strategy was built into the study's overall design. To implement this, effort was made to gather data by means of documentary sources and the inclusion of the Ihiala community that helped to detect the kinds of changes taking place in the way the ceremonies are being conducted now compared to the way they were conducted in the past. Investigator triangulation was involved since the researcher conducted the participant observation of the ceremony studied, with the assistance of two other male and female research observers. This approach was supplemented with the friend of a friend approach (which refers tothe process of building a sample of participants by including the friends of those already contacted) emphasized by Milroy and Milroy (1985) intended to enable the researcher to get into the patriarchal world of the Igbo so as to acquire some real information on the ceremony studied.

Data analysis strategy

Data that accrued from the study was largely qualitative in nature such as beliefs, spiritual agencies addressed, symbols, sacred objects/officials, incantations, music, chants, operative acts and prayers and practices encompassed in the ceremony. For this reason much of the data accruing from the study involved the use of content analysis of certain levels of the data, arranged under themes; tabulation of data trends andhistograms. The central attempt in the analysis plan was to go beyond mere data description to pursue accurate data interpretation that go with the theoretical framework and the key objectives of the study. Trend analysis was also used to answer and discuss the basic questions posed in the study (which guided the questions posed to the interviewers).

RESULTS

The results of the study in relation to the key themes of the study earlier outlined will now be highlighted and thereafter analyzed and discussed.

Meaning and aim of Igbo Naming Ceremony

Representing the views collected from Nrielders under the above theme are those by Anekwe (Oral interview, 17/6/02), and Nweke (Oral Interview, 19/6/02) who agreed to be named. For example, according to Anekwe the purpose of the Igbo naming ceremony is the out-dooring of the child (Nkuputenwa). In his view, the naming ceremony, IbaNwaAfa, marks the official presentation of the child to his or her human agnate community (umunna) climaxed by the giving of a name to the baby in the presence of the child's agnate (umunna) - the members of his/her father's kindred).

Nweke (Oral Interview, 19/6/02) on the other hand identified a second goal for the naming ceremony among

the Nri community. In his view, the aim of this ceremony is to fulfill the social-religious obligation that comes into effect after the birth of an indigenous Igbo child. And this is the need to perform a ritual of thanksgiving to gods and ancestors for the gift of the child and to ask for blessings on his/her behalf as s/he begins his/her earthly journey.

According to Uchegbue (2010:157), "among the Igbo, naming ceremony is the most elaborate and religiously significant of all the infancy rites". In other words, among the Nri community, the naming ceremony is intended first as a ritual of giving a name and welcoming of the child into his/her human fold. Secondly, it is understood as a ritual for praying to God, the village deities, and the ancestors to protect and take adequate care of the child as s/he lives among his/her people.

Interview with some elders from the Ihiala community brought other significant dimensions, while agreeing with those located at Nri, as regards the meaning and importance of this ceremony. For example, Obiudo (Oral Interview, 7/8/02) who spoke for the community elders from Ihiala in this regard opined that the one reason for this ceremony derived from an Igbo myth that a newly born child has a double audience. This encompasses members of his/her peers in the world of the unborn children and those of the human community in which s/he has been born as well as being blessed with a double-voiced relationship. According to him, to say that a newborn child is invested with a double-voiced relationship means that, until s/he is named s/he is still in communion with two types of constituencies, the human constituency and the constituency of the unborn babies. A newborn baby according to this myth has two dialects with which s/he communicates with the two communities. With one speech act, unknown to humans, s/he talks to his or her peers in the world of the unborn children. And they can allure him or her to come back to them through such continued exchange of views with them. With the other speech act (e.g. crying) s/he registers his or her presence in the human world; and through this, s/he requests for a name by which to be known and related with. Continuing, Obiudo, points out the myth and reason behind giving a name to children after twelve days of their birth in the following words: "The world of the unborn children is the world of beings without body. In such a world, members have no need for a name. Life in the human world is lived by means of a name. We become completely human in being named. And once the child is named, his/her link and invisible loyalty to his or her peers in the world of the unborn children become broken". Liseli (2012:39) is in agreement with the above view when he observed that "among the Kongo ethnic group for instance, a new born was not regarded truly human until the bestowal of a name".

From the above observations one can then say that in general, among the two communities studied, the naming ceremony is one of the first major rituals of great traditional importance to the child and his or her people.

With it a child is incorporated and received officially into the human agnate (*umunna)* community and become officially separated from his or her prenatal world. In this way one can say that such a ceremony has a double dimension, that is, social and religious, and therefore a turning point in the history of the child.

The time of naming a child

The practice of giving a name to a new baby is important as has been implied in the previous section. Interview with elders from Ihiala community showed that it is a ritual that is grounded on a proper time perspective since from information accruing from the present study it cannot be performed immediately the child is born. For example, according to one of the Ihiala elders interviewed, Chidi (Oral Interview, 10/8/02) making a point that was concurred to by others in this regard, noted that "the naming ceremony ritual is not performed immediately the child is born. It must wait till the 12th day or three Igbo weeks *(Izu-nato)* of the child's birth." He explains that the reason for this is related to an Igbo myth that every new baby must first be given sometime to weigh and choose if s/he really wishes to stay. That is, whether he/she wishes to be incorporated into the human community or if s/he desires to go back to where s/he came from. Although we know that babies are not able to engage in this process, this rationale was built into the Igbo myth explaining why the Igbo naming ceremony is not conducted immediately after birth.

In line with this myth, according to Chidi, when a child dies before the 12th day after birth and therefore could not be named, it is a sign that s/he has decided not to stay but has chosen the option of departure to the world of the unborn children. On the other hand, surviving up to the 12th day of birth is an indication to the members of his or her agnate community *(umuuna)* that s/he has weighed and has chosen the option of membership in the human world.

Consequently, according to Chidi, the *IbaNwaAfa*ceremony commonly takes place on the 12th day from the day of the child's birth. This space gives enough time for the parents to believe that s/he has given them sufficient signal that it does not intend to die, that s/he has come to stay.

Commenting on this same issue of why the delay of the naming till the 12th day of the child's birth, another interviewee, an elder Ezebuein oral interview (15/6/02) from Nri community explained that this is traditionally done to find out whether s/he would give some extraordinary manifestations of the kind of trait or characteristic s/he is made of. That is, whether s/he has some supernatural powers with which s/he might be identified. According to Paul (Oral Interview, 15/6/02), another informant in the study, such period of waiting for possible significant manifestations from the baby does

not only involve a type of passive waiting for the signs. It also involves the act of consulting the diviners or fortune-tellers (*IgbaAgu*) [2] in search of who is behind the child's earthly journey, in terms of his or her destiny spirit (*Onye-Uwa*). As Paul put it, "the value of waiting for significant signs from the baby is to find a suitable name for the type of being s/he manifests". More information collected under this theme will be further clarified below under the preparation stage of the formal structural process of this ceremony.

A focus group discussion with women from Nri and Ihiala communities produced an interesting gendered response to the whole question of why this ceremony has to wait till the 12th day of the birth of the child before it could be conducted. Thus in the view of one of the women discussants from Ihiala community Uduaku (Oral Interview, 22/6/02) speaking as a representative of the rest in this regard, observed that this waiting is calculated to give the mother of the baby some time to heal and recuperate from the aftermath of childbirth. And as the women group from Nri, represented by Akukalia (Oral Interview 15/8/02) put it, this delay is necessary to enable the mother of the baby to be in a position to heal completely before she can be in a position to play host to the agnate *(umunna)* community during the naming ceremony.

The above responses suggest that in the view of these women, the eleven days distance from the day of birth to the appointed day of the naming ceremony gives the mother of the new born that necessary restful period. This is essential to enable her to participate fully in the planning and the social aspects of the ceremony. This includes the tasks of receiving guests, monitoring the proceedings and ensuring that everything goes well at the occasion. These indications mean that INC can be described as a typical example of an African social drama that can be broken into three tier time components namely the period of separation, the period of transition and the period of incorporation (van Gennep, 1969).

In this regard, the period of separation covers the period from conception to the birth of the child. This marks the time of breach between the child and his or her peers in the world of the unborn children. The period of transition, encompassing the time from birth to the 12th day of the child's birth, stands for that period when the baby strictly speaking is neither fully human nor merely a formless spiritual guest in the world in the manner of his or her peers in the fore-world of children. The period of incorporation stands for the period of the naming ceremony proper. It represents the actual day of the child's full birth into the human world ascribed with a personal name.

Key officiant/s witnesses to the ceremony

Under this theme, data from the field as to the question of who gives the name to the child and the issue of the composition of those who should be there to witness the ceremony, were received through live observation by the researcher and her two assistants from instances of Naming Ceremony in the two communities studied. The result showed that the primary person who gives the name to the child at the Naming Ceremony is the father of the child.

The father of the child was discovered to be the principal officiant in this ceremony. And the reason for this was explored in the study. It was noted that this was the case because the Igbo people are a patrilineal group. In that way, the ritual was conducted in the presence of the child's *umunna*. Those who witness the ceremony consist of the elder members of the agnate (*umunna),* plus other members of the kindred group as well as people from other village group, both men and women. Other children of the agnate were also welcomed in this ceremony. During the ceremony such children were seen to manifest signs of being happy that they now have another of their kind. Some of them not quite related to the new born appeared happy just because of the feasting that accompanies the naming of the child born in their midst.

In preparation for the actual ceremony of naming the child, the infant was brought outside, leaving the mother's hut for the first time, now officially exhibited or shown to the assembled guests. S/he is brought out by the paternal grandmother and then handed over to the father who is the actual person to present him/her to the agnate community.

The naming ceremony process

In preparation for the actual ceremony of naming the child, the infant is brought outside, leaving the mother's hut for the first time, to be officially exhibited or shown to the assembled guests. S/he is brought out by the paternal grandmother and then handed over to the father who is the actual person to present him/her to the *umunna*.

The process of naming is inaugurated as the child was being formally presented to the agnate community. During the actual naming process, the father of the child carried the baby in one hand and palm-wine in the other and performed the naming. He began presentation by saying that he wants the child to be called 'Chukwuma' (God knows).

An instance of the presence of some vector quantities in the performance of this ritual was reflected in the fact that the participants were usually seated while the father of the child makes his presentation of the child, in a standing position. This sitting position of the participants was continued even during the communal meal period and during the prayer and the blessing of the child's session.

During the prayer session it was noticed that elderly participants were striking their closed fist on the ground in

front of them as they chorused the fixed expression, (*Isee,* which means, "Indeed thus we say"), after each stanza of the prayer of blessing of the child. While the actual process of naming was to be found uniform in the two communities studied, an element of variation was observed in one ceremony context in Ihiala community. There, the person who gave the name to the child was not the very father of the child, but the eldest member of the child's father's agnate. Further field inquiry showed that this variation was applicable mainly in situations where the father of the child died before the birth of the child. In such a case, according to some respondents, the child is usually given the name, '*Amanna*' (a child who came after the death of his/her father and therefore he could not know him).In this context, Wieschhoff (1941:214) agrees that "names are not merely considered as tags by means of which individuals may be distinguished but are intimately associated with various events in the life of the individual as well as those of the family and the larger social group".

Field investigation of this ritual process in the two communities also showed that this same practice is applicable to the Nri community too. This means that although in general terms, one could conclude that in INC, the more usual practice is for the father of the child to take up the prerogative of giving a principal name to the child. But the above observation, suggests that it is not always the case that it is the biological father of the child who takes up this role.

The idea of the principal name for the field that is given in this ceremony was raised because further field investigation on this matter brought up the gender question of, could the mother of the child give the name too? To this question, respondents from the two communities unanimously responded that the mother could do so but only after the father has given the child a name officially. Indeed, some of the respondents from Ihiala community implied that any member of the child's family can give a name to the child but the one that is taken and officially recognized at this ceremony is the name given to the child by his/her father.

Pursuing this aspect of the investigation further, one respondent from Nri, Okoye (Oral Interview, 11/8/02) indicated that the mother of the child could address the child by the name she herself has given to the child, and can be calling the child that name after the ceremony is over. Her doing this does not, however, in their view, have any negative effect on the official name of the child as given by the father. This explains how pet names from the mother of the child and other relatives emerge and are allowed to stay alongside the one given to the child by the father during this ritual naming of the child.

Ritual objects in Igbo Naming Ceremony

Data from the two communities studied showed that the following constituted the ritual objects involved in the Igbo Naming Ceremony.

1. 4 kola nuts or more. *(oji)*
2. 2 or more alligator peppers (*ose-oji*)
3. 1 cock, (*okeokpaokuko*) or more, depending on the wealth of the family of the child, or as my respondants put it in Igbo language, "*ka aka onyera"* (Nri), or *"ka aka onye ha"* (Ihiala).
4. 2 bottles of local gin (*kai-kai or kinkana*)
5. 2 gallons of local palm wine or more (*Nkwuenu/Ngwo*).

Symbolic significance of the ritual objects

Interview data on the symbols of some of these items were pursued during the fieldwork. In this context, respondents from Nri emphasized the symbol of the presence of variety of placatory gifts in the list above. These included the animal gift of a cock, to reflect the abundance of joy of the members of the child's agnate for the gift of a child. Respondents from both communities on the other hand agree that the presence of the four kola-nuts or more stands for the spirit of prayer on the part of the *umunna.* With it, prayers are offered for the child to grow to adopt the agnate *spirit* that will enable him/her to grow without deviation from the discipline and guidance of the community.

Regarding the basis for the presence of four kola nuts or more, in this ceremony, Nwoga (1984:28) explains that: "In offering kola, multiples of two and four are given and not the odd numbers – thus events demands four, eight, sixteen, sixty-four kola nuts and some multiples of four in between. According to him, when kola nut is split the number of lobs found in the kola nut has been given symbolic meaning. Three is *akadike* (the strong arm), four is peace, five is wealth and children and so fourth".

In Ihiala, in particular, one informant, Obiajunwanne (Oral Interview, 13/8/02) stated in relation to the symbol of the alligator pepper, that its presence in the naming ceremony was taken to stand as a word of reminder to the parents of the new child during this solemn occasion, namely, to remind them of the fact that parenting can be both joy and pain, just as the alligator pepper is known to sting as well as bring a nice aroma to s/he that chews it. In addition, the birth of a child brings an emotional satisfaction to the parents: To the man, the event is a proof of his manliness and to the woman of her fruitfulness. It moreover provides a status symbol and further, an opportunity for both parents to develop towards greater maturity. Children bring joy to many even when their day-to-day life is full of harshness and poverty. But it was believed that, in the end, with perseverance andeffort on their part, the child could grow to become a full-fledged adult that will bring honour not only to himself/herself but also to his/her parents and the *umunna*at large.

An elder from Nri, Ihenwaeme (Oral Interview, 17/8/02) observes in relation to the presence of wine in the items presented above, indicating that it is there to symbolize the idea of the celebratory spirit among the agnate blessed with a child. He also said the cock symbolizes the idea of the dawn of a new hope, a new opportunity and blessing in the family through the birth of the newborn child.

These clarifications show that Igbo ritual objects, like in the context of the present ceremony, are used as symbols that speak larger and longer than the actual concrete items, which they represent (Turner,1968).

Sample prayer form used in Igbo Naming Ceremony

The researcher noted that the prayer variations from the two communities studied are not much different, but mainly dialectal. In relation to the basic prayer form used in breaking the kola-nut, and in asking for blessings and protections on the child, and on the rest of the agnate *(umunna),* the results from one of the naming ceremonies witnessed by the researcher and her two research assistants at Nri are presented below. During that the ceremony, the officiant, Uzonna Ike, the chief elder of the *umunna,* took one of the kola-nuts in his hand and lifting up his face towards the sky prayed in the following words:

Officiant Igbo	Officiant (English version)

Greeting and addressing god, spirits and ancestors

Igbo	English
Chukwuabiaama,	Chukwu, He who was before all of us
Ezechitoke,	The king of all creation
Omamaamachaamacha,	The known but infathomable
Isi nsikogbalu Igbo ghalii,	The crab's head that is a mystery to the Igbo
Eze bi n' IgweOgoduyanakpunani	He who lives above with his feet on the ground
NwokeOghologhoanya	A man with distended eyes that sees everything.
Ndimuo di baanyi,	Our gods and ancestors
AnyanwunaAgbala,	The sky and the sun gods
Ndenbunandeegede	Our ancestors and forefathers
Anyiekene.	We thank you
Participants: *Isee*	Participants: Indeed thus we say/agree.

Begging agencies to break the kola-nut for them and make it a sacred meal

Igbo	English
Nalunuanyi (Nararanianyi) ojia	Receive this kola nut
Taanun'otuk'anyi ta n'ibe	Eat it whole, while we share the pieces
Bianugozieojiak'anyisina	Come and bless this kola so that we will
itayanwetandu. Partcipants: *Isee*	obtain life through eating it. Participants: Indeed thus we say/agree.

Prayer of thanksgiving and for his welfare

Igbo	English
Obi di anyiutorinnenanwa	We are very pleased
Enyereanyi.	For the child given to us
Anyinaekeneunu	*We thank you all*
Avia a bu … (Afayabu)	His name is …
Anyinaayoagamn'iruya, aruike,	We pray for his progress in the world,
Ogbogbo/ogonogondu,	for his health, virile and long/strong life and
Na ifeejienenduanyan'ebeono.	the wealth with which his/her life will be enhanced
Paticipants: *Isee*	Participants: Indeed thus we say/agree.

Prayer to the ancestors to pave his way for him

Igbo	English
Ndimuo di banyinaNnannanyifa	Our gods and ancestors
Tivolu nu yaezi,	Make smooth his/her life path
Kaotoo, so luuloyamee	So s/he can live long, to do and
ifeibeyan'eme	to take his/her seat among his/her mates
Paticipants: *Isee*	Participants: Indeed thus we say/agree.

Prayer for peace and joy

Igbo	English
Udo no oghu	Peace and Joy
Ejeabata	Successful going out and coming in
K'anyinayoebennenannayano	We pray on his/her parents behalf
Paticipants: *Isee*	Participants: Indeed thus we say.

Prayer for offspring

Igbo	English
Na isinnenannanwaaanyinaayo	We pray on behalf of the parents of this child

| *Omumunwokenaomumunwanyi* | blessing of more children of both sexes |
| Paticipants: *Isee* | Participants: Indeed thus we say/agree. |

Prayer for wealth to sustain life

Ife akuakuifeenwe- enwe	For animals and possessions
K'anyinayon'isi fa (n'isi ha).	We pray on their behalf
Kaeliitaa, k'eli e ozo	May we come again in this family for a similar celebration of joy
Participants: Isee	Participants: Indeed thus we say/agree

Prayer for the welfare of his entire agnate *(Umunna)*

Ndib'anyi, anyigaadisinu	Our people, we shall all live
Yagazieluununine	May things go well for you all.
Participants: *Iseeeeee*	Participants: Indeed thus we say/agree!!!

In each of the two communities studied, the members of the participants as shown above respond with the single fixed expression: 'Indeed thus we say/agree' or *Isee*, at strategic intervals during the prayer ritual. This gesture was interpreted to mean that this ceremony is one in Igbo Religion where the participants do not operate as a passive audience but as a participant community during the entire ritual process.

A close inspection of this prayer text shows some principal elements embedded in it. These include: praise and worship, thanksgiving, supplication for protection and support of the child, his/her parents and other members of the community present. This implies an inclusive recognition by the people, of the important contributions of not only the Supreme Being, but also other gods, spirits, and ancestors, in the affairs of their lives.

In addition, a major contribution of this study from the results set above is that Igbo prayer ritual is communally owned spontaneously generated and focuses in its contents beyond concern for praise and worship. The elements of the prayer place emphatic stress toward making petitions relevant to the needs of the participants. The whole ritual was discovered to be not just God-centered, but human-need centered as well (Horton, 1995).

Formality and components of the ritual process

The process format of the ceremony was also noted during the field observation of live samples of the naming ceremony in each of the two communities studied. The field experience for example, showed that broadly speaking the following six stages were traversed in the performance of the naming ceremony. These include: the announcement, the preparation, welcoming, presentation and naming, feasting and communion, and the departure stages (Figure 1).

The U-curve depiction of the stages shown in Figure 1 points to the sequence of stages and movements of the rituals of activities in the INC. The above figure draws attention to six major stages embedded in this ceremony as was observed in Nri and Ihiala communities at each session, in a kind of face-up U-curve position. This means that each session ends in a spirit that still looks forward to another of such occasion as the Igbo proverb express it: K'*elitaak'elikwaozo;ofuofu, teghete,* meaning that they look forward to another of the same occasion to eat and celebrate with the parents of the child as they have eaten/celebrated that day.

The ritual stages follow one another sequentially at the end of each stage, except for the last stage, which do not form a closed circle by the end of the session. This signifies the participants' belief that many more children are on their way to the couple. They hope to come back very soon to the family for another naming ceremony with the parents whom they pray to have many more children in their marriage.
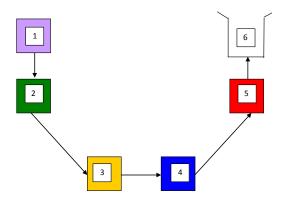
The six stages will now be discussed one by one to explain them further, beginning with the announcement stage.

Announcement

In both communities, the ceremony starts with a prior announcement to the agnate that a child is born to them. This announcement is made informally through the word of mouth via the snowball technique. The services of the town crier (public announcer) are not used in this context. Through the snowball process each member of the *umunna* who hears of the birth of the child takes the onus to share and spread the good news to those others who s/he believes have not heard of it. The content of this informal announcement regarding the birth of the child carries not only the news of the gender of the child but also the Igbo market day when the child was born. In this way, members automatically become able to reckon the ritual date for the naming ceremony process.

Preparation

This refers to the period of gathering/purchasing of the items for the naming ceremony, such as the kola nuts, the cock, and making arrangement for the native palm wine to be used. Respondents from Nri community indicated that some families during this preparation stage

Figure 1. A U-curve depiction of the 6 stages of Igbo naming ceremony. Key: 1.The Announcement Stage; 2. The preparation Stage; 3. The Welcoming Stage' 4.The Presentation/Naming Stage; 5. The Feasting/Communion Stage; 6. The Departure Stage. Source: Researcher's representation.

engage in the pre-naming ceremony of *IgbaAgu.* This is the process of ritual determination of the ancestor or village deity that was behind or sponsored the coming into the world of the newborn child in question (*Onyenoluyauwa*) through the process of divination. According to Uchegbu (2010: 157), "several factors determine the name given to a child". Hence finding out who the child's spiritual patron (the child's *Onye-uwa*) is important because the name to be given to the child may be decided by finding out from that agent the name s/he will want the child to be called. In Nri community, some of the names given to children are that of a deity who through divination was discovered to be their *Onye-uwa*. Interview data from some respondents from Nri community showed that even where a specific name is not determined through the inspiration of the *Onye-Uwa* agent, the ritual of determining the child's *Onye-Uwa* is still part and parcel of the formal process of rooting the spiritual patron of the child. This also is one of the important components of consolidating the child's arrival and membership in the human community of his/her people. It is part of the process of spiritually naming him/her alongside the targeted formal naming ceremony ritual proper to be celebrated by the agnate *(umunna)*.

Welcoming and presentations of gifts to the child

As each lineage *(umunna)* member arrives for the ceremony, he/she was observed to take the trouble, before settling down at the child's father's *Obi*, to first of all enter the mother's hut to see, greet and give some gifts to the new born child and the mother. These gifts came in various forms from the relatives on both side of the father and mother of the child [3]. The items presented to the child and the parents constituted part of their

contributions towards sponsoring the occasion. Some come with already cooked food while others bring them fresh foodstuffs. In support of the above, Anozie (1998:63), points out that: "No contribution to the welfare and well–being of the community could equal that of the gift of a new member. As the community is fully linked to this aspect of individual's life, child bearing have a very serious social tone. God gives life to a person but society fits individuals into a sociable and communal entity". This observation in line with the view offered by Mwaura (2001:300), who said that among the Abaluhya people of Kenya, "in naming, a child is dedicated to the community to be part and parcel of all its realities and experiences that is, its privileges and responsibilities."

In this way, the newborn child is not forgotten in this gift giving stage as some relatives bring him or her some ready-made baby clothing materials also. All these gifts according to some respondents signify and point to the Igbo saying that, "a child belongs only to the mother when s/he is in the mother's womb. As soon as the child is born s/he becomes the responsibility/property of all his kit and kin." Other respondents indicate that presentations of these gifts by the participants, symbolize the theme of solidarity and the brotherly spirit of communal sharing of family burdens that form part of the social ethics of the Igbo. It also encourages the phenomenon of investment in social support and ethic of mutuality among the Igbo.

It must be mentioned that this stage is not hurried. It could last for an hour or more. Some of the interviewees gave the impression that the stage is typically allowed to drag strategically to enable majority of the participants to assemble and settle down before the actual presentation of the child to the agnate *(umunna)* could commence. This stage is thus essentially the social component of the naming ceremony ritual process. During this period members take their time to exchange words of affection with fellow participants. This therefore reflects the build up stage of the ceremony proper.

Ritual presentation and naming of the child

In both communities, what followed the period of welcoming and presentation of gifts to the child is the stage of formal presentation of the child to his or her father's kindred, the *umunna,* and the time for the ritual naming and blessing of the child to take place. According to Nwoga (1984:20), "every child becomes fully human only when it has been formally received into a community most often by ritual presentation to the elders of the kindred".

As mentioned above, two principal officiants were implicated at this stage. The first is the father of the child who presents him/her to the congregation, giving him/her the name chosen for him/her (often, as we have said, determined through divination). Second, the blessing of

the child that goes with the ritual breaking of the kola nuts by the oldest man among the *(umunna)* present for the occasion.

There was no instance during the fieldwork in the two communities covered, where a woman is given the power to preside over this ceremony in any of the sample ceremonies observed. The Igbo naming ceremony is therefore gender-biased on the male members of the agnate But this is not surprising, as the two Igbo communities studied are patriarchal in organization. In the two communities, majority of the ritual practices were presided over by males. One of the participants interviewed from Nri, Ukoha (Oral Interview, 11/8/02) argued that part of the reason for this bias is because among the Nri community, elderly adult women available are typically married mothers that are members of different *(umunna)* communities by birth from the one into which the baby is born. For this reason women are assumed unqualified to preside over the ceremony, as this involves the privilege of addressing the gods and ancestors of the child's agnate and not theirs.

Feasting and communion

After the breaking of the kola nut and the blessing of the child, the cock is killed through slitting of its throat and a communal meal is prepared with it. Everyone present participated in this meal that entailed some eating and drinking. The ritual of sharing meals together signifies the act of communion between the living and the dead, as well as between the people and the gods and spirits of the child's village. This again seals the actual process of incorporation of the child into the agnate *(umunna)* community.

The Igbo people, the respondents emphasized, attach a lot of importance in communal meal at occasions like the naming ceremony[4]. This is said to arise from the fact that it is assumed to unite them together, giving them a sense of sharing with one another. It was also noted to be a ritual that brings a feeling of joy, happiness, solidarity and love for one another expressed in eating from the same plate in these ceremonies. During the sharing of the meal the elders were usually served first. The basis for this according to the informants was because the Igbo culture puts a lot of accent on seniority and hierarchy of human organizations.

Departure

The last and final stage represents the departure stage showing not only the participants' spirit of openness to *Chi* and *Eke,* the creative deities in Igbo Religion, but also the hands of surrender in trust to obtain more of such favours as observable in members as they depart in an open mood. The Igbo Naming Ceremony is a one-day

ritual occasion and so people depart after the communal meal is over. But participants do not just stand up and depart. They do so only after exchanging, final closing friendly greetings and words of appreciation to the chief hosts, the husband and wife who invited them to the occasion. Each departs with the full idea in his/her mind that the day has been well spent, with the name of the new child now fixed in their memory. The departure ritual in Igbo naming ceremony is therefore highly structuralized.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RITUAL

The primary data from the field observation of the Igbo Naming Ceremony presented above will now be discussed. The discussion will begin with examining in closer detail the taxonomy of Igbo names

Taxonomy of Igbo names given to children at naming ceremonies

Field investigation from respondents from the two communities under this heading revealed that names that could be given to the child under the auspices of the naming ceremony are many and varied. Among them, the following taxonomy listed in the table could be noted. Those cited in taxonomy above include both those mentioned during the sample ceremonies observed, as well as those gathered from interviewing the respondents and participants. Presented in Table 1 are therefore the list of significant names in their various categories and meanings.

Naming and aspects of Igbo belief systems

The results of the present study just highlighted contain a lot of clues as regards the belief systems, and ritual practices encompassed in Igbo religious, philosophical and psychological traditions. These aspects will now be discussed and an attempt made to relate the findings to the assumptions and premises of the study.

In the above taxonomy, names listed under Column 1(Consolatory /Melioristic Names) refer to those that reflect the feelings of the parents at the time when the child was born. They are names that evaluate human actions and caution for prudence and patience in human affairs generally. These include such names like: 'Ochiabuto' (Salutation is not love) and 'Osochiegbu' (Fate's accomplice in the downfall of others). They show that some Igbo names have a declarative and warning character, intended to be a life guide to those who bear or use them.

Similarly, some of the names discovered in the field in

the study of the naming ceremony show that certain proverbial names are used by Igbo people to justify a position, with all of such names attesting to certain aspects of the core of their belief system. As Obiego (1984) points out, these are names that speak volumes regarding the nature of the Igbo spirit. They are situational names surrounded with circumstantial experiences. Such names are 'Nkiruka' (Greater blessings still lie in the future), 'Iruka' (Tomorrow is greater) and 'Echidime' (Tomorrow is pregnant, so nobody knows tomorrow). These names in Igbo framework are intended to help to counsel and console those not yet well treated by fate.

Names under Column 2above (Igbo Market Day Names) refer to the day of the week or the time/event in the community when the child was born. Thus a name like 'Nweke' shows the tendency of the Igbo to immortalize the name of the day of the Igbo week when the child was born. In this case a child born on the *Eke* market day is given the name, 'Nweke'; the one born on *Afor* day is given the name, 'Nwafor'. A child born on *Nkwo* market day', is called 'Nwankwo' while the name 'Nwoye', is given to a child 'born on the second day of Igbo week, *Oye* day'.

Names listed under Column 3 above (Theophoric/ Destiny Names) refer to those that show the religious import of Igbo names. Such names are given either as gratitude to God, such as: 'Chukwudalu', 'Thanks be to God'; 'Chukwuemeka', 'God has done well' or to a specific village deity, for example, the earth-goddess such as 'Anaemeke', 'the earth-goddess has done well' for the birth of the child.

A number of Igbo names as generated under this column contain a lot of information on Igbo religious philosophy and theology. A close examination of some of those names reveals that most names given to the child under this ceremony are shorthand expressions of Igbo religious creed and experiential and circumstantial wisdom. They also make reference to the Igbo idea of God, life, death, ethics, Igbo theology and general orientation to living. For example, testimonial names 'Chukwudi' (God exists), 'Onyekachukwu' (Who is greater than God?) and 'Chukwuebuka' (God is great), contain eloquent clues regarding Igbo idea of God. They assert that God exists; that nobody is like Him; and that He is great. Other names like 'Chukwudalu' (Thanks be to God!) and 'Chukwuemeka' (God has done well) are also in the same trend. They attest to the relational character and the idea of Igbo Religion as a religion of gratitude. These names as Obiego (1984:78) points out show that: "For an ordinary Igbo (as with any other group of mankind on earth) the demonstration for God's existence does not begin with the gamut of metaphysical reasoning or the 'five ways' of 'the Angelic Doctor'. On the contrary, it begins from God's providential care for men – from men's experience of that 'awesome immanence of the wholly other' – i.e. men's experience of God coming as providence – good and thoughtful of men, giving children

to the barren, food to the hungry, perseverance to the despairing, justice to the afflicted, and peace to troubled household".

Theophoric names or those related to particular Igbo divinities were also unearthed in this ceremony, such as 'Nwanyanwu' (The child of the sun-god), 'Nwigwe' (The child of the sky-god), 'Nwamuo' (The child of a divinity), 'Nwala' (A child of the earth-goddess), and 'Ngene' (a name for one of the river deities among the Nri community). In some of these names, the Igbo demonstrate strongly their faith in the contributions of divinities other than the Supreme Being (*Chukwu)* in the affairs of their lives.

Some of the names discovered under this column, also reveal the strong Igbo belief in the uncertainty and fragility of the human experience and therefore in humans' dependence on the support and providence of their gods and ancestors. Such are names like 'Chikwe' (If my *Chi* approves the plan), 'Nkechi" (Whatever the destiny spirit decides), 'Ogechi' (God's time), and 'Anele' (We wait and see). They speak volumes on the nature of Igbo philosophy and existential orientation.

Names listed under Column 4 (Testimonial/ Ejaculatory Names) above reflect the tendency of Igbo people to give a name to a child that depicts their pragmatic view of the child in question or the background of event in his or her family at the time s/he was born. For example, a name like 'Amanna' shows that the child was born immediately after the father's death. And a name like 'Ositadinma' reflects the idea that things were not so smooth in the family of the child before s/he was born. The parents start to believe that things could improve in their lives with the arrival of the newborn. In that case the child's birth is construed as a new way forward in the life of the whole family.

On the other hand names like 'Uzoezie' (My road has been straightened), 'Obialo' (My heart is now at ease or pacified), 'Chiedozie' (My *Chi*, destiny spirit, has repaired the damage), 'Amaechina' (May my family lineage not be closed), Obiadi' (The homestead is now preserved), 'Ndirika' (He is blessed who survives his suffering), and 'Uzoechina' (May my path to a good fortune not close). In fact all names generated in this column, sum up the spiritual view of the people, including their beliefs and reactions to the chances and challenges of the human experience. These include their joys and sorrows, fortunes and misfortunes, their happiness and sadness, their hopes, expectations and aspirations and their ethical orientation.

Names reflecting the Igbo religious values and philosophy are those tabulated under Column [5](Advisory/ Experiential Names)above**.** In this context a name like 'Onwuamaegbu' (death does not follow any order in selecting its victims) or a name like 'Ekwutosi' points to the Igbo moral value and general orientation to living that enjoins us never to talk against people behind their back. All these show that Igbo naming ceremony is more or

less like a minefield for the excavation of the major moral and religious values, principles and belief systems encompassed in Igbo Indigenous Religion.

In general however, the trend so far shows that naming is a strategic human ritual. It confers identity, and a means of self-reference to the child. It is also a ritual through which an individual is to be known and made reference to. It is therefore an important means for successful living in the world.

Similarly names like 'Onwuamaegbu' (Death does not know how to kill), 'Onwuamaeze' (Death is not a respecter of persons, it kills even kings), and 'Onwuzuluigbo' (Death is universal) show the Igbo belief that death is a natural end of life for everybody both the poor and the wealthy. It speaks to their existential observation that death does not select its victims. These names also show that, in Igbo world-view, death, as a phenomenon, is conceived as capricious. It chooses its path and does not go by age or seniority.

Other names such as 'Adigwe' (Group is stronger than an individual), and 'Igwebuike' (Unity is strength) also discovered in the study of this ceremony, point to an aspect of the Igbo social ethics that emphasizes communal ethos and the Igbo belief that, they can only grow through investment in human and cooperative support of others. Another aspect of such ethics that is oriented to communality is similarly revealed in names like 'Ebunilo' (Do not carry malice in heart/life) show indications of centuries of experience and a result of an accumulation of the experiential wisdom among the two communities studied.

Some of the names appear to come as a protest by one or both parents of a child who had been a victim of an unjust trial by fate, or an unjust public reproach, victimization, abuse, evil-speaking or gossiping from neighbours or community. This trend is illustrated in names like 'Ekwutosi' (Do not blackmail others), and 'Onuabuchi' (Our destiny is not in human hands), Ochiabuto' (Salutation is not love) which attest to the people's way of responding to social offences and distress.

Names like 'Nwadiuto' (It is sweet to have a child), 'Nwabugwu' (Having a child is an honour), 'Nwakaku' (Child is greater than wealth), 'Nwamaka' (Having a child feels good) are those that justify the belief among the Igbo that having children is a great investment and a great blessing.

An important implication of all these findings is that Igbo Naming Ceremony is a good-enough-in-road into the variety of spiritual agencies that are appealed to by Igbo religious worshippers. Igbo names are not only chosen very carefully but are also believed to represent the person named. They are also attached with mystical power. Myers (2010:23) agrees that "your name repre-sents your immortality. This concept readily… explains how African peoples on the continent and later throughout the Diaspora, experience reality as union between both spiritual and the material".

Principal spiritual agencies embedded in Igbo names in Igbo indigenous religion

The results of the present study gave eloquent indication of the typical spiritual agencies in Igbo Indigenous Religion. These were deduced from the above list of Igbo names given to the child at the naming ceremony. The trend showed that in studying these names the following constitute the spiritual agencies of Igbo Religion:

1. *Chukwu* (the Supreme Being, and the King of all creation) [5]
2. *Ngene* (nature deity) [6]
3. *Amadioha*(the god of thunder and lightning) [7]
4. *Ndi-ichie* (the ancestors) [8]
5. *Ikenga* (the god of strength, enterprise and fortune) [9]
6. *Ana, Ala, Ani* (the earth-goddess) [10]
7. *Eke* (god of creativity)
8. *Chi* (the child's *Onye-uwa*, the spiritual agent that sponsored or brokered the child's earthly existence and destiny, and so the child's spiritual double or resident deity).
9. *Agwu*(god of divination and healing) [11]
10. Udo[12]
11. Ogwugwu[13]
12. Anyanwu[14]

The above list shows that Igbo Religion is a religion that recognizes a plurality of gods. The trend shows that the Igbo people are democratic and inclusive in their religious orientation, evolving an eclectic perspective in relation to the spiritual agencies of their religion. Their way of making reference to the agencies in the prayer form presented above tends however, to betray their tendency to give the first pride of place to *Chukwu* the Supreme Being. This is followed by village deities and the *Ndi-ichie* referred to, in the prayer given above as *Ndi-muo di b'anyi* (our gods and ancestors). Okafor (2001:11) reporting about the religion of his village group in Igboland stated that: "Imezi-Owa people are deeply religious. …They believe in the existence of a Supreme Being called Chukwu Okiki (God the creator) who is the source of life. Apart from Him, there is also a belief in a personal god called chi to whom sacrifices are offered during good and bad times. Furthermore, there is a belief in a pantheon of other deities. Sacrifices of petition, atonement, appeasement, thanksgiving, etc. are offered to them".

The attitude of the Igbo as could be deduced from the names given is even more eclectic and egalitarian than hierarchical or exclusive allegiance to the Supreme Being, in their allotment of respect and regard to these agencies. Some of the names highlighted reflect the tragic sense of life that characterizes much of Igbo world-

view that appears to underpin their religious attitudes, goals, rituals and practices.

Findings from the study of the Igbo naming ceremony demonstrate that there are more spiritual agencies of the religion than had hitherto been identified by previous investigators like Ezeanya (1963) and Arinze (1970). Clues as to the presence of these agencies in Igbo Religion were found embedded in the prefix of most of the names given to the newborn child under this ceremony. For example, some of the names that could be given to a newborn child during the Igbo naming ceremony include: Chinualumogu (May Chi fight for me), Chi-ekezie, (My Chi has redefined me), Chikwuebuka (God is great), Chinagorom (Chi has been my advocate), Chikaodili (Chi is in charge).

All these names support the views of the previous researchers that among the spiritual agencies in Igbo Religion are the Supreme Being (Arinze, 1970; Ubah, 1982) and Chi (Ezekwugo, 1973; Nwoga 1984). Ngene is a name of the god of streams in most villages in Igboland. Ana/Ani/Ala (the earth goddess) is an agency that has been recognized by previous investigators such as Arinze (1970).

Although it can be said that a good number of the spiritual agencies highlighted above have been identified by previous researchers, they had merely been discovered part by part by these researchers. No one of such studies has created a context like undertaken in the present study as whereby all of these agencies can be identified at one go. Consequently, the major contribution of the present study of Igbo naming ceremony is the opportunity it has provided to unearth and note, at a glance, the presence of these agencies in Igbo Indigenous Religion. In this way, it has generated a comprehensive image of the variety of spiritual agencies in Igbo Indigenous Religion.

In particular, an important discovery from the present study is that Igbo names have meanings. Some serve as a diary of the parent's experience. Others serve as texts attesting to the nature of the peoples' philosophy and orientation to life. Some have some morals behind them. In this way, through naming a person gains not only a personality but also kinship identity. Supporting the above observation, Mbiti (1975:87) asserts that "the name is considered in African societies to be very much part of the personality of the person. Therefore, it is taken seriously, and chosen with care and consideration. Often names of people have a meaning, and it is this meaning which must be given due consideration". To be named therefore, is part and parcel of what it means to be human and to belong to a human community. It contributes to making the individual feel welcomed in the human world. It is therefore a cardinal process in one's earthly experience. The above indication is in line with Liseli's (2012: 39) observation that "naming among the Congolese also holds immense importance. Among the Kongo ethnic group for instance, a new born was not regarded truly human until the bestowal of a name."

Aspects of Igbo religious values in the naming ritual

A close examination of the prayer texts collected under the present study gives important clues as to the major values of Igbo Religion and culture. Such values are seen reflected in the items mentioned in the petitions submitted to the spiritual agencies of the religion under this ceremony. For example, the sections of the prayer text collected under thisceremony, which contain clues as to the major values of Igbo Religion, are highlighted in section A, E and G.

A discourse analysis and collation of the information contained in the prayer text shows that the following are among the major values of Igbo Religion: Life (*Ndu*), Offspring (*Nwa*), Wealth and Possessions *(Aku-na-Uba)*, Peace and Joy (*Udo-na-Oghu*). The first two stanzas of the prayer text contain the declaration that the participants are gladdened by the fact of the child that was born. *(Obi di anyiutorinnenanwaenyereanyi).*This assertion betrays the great value that is placed on the phenomenon of having children in Igbo culture. With a child, the continuity of a homestead is assured. As the Igbo proverb puts it: *"Amutanwaomutaibeya bun du ebebe"* (when a child is born and that child lives to give birth to another child … and the chain continues, that means, unending life).

Similarly, the prayer text above went ahead to ask for the child's health, progress, a good and strong life, wealth and peace and joy on behalf of the child *(Anyin'ayo, agaamníruya, ogonogondu, naaruisiken'ebeno).* All showing that they key aspects of the prayer text draw attention to the chief values of Igbo religious worshippers. Now the idea of the presence of five values in Igbo Religion as revealed under this ceremony is very well supported by Ekwunife (1997:78) who identifies similar emphasis, as discovered in the field study of this ceremony, on the following five values in Igbo Religion: 'Life as a supreme value, Offspring, Wealth, Love (*Ifunanya*), and Peace *(Udo)'*. A slight variation between his findings and the present one is as regards the name to call the fifth value. He refers to it, as love while in this study the name given to it in the prayer text highlighted above, is joy *(oghu)*. But, when looked at closely, one sees that there is no conflict in the two lists since the presence of peace and joy in a home is a sign of the presence of peace and love in that same home.

In reference to these values, Ekwunife (1997) observes that none of them can stand alone as a unit. This point is illustrated by the fact that in the study of the present ceremony, they are all mentioned together in the prayer text cited above.

Some other Igbo scholars have earlier given thought to the important place occupied by these same five values in Igbo Religion. One of such scholars is Uzukwu (1981:

10). He observes that "the principal access to the Igbo people's understanding of the universe and its multiple relations, the key to the core of the people's hopes and fears as they search for, follow, and try to shape their destiny, is *ndu* (life). And their goal is to preserve it, increase it, and realize it to the full".

The other scholar is Mere (1973). Making reference to the eminent value that is accorded to the idea of having children in Igbo culture, Mere (1973:93) points out that: "Traditionally children are highly valued. They have to continue the ancestral line in order to retain the family's ownership of whatever property belongs to it. The reality of family extinction cannot be ducked where children are not forthcoming. Such a situation is socially abominable. On the part of any Igbo parents, having children wards off the anxiety of growing old and fear of loss of property to undeserving fellows".

Sharing his views on the emphasis on wealth in Igbo Religion and Culture, Ekwunife (1997:78) points out that "wealth and riches *(akun'uba)* in Igbo context does not necessarily mean abundance of material goods as modern Africans conceive it; nor does it exclude some measures of affluence. In his view, wealth for the traditional Igbo is a comprehensive term. It includes in its coverage: some landed property, numerous children, relations and dependants, human skills and other endowments of nature through which a man can make a living".

Such comments as these are useful. They show that the five Igbo traditional values identified under this ceremony must be conceived as principal values for the traditional Igbo. This is because in terms of their ritual value, their job is to motivate choices of relevant prayers and petitions for the Igbo religious participants at salient occasions.

A number of deductions can be made from the results of the study of the naming ceremony in relation to the key questions of the present study focusing on the goals, Spiritual Agencies of Igbo Religion and Attitude of the people to these agencies. This is the angle of this discussion to which attention will now be directed.

Naming and the goals of Igbo indigenous religion

The major goals of Igbo Religion stand out from the prayer text generated in the course of the study of this Naming ceremony, and in the meaning/supplications contained in the names given to the newborn child. For instance, a typical prayer that was made by the officiant, during that ceremony, shows that Igbo Religion is essentially a religion of praise, worship, thanksgiving, and petition. They engage in each of these rituals to win the hearts and invest in the goodwill of the spiritual agencies of their religion.

Thus, in every Igbo cultural celebration of which the naming ceremony is one, the officiating elder, usually starts with the breaking of the kola-nut. He picks up a piece of kola-nut from the bowl of eight or more kola-nuts, as reported earlier from Ihiala community, and calls on the Supreme God, and litany of the village deities and spirits as well as the ancestors, and prays as follows on behalf of the child being named, for:

1. his/her progress and health,
2. wealth with which his/her life will be enhanced;
3. growth without problems in his/her parts life,
4. his ability to take his/her seat among his/her age mates; and
5. his/her peace and joy and successful going out and coming in, all the days of his/her life.

But that is after showing their praises to these agencies. Yet, these trends show that in Igbo Indigenous Religion an important goal is not only for praise and worship, but also for a search for earthly blessings on behalf of the living; a search for protection against the changes and challenges of the human experience. Indeed, as Ejizu (1987:132) put it, the prayer economy of Igbo Religion shows that: "Man's life and the general welfare of his world are the central focus of attention; the primary thrust of most religious activities is geared towards the enhancement of man's life and the promotion of his total well-being. This emphasis portrays the belief in Igbo Religion that 'man's life, although received from God, is the greatest good to be fostered".

All these are testimonies to the fact that a major goal of Igbo Religion as found from the study of this ceremony is double-edged: praise and worship and a search for the enhancement and protection of the personal well-being and fortunes of its worshippers and an opportunity for thanksgiving for favours received. They also betray a clear recognition in Igbo Indigenous Religion of the exalted position and power of the supernatural order and supersensible beings over human beings and the material order.

Attitude of the Igbo to the spiritual agencies of their religion

This is among the key basic questions according to Horton, (1995), which have been left unexplored by previous researchers in African (Igbo) religion. It was one of the majors concerns of this study. Part of the aim was to find out by means of this study what can be said to be the nature of the attitudes of the Igbo people to the spiritual agencies of their religion. And from close examination of the prayer texts, the symbolic gestures, and the operative practices encompassed in the Igbo naming ceremony studied, it could be concluded that the attitudes of the Igbo to the spiritual agencies of their religion can be qualified with such terms as:

1. Attitude of Deference, as well as faith and trustin their spiritual agencies and absence of a non-fanatic

attachment to any one of the spiritual agencies
2. A sense of appreciation and gratitude,
3. A sense of categorization or scaling, and
4. Democratic and egalitarian attitude and a sense of Rotational Sensitivity.

Presented below is a more detailed attempt at clarifying this conclusion.

Attitude of deference, faith and trust in their spiritual agencies

One important fact to be noted in going through the prayer texts generated in the study of this ceremony is a glaring sense of deference manifested in the language of the prayer texts presented during the naming ceremony (*IbaNwaAfa)* ritual. In conducting a discourse analysis of such prayer texts, it was discovered that some operative words reveal that the Igbo manifest a clear attitude of respect and a feeling of deference to the spiritual agencies of their religion. The indicators for these attitudes can be seen revealed in prayer phrases said by the oldest man from the child's agnate*).*

In all the prayer phrases in section A and B of the prayer text cited earlier in this report**,** it is obvious that among the principal attitudes of the Igbo to the spiritual agencies of their religion is that of deep respect and deference. This is particularly brought out in the last two phrases where the spiritual agencies were being invited to come and eat kola and to eat it whole while the worshippers canshare the pieces. This is an indication that they recognize that these agencies are not in the same class or rank or order of being with ordinary humans in the world. From the same prayer phrases by the officiant during the naming ceremony, a sense of respect is also well brought out in paying homage to God, the Supreme Being as shown in section A of the prayer text earlier cited.

These phrases, arising from their prayer of praise, demonstrate that their sense of due respect and deference for the spiritual agencies of their religion is based on a solid African metaphysics and a philosophical theology.

Sense of appreciation and gratitude

Another attitude of the Igbo to the spiritual agencies of their religion is that of a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the favours and protections they receive from these agencies. This attitude is well illustrated in the prayer text arising from this study highlighted above. There, the first thing to strike an observer is their attempt to express gratitude to the spiritual agencies of their religion for the gift of the child to be named. They do this, so to say, as a first order of business before pleading for more blessings for the child and for favour in the lives of his or her parents. That section, thus, presents a clear

indication, as a result of the study of this ceremony, that Igbo Indigenous Religion is not only a religion of petition and protection but also a religion of gratitude.

Attitude of categorization or scaling

Yet another attitude of the people to the spiritual agencies of their religion as revealed in the study of this ceremony is that of a sense of categorization and scaling. This is reflected in the order of some of their prayers of praise as generated in the study of their naming ceremony (*IbaNwaAfa).* In the prayer text presented in that ceremony as highlighted earlier, the officiant began with mentioning the Supreme Being, the Divinities and the ancestors in that order, showing that in their sense of estimation and scaling the Supreme Being is first among these other agencies. The invoking of the divinities before the ancestors gives testimony to their belief that compared to the ancestors; the divinities are in a stronger position in terms of their power to influence things in their lives. Commenting in this regard, Nwoga, (1984:32) observes that: "With regard to the structure of Igbo Religion, the principle of dualities and the concept of being-as-action predispose the Igbo to the acceptance of a wide range of deities and being forces. There is between these deities not a hierarchy of beings as such but a hierarchy of function, which makes it possible for a deity that, is very powerful in one area of Igboland to be completely disregarded in another community".

This attitude of categorization and scaling of the spiritual agencies of their religion is confirmed by Ubah, (1982:101) when he pointed out that, "the ancestors are expected to influence the divinities in respect of matters, which they cannot deal with alone or directly. The divinities are always said to possess more powers than the ancestors".

There was, however, no question from the view of the respondents that the ancestors as spirits are in a privileged position to these divinities than the humans themselves.

This calculation is perhaps one of the considerations that influenced Temples' (1945, 1959) emphasis on the notion of the hierarchy of beings in African religious and philosophical thought.

These clarifications show that the Igbo have a proper sense of estimation of who is who in the spiritual calculations of their religion. And this sense of categorization and scaling influences, indeed, to a great measure, the ritual order of their religion.

Democratic and egalitarian attitude and a sense of rotational sensitivity

Another important attitude of the Igbo to the spiritual agencies of their religion revealed in the study of this ceremony is that of their democratic and egalitarian

orientation and a sense of rotational sensitivity to these agencies. Commenting in this regard, Nwoga (1984:47) states that:

"An important factor to mention with regard to Igbo Religion is the democratic nature of the Igbo approach to the deities. The Igbo do not go into the dangerous road of deciding between the deities which of them may be senior to others. More importantly, they do not refuse to acknowledge the deity of any deity that is proclaimed deity".

This can be found embedded in the prayer texts generated during the naming ceremony ritual. Their attitude in this regard is specifically reflected in their prayer of praise at that ceremony which took into account a clear mention and recognition of the support of Chukwuor the Supreme Being in the joyful gift of a child to the Igbo family implicated in the ritual. They also mentioned and recognized the goodwill and support of the other divinities, including the role of the ancestors as agents of protection, support and blessings in their lives as seen from section A and D of the prayer text. The text demonstrates that in Igbo prayers of praise and petition, attention is rotated not only to the influence of God or the Supreme Being in their lives but also the recognition, contributions and support of other divinities and those of the ancestors.

This attitude of rotational sensitivity to the role and importance of multiple agents of favour in their lives can also be seen reflected in the following phrases embedded in the same prayer text collected under their naming ceremony ritual. This shows that their egalitarian attitude in this regard extends to the asking, not only for the welfare and progress of the child being named, but even for those of the parents, the animals, and all the other members of the child's agnate (*umunna)* present, as shown in sections C, E, F and G of the earlier cited prayer texts.

The same rotational sensitivity in their religion is again seen reflected in the thanksgiving section of the same prayer texts where the thanksgiving was voted and generalized to all the spiritual agencies of the religion. The trend in section C, of the prayer text, demonstrates that in their prayer orientation none of the agencies was singled out in particular for a special appreciation.

Such orientation means that the Igbo demonstrate a multi-partial attitude to the spiritual agencies of their religion. In clarifying the basis for the presence of this multi-partial attitude to the spiritual agencies of their religion, Achebe (1989:42) points out that "whereas in some cultures a person may worship one of the gods or goddesses in the pantheon and pay scant attention to the rest, in Igbo Religion, such selective-ness is unthinkable. As far as the Igbo people are concerned all the people must placate all the gods all the time". This orientation arises from the cautionary proverb popular among the

Igbo that even when a person has satisfied the deity *Udo*[11] completely, *Ogwugwu*[12] (deity) may yet kill him and yet *Ogwugwu* is known in Igbo Religion as a consort of *Udo.*

Field data from the present study revealed that it is the striving to come to terms with a multitude of forces and demands, which gives Igbo life its tense and restless dynamism. For in the last analysis, according to some respondents, all extremism is abhorrent to the Igbo sensibility. The trend in this study thus provides an empirical support for the existence and recognition of many gods in Igbo Religion. This is reflected in the people's fervent attempts to see that they worship all these agencies multi-partially, in times when they have the need to celebrate joyful occasions in their lives.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted to find out what can be learned of Igbo Religion through the study of Igbo Naming Ceremony. The results proved that the proper study of the Naming Ceremony of Igbo could indeed generate answers to some the three basic questions of the religion posed by Horton (1995). The trend shows that Igbo Religion, when studied in the raw, as undertaken in this study, through a field study of Igbo Naming ceremony, has well-thought out answers in terms of its goals, the spiritual agencies of the religion and the attitude of the people to these agencies.

This means that with the study of this ceremony the principal objectives of this study have been achieved. From the results emanating from the study of the Igbo naming ceremony, we have come to discover a lot about the belief systems and some myths underpinning the Indigenous Religion of the great Igbo people of Nigeria. In addition, with the prayer patterns collected in the fieldwork in the course of the present study we now know what one can call the principal goals of Igbo Religion: praise, worship, thanksgiving, and petition for protection and earthly blessings.

The result of the study equally demonstrated the inclusive and pluralistic nature of the spiritual agencies in Igbo Religion. This confirms the view of previous investigators (Ubah, 1982 and Echeruo, 1979) that over and above the Supreme Being and other divinities and spirits that are addressed by the worshippers are autonomous forces in their own right.

Even the nature and pattern of Igbo religious practice has been determined from the study of the naming ceremony. We now know from studying this ceremony that Igbo religious practice includes both animal offering and placatory gifts, including speech, body movement, sacrifice and communal meal sharing. Important symbolisms of the religion were also noted in the course of this study showing that rituals in Igbo Religion are covered by the conclusion credited to Turner (1968), that

African religious ceremonies are highly symbolic. Turner's theory of the systematic nature of African rituals/ceremonies was also confirmed in the study of the present ceremony. The results show that Igbo Naming Ceremony is a systematic process that encompasses a number of stages that unfold in logical fashion, showing an enormous element of order in its practice.

In addition, the content of most Igbo names show that, names and naming play strategic roles in the belief systems and customary orientations of the parents. Some, as we have seen, are consolatory in orientation, while others are testamental in emphasis, testifying to the beliefs and assumptions of the parents about the nature of life and human existence. Some, like destiny names show that for the Igbo, there is a belief that 'what will be will be' as long as God is in support of it. Others like the market day names demonstrate that among the Igbo, some names are used for event reckoning or for calendarical purposes enabling Igbo parents as members of an oral culture tradition to write the date when a child was born in the child's name.

Finally, then, one can say that judging from the trends discovered in the present study of the Igbo naming ceremony, a pluralist and inclusive position is the more justified path to take in making reference to the number of goals, ritual objects, spiritual agencies and attitudes of the people to spiritual agencies of Igbo Religion. Hence, the general implication to be drawn from the present study is that that a lot about the basic tenets of African Indigenous Religion could be discovered through the systematic study of similar rituals and ceremonies of the different indigenous peoples of Africa like the naming ceremony of the great Igbo people of Nigeria examined in this study.

END NOTES

1. The Igbo birth rites are the entrance gates to the Igbo culture for an individual as well as the fundamental traditional rites, which introduce and insert the Igbo child into the culture of his/her community. Its objective is to gain recognition, integration and consolidation within traditional community.
2. *Igbaagu* is a divination process, which is entered into after the seclusion period of child's birth. This is done to know who is behind the childbirth and to know which name to give him/her. The diviner is believed to possess powers to communicate with the supernatural world and is able to find out the wishes of the dead relative. If it is revealed that it is a dead ancestor, or a deity that is behind the child's birth, the child is named accordingly. Deities are normally the Chi of children of families that have a deity in their midst (see Mwaura, P.N. *"A Theological and Cultural Analysis of Healing in Jerusalem Church of Christ and Nabii Christian Church of Kenya"*. Ph.D. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2001.

3. Nature brings the child into the world, but the society creates the child into a human being, a corporate person. For it is the community, which protects the child, feed it, brings it up, educates it and in many other ways incorporate it into a wider community (Anozie, 1998:16)
4. The festive aspect of the Igbo naming ceremony consists of eating, drinking, dancing and merriment.
5. Chukwu: This name is translated and accepted as the Great Chi or God. The best rendering of Chukwu, in Metuh's (1981:24) view, would be "Great Providence". Sometimes Chukwu is simply known as Chi; this creates some confusion because one is not sure of which spirit is meant: Chi (Chukwu), the High God or Chi, the controller of individual destiny. According to Talbot, (1969:40) among all the sub-tribes in Owerri Igbo Division, Chukwu is known as "ChukwuOkeAbiama", (maker of everything) in order to distinguish Him from the personal chi.
6. *Ngene*: This deity is associated with river or streams (Arinze, 1970: 14)
7. *Amadioha* is the god of thunder and lightning. He is seen as the wrathful messenger of the Supreme God who sends him in the form of thunder to punish evildoers. Oaths are sworn by him and his priests curse suspected persons by him. Most villages of each lineage possess a shrine of this god (Metuh, 1981:64, Arinze, 1970:16).
8. Ancestors and *Ala/Ala,* according to Meek (1950:25) is regarded as the owner of men, whether alive or dead. The cult of ancestors is, therefore, closely associated with that of the Earth goddess who is Queen of the Underworld. *Ala* is the leader of the ancestors who are buried in her womb; the dead fathers, who are regarded as symbols of peace, unity and prosperity in the family; and are, together with Ala, the protectors of traditional laws and customs. Every breach of custom is punished otherwise the spirits of the ancestors and *Ala* will plague the society (Metuh, 1981:96 and Arinze, 1970:15).
9. *Ikenga* is a minor deity, which is associated with good fortune, success, ability and the strength of a man's right arm. It is represented by carved wooden figure of a man with ram's horns on his head and a matchet in one hand and human head in the other. (Ilogu, 1974:36).
10. *Ana/Ala/Ani* is the mainspring of the Igbo people's social life and, in many localities in Igboland, if anyone wishes to better his social position by taking a title, he must first secure her good offices (Meek, 1950: 25). Without her, according to Uchendu (1965:96) "life would be impossible for the Igbo, who attach much sentiment to the land (*Ana*). It is out of respect to the Earth goddess that the Igbo are ideologically opposed to the sale of land; and where there is a sale of land, *Ala* must be ritually pacified if the transaction is to be consummated." One can say that *Ala* is everything to the Igbo; they live on the land from which they get their food and in which they are buried when they die. The cult of *Ala* exists in every part of Igboland and her priests are very important members of their communities. Every village or village-

group has a priest of *Ala*. Many of the priests, according to Meek (1950:28), are chosen by divination from particular families and in a few groups the priest of the Earth goddess is said to be the "owner" of the group. The priest, in a family that has its own private cult of *Ala*, is the head of the family.

11. *Agwu* is a supernatural force, which is associated with medicine, divination and magic. It is always in need f servants or worshippers whom it chooses (Henderson, 1972:119, Uchendu, 1965:98).

12. *Udo* is one of those spirits who have shrines and priests. However, he does little good and so great harm that it is called "wicked" spirit. *Udo* is widespread in Iboland. No sane man wants to deal with them. Everyone is afraid of swearing falsely on them. They are sacrificed to only to appease them or to invite them to do harm to one's enemies. *Udo* is no respecter of persons, not even of his priest, when inflicting evil. There are children who are given names in honour of *Udo* (Arinze, 1970:14)

13. *Ogwugwu:* This is a female spirit connected with fertility, protection and the achieving of one's ambitions (Isichei, 1977:345;Arinze, 1970:77).

14. The Igbo have varied cult of the Sun. *Anyanwu, the* Igbo name for such a cult is worshipped as a deity of fortune, and the provident of wealth. The deity is prayed to for profit in the market and for good harvest (Onuh, 1992:24). *Anyanwu*is called the son of Chineke and sometimes his emanation. (Metuh, 1981: 41).

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Appendix A

Presented below is the compressive summary Table of the ritual elements in Igbo Naming ceremony *(IbaNwaAfa).*

Table 2. Poster summary of the ritual elements in Igbo naming ceremony.

Communities Studied:	Nri	Ihiala
Aim:	Celebration of the child's incorporation into human community (*umunna* community) and the breaking of the child's link from the prenatal world, hence a pragmatic and spiritual aim.	To officially mark the presentation of the child into his/her human *U* umunna family climaxed by giving him/her a name by which he/she is to be known and called and to break the child's invisible loyalty with the world of the unborn children.
Participants:	The child's *umunna* of all gender/age status.	The entire village group of all fender and age.
Ritual Key Components:	Prayer of worship, thanksgiving, supplication protection and support of the child then sacrifice and communal meal.	Same.
Who gives the name:	Father of the child.	Father of the child or eldest member of the child's *umunna*where the father of the child died before the child is born.
Location of the ceremony:	Father's compound.	Same.
Prayer Officiant:	The most senior elder of the community.	The surviving elder of the *umunna* community.
Utterances:	Prayer in form of blessings for the good things of life for the child, the parents and all present.	Same.
Participants responses at prayer intervals:	*Isee*meaning, "indeed thus we say" as they knock their fist on the ground.	Same.
Animal used:	Cock	Same.
Mode of killing:	Slitting the throat.	Same.
Animal killed in order:	To supply shed blood.	To show that what they are celebrating is worth making a sacrifice of a cock
Ritual objects/items:	Kola nut, alligator pepper, cock, bottle of gin and gallons of local palm wine including soft drinks.	Same.
Time when conducted:	Twelve days (*izun'ato)* after the birth of the child.	Same.
Why Twelve days:	To give time for the mother of the child to heal and recover from the aftermath of childbirth so that she could participate fully in the naming ceremony process.	To give time to test if the child has really come to stay or will soon die to reconnect with his/her unborn peers and therefore needs no naming.

Source: Researcher's representation.

Table 1. The list of significant names in their various categories and meanings.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Akukalia	Nwafor	Anaemeka	Amanna	Adigwe
Ego-di-ukwu	Nwakwo	Anele	Amaechina	Ebunilo
Echidime	Nweke	Chidi	Anene	Emenike
Ihenwaeme	Nwoye	Chukwudi	Adizue	Ejefenihu
Iruka		Chinualumogu	Chioma	Ekwnife
Ijeoma		Chinwe	Chiekezie	Egbuna
Muorah		Chukwudalu	Chiagorom	Ekwutosi
Nnanna		Chukwuebuka	Chineme	Nwakaku
Nkiruka		Chukwuemeka	Chiedozie	Nwamaka
Obinna		Chinyere	Osondu	Nwadiuto
Onwubiko		Chikwe	Obiadi	Nnorom

Table 1. Contd

Osochiegbu	Chikwuo	Obialo	Nwatoka
Ozoechina	Chimto	Ositadimma	Nwabugwu
Orjiewulu	Chinelo	Iruka	Ochiabuto
Umeano/Umealo	Chima	Ndirika	Onuabuchi
Uzoma	Chikanelo	Nnuaku	Onwuamaeze
	Dioha	Nwanyibuife	Onwuamaegbu
	Ebubechukwu	Nnakee	Onwuzuluigbo
	Ngene	Nwando	Onyejelubechi
	Nnamani	Udeoku	Ikeanyionwu
	Nwanyanwu	Uzoezie	Igwebuike
	Nwala	Uzoechina	
	Nwamuo		
	Nwolisa		
	Nebechi		
	Nwachukwu		
	Nkechi		
	Nwigwe		
	Onyekachukwu		
	Ogechi		

Source: Researcher's representation.

Full Length Research Paper

Ethno- medicine of Bhotia tribe in Mana village of Uttarakhand

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The present paper is based on field work conducted in village Mana in Joshimath subdivision of the District Chamoli, Uttarakhand, among Bhotias. The group of Bhotias residing in this village belongs to the Marcha Bhotia category and is transhumant in nature. The paper gives an ethnographic background of the Bhotias and then focuses on the major ethno-medicines which are used by these people. These medicines have been in use through the ages. This traditional knowledge is of significance since the health services in this region are limited and these medicines are effective in curing patients. The intellectual property right of these medicines belongs to these people and they must be given the credit for it.

Key words: Mana village, Bhotias, ethno-medicine, traditional knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Area and the people

Mana village is situated on the bank of River Saraswati. It is a part of Tehsil Joshimath in the District Chamoli. Mana is situated at an elevation of 10,510 feet above sea level. The population is constituted by Marcha Bhotias. There are a few houses of Harijans also. Mana is the last village on the Indian side of the International border between India and China in the Himalayan state of Uttaranchal. It is the last village on the Indian side where people cultivate the land. Mana is covered by snow for about six months and the people living there go down to villages situated in lower altitude. This movement occurs approximately from 16th November onwards. They return to the higher altitudes in the month of May, in the summer season, when the glaciers start melting (Table 1).

According to 2001 census, village Mana which falls in Joshimath sub-division had 188 houses with the total population being 594. Out of this, there were 254 males and 340 females. 395 people were educated, 207 of them were males and 188 were females. Among the uneducated population 47 were males and 152 were females. The researcher found during the present study that the women were taking interest in education and would like to get a job as a teacher if it would be offered to them in their own area. The younger Bhotias were found to be taking interest in education, but they were more interested in doing government jobs. Before the partition of the state of Uttar Pradesh in Uttaranchal and U.P. (2000), the Bhotia were given the special status of a Schedule-Tribe (ST) by the government of India in 1967. Now Mana also has been given the status of a Heritage

Table 1. *Demographic details of Chamoli.

Description	2011	2001
Actual Population	391,605	370,359
Male	193,991	183,745
Female	197,614	186,614
Population Growth	5.74%	13.87%
Area Sq. Km	8,030	8,030
Density/km2	49	46
Proportion to Uttarakhand Population	3.88%	4.36%
Sex Ratio (Per 1000)	1019	1016
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 Age)	889	935
Average Literacy	82.65	75.43
Male Literacy	93.40	89.66
Female Literacy	72.32	61.63

Source*www.census2011.co.in.

Village. Due to their special status, education, awareness of government policy and comradery among themselves the Bhotias have always received concessions from the government and benefits of the reservation policy of India. Undoubtedly the Bhotias have a better Socio-Economic standard of living compared to the Non-Scheduled castes of the Garhwalis in their neighborhood. By tradition they were used to traveling and indulging in fruitful economic activities and trade across the border which was banned by the government later on in 1962. Those Bhotias who are engaged in service are not able to return to their village, frequently. They come only on special occasions and festivals, like marriages and Sankrant (Figure 1).

The Bhotia people are monogamous. They do not practice widow-remarriage. There are some cases of love marriage outside their community, but mostly, they are endogamous. They were earlier living in joint families but now their families are changing into small nuclear families.

They are subdivided into the following sub-castes (as enumerated by themselves): *Badwal, Parmar, Pankholi, Rawat, Bisht, Daliya, Molpha, Chauhan, Takola, Jitwan and Kandari*.

Their chief God is called *'Ghantākarna'*. Besides, they have their own goddesses for each sub-caste like '*Nanda Bhagwati'* of Pankholi, *'Bhawani Devi'* of Badwal etc. They have their own temples and priest. They also worship Hindu gods and goddesses. They participate in Hindu festivals like Dussehra and Diwali. Their own special festival is the *'Jeth Ki Sankrati'*, which occurs in June, when the gates of *Ghantākarna* temple are opened and sacrifices and worships are offered.

They practice seasonal migration in winter (from mid-November to April); they go down to Ghinghran, Negwad and Lambaggad villages in and around Gopeshwar. In summer (from May to mid-November) they go up to Mana

village near Badrinath. Mana village is the last village on the Indian side of the international border. In Mana (their summer home) they cultivate potato, a few vegetables, beans and mustard. They sell woolen carpets and sweaters. In winter, they weave woollen carpets on handloom, and knit sweaters to collect for sale in the tourist season. They breed cattle and keep dogs and mules, which they take with themselves when they migrate. They keep small stalls for tourists, pilgrims and other temples.

Before the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Bhotias used to travel to and trade with Tibet. For centuries Bhotias had trade relations with Tibet to bring salt, borax, animal skins, wool, gold, mules, sheep and goats. After the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1962, this trade was stopped and the migration route across the Indian border was closed. Because of the century old habit of trade and long route of migration, the Bhotias are very strong and hardy people and have the capacity to adapt to tough Himalayan conditions. Now they confine their seasonal migration to Mana in the north and Gopeshwar in the South.

The traditional knowledge of medicines and herbs is now confined to the elders only. The youths of the Bhotia community have no knowledge of the traditional herbs and health treatments. The use of Allopathic medicines is very popular there. There is a Primary Health Centre and Army Camp-health centre in Badrinath. In Gopeshwar there is also a district hospital. The Bhotia use these facilities provided by the government.

If medicines fail, they go to the *'Puchher'* a sacred priest who has the knowledge of super natural powers. *'Puchher'* can be the priest of *'Ghantākarna'* or the priest of any local temple of the goddesses. Bhotia consult these *'Puchher'* and have a firm belief in their knowledge and skill.

The rules of the Department of Forest and the government policies prohibit frequent exploitation of the forest for herbs and plant. This discourages the Bhotias to make extensive use of these herbal plants. However, they do get a few herbs and use them for some minor illnesses, consulting their elders.

Socio-economic life

The Bhotia people living in Mana call themselves *Marcha Bhotia.* The Bhotia people of nearby Niti valley also call themselves Marcha. In the neighbouring villages we do not find Bhotia, for example in Báhmani village near Mana there are Gharwali people, belonging to a caste called *Duriyal.* These people have their settlements near Badrinath temple which is one of the four major *dhaam* (Hindu pilgrimage center).

During the months of winter, they live in Pandukesh-war, which is at lower altitude. The main characteristic of Bhotia lifestyle is being 'Transmigrant'. "Transhumance is

Figure 1. Map of Chamoli.

the seasonal movement of people with their livestock, between fixed summer and winter pastures. In mountainous regions (*vertical transhumance*), it implies movement from higher pastures in summer to lower valleys in winter. Herders have a permanent home, typically in valleys. Only the herds travel, accompanied

by the people necessary to tend them. In contrast, *horizontal transhumance* is more susceptible to being disrupted by climatic, economic or political change (Blench, 2001).

In the month of May when they come up, they use heavy four wheelers such as Tata Sumo, and other kinds

of vehicles for the purpose. They move their animals by road. It takes six to seven days to reach the village of Mana. The eldest member of family walks along the animals and takes halts in the way. They carry their beddings, some eatables and utensils. They cook and eat on their way. All other people come by taxi. It was not the same in previous days. They did not have all these facilities earlier. But now because of Badrinath pilgrimage they get a lot of facilities. They do not bring along their groceries; now they can get it from Badrinath. By September-October their crops are ripped and then they go back downwards after selling their crops till 16th November.

In Mana the people cultivate some vegetables like potato, green peas, beans, cauliflowers, radish and some varieties of lentils and grains like *Rajma, Kutu, Phaphar* and *mustard.* Apart from cultivation they also breed cow, oxen and goat. They keep mules and dogs. These animals and cattle also move with them when they migrate from a higher altitude to a lower altitude, and vice versa, with the changing season. This life style of semi-nomadic movement is called 'Transhumance'. Because of high altitude and six month of snow the climate is mostly cold throughout the year. However, the winter is considered between middle of November to middle of March. From June to September they have rain. The summer season starts from the middle of March and continues through the middle of June.

At that height of trees of the region are both of broad leaves and pointed leaves. Most of the trees there are Pine, Burans, Kharasu, Tun, Tilong, Kail and Fir. The fauna here is constituted by leopard, cheetah, tiger, panther, Himalayan black bear, brown bear, deer, wild dogs, wild goat and sheep.

The Bhotia people live on the border district of Garhwal and Kumaun in Uttaranchal. Bhotias have always been a transhumant community and have migrated up and down the Himalayan hills after every six months. Therefore, they have two houses. The Bhotias of Mana village live in Ghingran, Negwad and Lambaggad in the lower altitudes from middle of November to April. They start coming up to Mana when gates of Badrinath temple are opened for Pilgrimage, in summer months. When they come up to Mana they start cultivating grains, potato and other vegetables. Once planting of crops is completed, these people pay their attention to earning money by selling woolen sweaters, socks, caps, 'Dun'; carpets, 'Aasan' (small carpets for sitting)'; 'Pankhi', 'Shawl', 'Lava' etc. They also keep shops for these things, along with tea shops, where they sell tea and snacks to tourist and pilgrims. Some of them supply milk to other shopkeepers. Sometimes outsiders visit their houses to get local liquor on cash payment. Some people also sell popular herbs for common ailments like hair-loss, stomach ache, head ache, cold and cough. These things allow them to get extra cash from pilgrims and tourist in the summer season. Some Bhotias work as drivers to earn money.

The winter months they spend in weaving and knitting woolen items and carpets. Male and female, old and young know this craft of weaving and knitting beautiful carpets and sweaters.

Many Bhotias go out to big cities like Dehradun, Delhi, Meerut, Kanpur and Lucknow for higher education and jobs. Some of them are also occupying good posts of engineers, doctors, bank managers and teachers. They are also serving in the Indian Army.

Earlier they mostly had joint families, but now since they are going to different places for employment, there are forming more nuclear families.

Bhotias practice monogamy and they do not believe in widow remarriage. Marcha Bhotias do not marry in the same caste, as they take one caste as a family (Exogamous), Earlier Marcha Bhotias were against the marriage with Tolcha Bhotias, but now-a-days there is a trend towards change. Now they also support love marriage and many outside Bhotia community. Although, there are very few cases of such marriage. The age of marriage is around 20-27 years. They get married after they complete there studies and specially boys like to marry only when they are settled with some occupation.

Socio-religious life

The Bhotias of this region have many subdivisions which they call 'Jatis'. The main subdivisions which they recognize are: *Badwal, Paramar, Pankholi, Rawat, Bisht, Dalia, Molpha, Chauhan, Takola, Jitwan and Kandari.* They believe that people of Molpha caste are the original inhabitants of village Mana. They have 13 houses of Molphas in this village. Other people are believed to have come here from different neighbouring places. The Harijans living in the village have a similar life style but some of these Harijans serve the Bhotias by doing odd jobs and stitching their clothes.

The main god of Mana people is *'GhantāKarna Devta'* who is called *'Kshetrapal'* by them. This means that he is the protector of this region. Apart from this, all the caste has their own goddesses (Kuldevi) as, Pankholi people worship goddess Nanda Bhagwati, Badwal worship Bhawani Devi, Bisht worship Siddhnath and so on. They have separate temples and priests devoted to different duties. When Bhotia people come to live in Mana, these temples are opened on Sankranti of the month of Jeth (June). After that ceremony, they worship their gods with all the rituals. They believed that the 'devta' (deity) comes over the temple priest which means that the priest is possessed by the supernatural power for some time. *'Ghantākarna Devta'* is offered mainly *'Jaan'* (a type of raw liquor). Apart from this people offer *'Prasad'* as per their wishes. A goat is sacrificed to the deity. Anyone whose wish has been fulfilled sacrifices a goat. Normally they offer *'Halwa', 'Kheer', 'Puri'* and sometimes a goat also to the goddess *(kuldevi).* Other than this Bhotias

celebrate all the festivals celebrated by Hindus and worship "Brahma', 'Vishnu', 'Mahesh' and goddess Durga.

Ethno- medicine

Traditional medicine includes diverse health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs. It incorporates plant, animal and/or mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises applied singularly or combined with each other, to maintain well-being as well as to treat, diagnose or prevent illness. 'Traditional medicine has a long history. It is the sum total of the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health, as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illnesses. The terms complementary/alternative/non-conventional medicine are used interchangeably with traditional medicine in some countries (http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2000/WHO_EDM_TRM_200 0.1.pdf?ua=1).

'Ethno-medicine is a study or comparison of the traditional medicine practiced by various ethnic groups, and especially by indigenous peoples. The word *ethnomedicine* is sometimes used as a synonym for *traditional medicine.* (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnomedicine*).

Bhotia people also practice traditional therapies and medicines. Long time back they used to go to the jungle to collect useful medicinal plants and herbs to use them for their treatment. At that time modern medicines were not in use. Nowadays, many elders still know about the medicinal herbs and whenever they get the time and opportunity they collect them from the jungle. The following table contains the names and use of the medicinal plants found here.

METHODOLOGY

The present paper is based on Anthropological fieldwork conducted in Mana Village of Joshimath Sub-division of Chamoli in 2006. We conducted in-depth interviews regarding the indigenous medicine among the Bhotia people of the aforesaid village. Such knowledge was restricted to the older generation. We conducted about 50 interviews. The younger generation showed no inclination in this sphere. We also questioned the respondents regarding the identification of these herbs by actually asking them to show us the samples of them. We explored their use and how it could be made available to the public. Most of these herbs are now being scientifically tested at the Central Herbs Institute (Government of India) at Mandal village of Chamoli (Table 2).

It is important to mention here that in Mana village there are no professional practitioners of folk medicine. All the Bhotia elders know the usage of their traditional medicinal plants. They keep and use them according to their need and convenience. But they do not force any educated youngster to follow these medicines. Being transmigrant and traders, they have a great ability to adapt to

changed circumstances, ecology and political scenario. That is why they also have accepted modern medicines and modern education.

Now, they mainly depend on modern medicine. When they live in lower altitudes, they go to Gopeshwar and other hospitals and to the private practitioner for treatment; but when they live in Mana, they go to the Primary Health Centre (PHC) and Army Camp in Badrinath. There, they get free treatment and medicines. They are satisfied with this facility and they depend on it. But serious diseases cannot be cured there. So, when an emergency occurs, they have to go to Gopeshwar. There is no facility of delivery in Badrinath, so pregnant women and mothers of infants do not go to higher altitudes during the summer. These days all the women give birth to their children in hospitals and they also get their vaccination there.

The use of medicinal plants in Bhotias is decreasing and the modern medicines are in vogue. The knowledge of medicinal plants is now restricted to seniors and is on decline. Members of the younger generation neither have the knowledge of these plants nor do they recognize these plants. They are not even interested in gaining the knowledge about it. According to them, when modern medicines are giving fast relief, there is no use of learning these old things. That is why this knowledge is now confined to the older generation of the Bhotia people. Mostly the leaves, flowers or fruits and stem have medicinal value but rarely the root of plants have such medicinal value.

Apart from modern health centers, the Forest Department and Government policies are playing a negative role in the decline of the traditional medicine. As per forest policies, bringing medicinal herbs from jungle is prohibited. The Bhotias have been living here since decades, and they have been using these plants, but now, the younger generation is departing from traditional treatment. Therefore the need of collecting them has also decreased.

Belief in the supernatural power

In the case of any sickness, they first go to Allopathic doctors and use the medicine prescribed by them. But when they find that the treatment is not enough to cure them, they go to '*Puchher*' a sacred priest, who has the knowledge of the supernatural powers. The '*Puchher*' can be any spiritual person like a priest of '*Ghantākarna*' (local deity) or a priest of '*Kuldevis*'. The Bhotia people not only consult instead they have a firm belief in them. When they go to '*Puchher*', he reveals the cause of their problem. He diagnoses, defining the cause of affliction.

Whether it is *'Chhaya'/'Bayāl', 'Masān'* or *'Edi'*, which caused the problem. Afterwards the relevant *pooja* (ritual) is offered to solve their problems. This pooja is performed by the local priests at the bank of a river or ridge of a mountain. Most of the time their problems are solved and their faith in them is confirmed.

They believe that the main reason behind their sickness is caused by being possessed by a *'Chhaya'*, during their visit to the mountains. It can be cured by interference of a priest or a *devta.* When the women are lonely on the mountains or in caves, singing or gossiping, they experience the effect of some *'Chhaya'* (a supernatural presence). They consult the *Puchher* to get rid of this evil effect which causes them discomfort or illness.

The knowledge of Bhotias is on the verge of extinction and it is our responsibility to save this traditional knowledge of herbal medicines. A lot of projects and

Table 2. The local herbs and their use.

No.	Local name of herb	Botanical name of the herb	Use	Usage
1	Atees/ Atis	*Aconitum Heterophylum*	• Stomach ache, fever, to stop bleeding, burning in stomach, gastric problems	• This root is socked in water overnight and water is taken in the morning on an empty stomach. • To stop bleeding it is rubbed on a stone with water and the paste is applied on the wound.
2	Dolu	*Rheum emodi*	• Boils and 'phunsis' • Pain in limbs • Stomach ache • Swelling • Pain in Bones • Injury	• When applied on boils and 'Phunsis' after grinding, pus is formed and after removing the pus the wound is healed. • For pain in limbs it is boiled in water and then limbs are fomented with a wet cloth dipped in this warm water with the herbal extract. • In injuries with stone its, paste is applied. • In swelling fomentation with its extract worm water.
3	Katuki/ Kutki/ Kedar Karvi	*Picrorhiza Kurrooa*	• Fever, stomachache, dysentery, constipation	• This root is soaked in water over night and then water is taken to cure fever. • For dysentery, it is taken dissolved in warm water. • For constipation they rub it on stone with cold water and drink the resultant water with and paste.
4	Hathraji	*Dactylorhiza hatagirea*	• Burns and injuries	• For burns it is applied in the form of a paste in cold water.
5	Balchad	*Nardostachys Jatamansi*	• Dandruff for healthy hair	• It is soaked in mustard oil and when the oil turns red it is applied on hair.
6	Shee	*Anselia aptera*	• Stomach problem and dysentery in kids	• This herb is mostly given to infants (1-2 months) • In case of bloating of stomach, it is rubbed with water and applied on the naval. This soothes the stomach. • For dysentery it is rubbed in warm water and one or two drops are given. • For constipation it is rubbed with cold water.
7	Meetha Jad	*Aconitum atrox stap.f.*	• Painkiller	• This is a type of poison, which if taken in excess can kill animals. But if taken in appropriate quantity is a very good pain killer.

Table 2. Contd.

8	Van-ajwain	*Thymus serpyllum*	• Cold, cough and gastric problems. • Clear bowel movement. • Respiratory problems.	• This is taken after boiling with tea. • Cleans the stomach when taken after being soaked in water over night.
9	Silfadu (Pashan bedh) / Silfori	*Berginia ciliate sternb*	• Stone on some internal organ.	• This root is ground after drying and its pieces are suckled like betel nut. The stone gets melted and is flushed out of the body.
10	Kut	*Saussurea costus*	• Stomachache, gastric, appetizer	• Chewing it increases appetite. • There are no snakes around the area where it grows.
11	Van-Tulsi	*Origanum vulgare*	• To reduce the acidity of tea	• They boil the leaves with tea. It neutralizes the acidity of tea.
12	Buthkesh	*Selinum vaginatum*	• To increase lactation in cows.	• The root or the whole plant is set on fire and then the smoke is given to the cows. They start lactating.
13	Bhujlees	*Betula utilis*	• Injury and pain	• For humans its paste is applied after rubbing in water. • For animals it is fed to cure wounds.
14	Choru (Ghandhrayan)	*Angelica glauca Edgew.*	• Gastric problem, digestion.	• It is used in the form of seasoning in food.
15	Jambu-faran	*Allium stracheyi*	• Gastric	• Used in 'Dal' as seasoning. • Used in potato vegetables.
16	Kala Jeera	*Carwn carvi*	• Preservative	• Used as a preservative, when mixed with any liquid no other chemical is required.
17	Khulya (Pahari Palak)	-	• Dye for wool	• They use it for dyeing the wool. It gives reddish maroon colour and the hue can be changed by varying its amount.
18	Masi	*Valeriana jatamansi jones*	• Material for Hawan	• This is used as 'Hawan Samagri' in 'Hawan'.
19	Tagar/ Sugandh Bala	*Valeriana hardwickii*	• Same as above	• This is a scented herb and is used to make 'Dhoop batti' (incense sticks).
20	Bhitara	*Juniperus communis*	• Same as above	• Masi, Tagar, Bhitara all three are ground and mixed with ghee and then Dhoop sticks (Incense sticks) are made for religious rituals.
21	Varmula		• Dysenter	• This is soaked in butter milk for 3-4 hours. When this butter milk is taken, it cures dysentery.

researches are being run in Mana and other villages by outsiders. Many people come and gain knowledge but nothing fruitful happens. Bhotias and other tribal groups are the one who have actual and in depth knowledge of

traditional medicinal plants and herbs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our Suggestion is that Bhotian elders should not be stopped from using the forest herbs, so that the traditional knowledge is transmitted to the next generation and perpetuated.

The youths of this ethnic group should be trained to learn their traditional medicine. The Intellectual Property Laws must be amended in India such that the Intellectual Property Rights over ethno-medicines belongs to the locals or natives. 'Intellectual property rights should guarantee both individual and a group rights to protect and benefit from their own cultural discoveries, creations, and products. But the current IPR system cannot protect traditional knowledge, for three reasons. First, the current system seeks to privatize ownership and is designed to be held by individuals or corporations, whereas traditional knowledge has a collective ownership. Second, this protection is time-bound, whereas traditional knowledge is held in perpetuity from generation to generation. Third, it adopts a restricted interpretation of invention which should satisfy the criteria of novelty and be capable of industrial application, whereas traditional innovation is incremental, informal and occurs over time. An alternative law is therefore necessary to protect traditional knowledge (Bag and Pramanik, 2012). They should also be permitted for the trade of medicinal plants and herbs. It will boost up their economy and thus encourage the perpetuation of the folk medicine among the Bhotias.

If the traditional knowledge is not preserved it shall be lost in the near present. At present the older generation is well-versed in this knowledge, but they are reluctant in disclosing this information to others, especially to 'outsiders.' As far as documentation of these ethno-medicines is concerned, the local people are not interested, because they do not realize its worth as an alternative medicine, secondly illiteracy may also be an impediment. 'The protection of indigenous knowledge has become a major concern and an issue of much debate internationally at organizations such as the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Intellectual Property Organization. Therefore, developing nations also should promote awareness of indigenous peoples' rights stemming from their valuable knowledge, and the trustee should invoke trade secret protection whenever possible to prevent the misappropriation and misuse of indigenous peoples' knowledge. This approach would have several advantages including helping prevent unjust enrichment and cultural theft. Furthermore, indigenous people would be empowered and would have a means to obtain monetary compensation if outsiders misused their knowledge or resources. Indigenous people also would have a means to protect their resources and control the use of their resources (Bag and Pramanik, 2012).

The vast population and the scarce medical facilities increase the need for alternative medical systems. In a state like Uttarakhand the difficult terrain is one of the reasons for lack of medical facilities and paucity of doctors. Hence, here the traditional knowledge systems can be of great help in solving health problems and aid human survival. 'Revitalizing the traditional healing system, based on native knowledge and resources this is a bottom up approach and shall be enduring. This will help sustain the healthy but fast disappearing native model of traditional healthcare, together with the biodiversity. With the state administered healthcare systems based on modern medicine unable to tackle the mammoth challenges in the country and the acute shortage of resources to effectively target this, the choice before the nation is to practically address the issues on hand. Repositioning the traditions and their delivery systems shall go a long way in this. For knowledge alone is not sufficient there has to be mechanisms to take these to people in a modern society. With policy plans and action modules this can be achieved with minimum expenses for the raw materials are readily available, only it has to be processed and fine tuned where things shall fall in place. But for a huge country like India with its mosaic of cultures and diversities it is no easy task either. Giving uniform guidelines can work only if there are given the space to incorporate the local variations, the herbal medicines used in the Himalayas shall not be the ones used in the coastal regions of India. The large number of traditional healers present in the peninsular tip tribal areas or the North east may not be there in the upper Indian regions. The marked ecosystem and biodiversity variations have to be inbuilt in the policy if it has to achieve the desired results. If the present model is effectively implemented then the results shall be multi-fold better v health of the population, conservation of the rich biodiversity of India and value addition to the presently neglected herbal resources are among these. Recognition to the native healers and their time tested practices shall add to this. In short together with the infrastructure in modern medicine a totally new health-care paradigm shall be available with innate capabilities to complement various sectors of medicine (Pushpangdan and George, 2010).

In order to preserve the ethno-medicine Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can also be used. By using this new technology one can also keep a track of source of information. 'ICTs can be used to: Capture, store and disseminate indigenous knowledge so that traditional knowledge is preserved for the future generation; Promote cost-effective dissemination of indigenous knowledge; Create easily accessible indigenous knowledge information systems; Promote integration of indigenous knowledge into formal and non-formal training and education; Provide a platform for advocating for improved benefit from IK systems of the

poor (Adam, 2007).

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Why 'Ritiya' could not go to sell vegetables: Myth vs reality in terms of caste, culture and livelihood

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This qualitative study focuses on the challenges faced by the upper caste Brahmin women in rural areas of the district of Katihar, Bihar, India; by keeping a contrast on their education, cultural values, choosing the means of livelihood in the milieu of 'newly transformed rural areas' in Bihar. With a drastically decreasing educational quality in terms of skill and morality, the message of Education translated as knowing the rights to maintain equity and equality has made the upper caste girls excluded from the benefits of the government policies. They have become the target of humiliations by the constitutionally 'lower' but economically well-off castes and the constitutionally 'minority' Muslims. There is a paucity of research which could reflect the suppressed voice of insecurity and psychological dependency of these women who like other communities are integral part of 'harmonious rural transformation'. Based on Grounded theory, this study was instrumentalized on 20 individual semi-structured interviews of the upper caste women (age 24 to 44), engaging them in an average of 56 min of interview (longest, 140 min and shortest, 39 min) from three villages at the Katihar District, Bihar Province of India. Semi-structured interview questions based on grounded theory for this study surrounded the main research question, "why Ritiya (arbitrary name of a rural Brahmin girl) could not go to work or study outside her home premise?" from the varied dimensions of educational skill, cultural competency and the personal security. The data later were embedded in the 'Grey System Theory' (Deng, 1982) to categorize them into social, cultural, occupational, political and demographic themes. The analysis of the qualitative data does reveal the agents of hindrances which keep 'this lot' of rural India economically 'handicapped' and thus as a dependent but 'commodity of honor' among their relatives or as a liberated but a commodity of sex for the rests. Understanding their problems would help international community to issue directives for the national and local governments yet activate the NGOs in the interest of this increasingly becoming marginalized community of the rural population in India. NVIVO 10 was used for processing and analyzing the data.

Key words: Rural Brahmin women, caste, conservation of resources theory, and Grey system theory.

INTRODUCTION

The target of this study is the Brahmin women who reside in the far flung rural area of Katihar District, Bihar in India. Katihar District comprises 8 blocks and each block has 4 to 8 village panchayats. All the villages are in the close proximity to each other within the radius of 3 to 20 km (Figure 1).

Due to the sensitivity of the identity of the target group of this research, snow-bowl sampling was used to reach these Brahmin women. Three villages of different identity were chosen for this study: Pokharia, Nepra and Manihari, falling between 10 to 20 km from the district head quarter (Table 1).

Source: Online Source Govt. of Bihar.

Table 1. Literature Listing.

KEYWORDS	PROQUEST	EBSCO_host:_H.I.C	SAGE
Dalit	2	37	23
Brahmin	0	5	10
Brahman	0	2	3
Caste	0	32	38
Dalit Wom	0	0	0
Brahman Wom	0	0	0

At National Library of China, Beijing (28th-30th August, 2013).

Apart from the literature review from the previous caste based research, the author recently had the opportunity to spend continuous 29 days with the respondents as an engaged researcher. The idea of the research was obtained through detailed probing, talking and formal interviews with the target group to investigate what type of psychological, economic, social and educational problems they face while choosing to step out of their homes. What problems they do face when they are identified with the rural poor Brahmin girl in contrast to the SC/ST and OBC of the society.

Despite the fact that the 'un-touch-ability' was abolished under India's constitution in 1950, the lower castes and those who owe wealth but are categorized as backward have been showing solidarity to conserve their resources. The basic tenet of Conservation of Resources theory is that individuals strive to obtain, retain, protect and foster those things that they value (Hofboll, 2001:341). Moreover, ever since India has got indepen- dence caste based politics has emerged as a grave problem due to a long run and constant pro-Dalit government policies and schemes that have been

Table 2. Interview Information Spread Sheet

Minutes	140	64	48	40	46	45	49	39	52	42	53	69	41	89	63	57	43	56	43	41
Participants	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15	P16	P17	P18	P19	P20
Mean = 56; and Standard Deviation = 23																				

implemented in the rural areas (Jannuzi, 1974; Michel, 1999; Kohli, 1987, 1990; Singh, 2000; Gupta, 2004). Sahay (2009:412) finds that caste based problems are fabricated in loyalty and networking, "Caste may enter into the political process in a number of ways. Firstly, appeals may be made to caste loyalties in a general way. Secondly, networks of interpersonal relations are activated both during elections and at other times for mobilizing support along caste lines, caste associations, may seek to articulate caste interests in an organized manner".

India has a long tradition of patriarchal social system (Bhasin, 1993; Dube, 1988; Kumar, 1993; Vindhy, 2007) and the modern day politics have always targeted the caste based discrimination rather than the gender based disparities. Caste at least does not debar people from earning their livelihood as it is a classification based on the kind of occupation one clan has been involved in rather than chaining the freedom of all kind, as it happens, in the cases of upper caste women.

The new government policies and schemes have not yet been made to directly target the poor sections of India. Brahmin female being least populated is marginalized in terms of both gender and the caste thus making the most disadvantageous identity in India; though deserving educationally yet deprived of jobs.

Are Brahmin young women falling behind in the stampede for qualifications and jobs? Are they suffering from new form of social, economic and educational disadvantages today? If one is to believe the Indian media, press and the social world researches since mid-70s till date then answer to this question is 'certainly yes'. There have been cases when scheduled caste and economically well-off OBC people have fraudulently used scheduled tribe fake identity to get jobs in Bihar; one of the headlines included, "44 fake STs as teachers" (Singh; Patna, Indian Express 10 Jan, 2012). The research becomes significant when no research has yet been conducted on the upper caste women in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To access the previous research based articles and their reviews on this particular subject in English language, the author explored the websites of academic journal and articles at the National library of China, Beijing during 28th to 30th of August, 2013. The author was interested in the recent academic articles which concentrate on the caste problem in northern India. The author concentrated his search between January 2009 to December 2013 but not limited to, with the keywords e.g. Dalit, Brahman and the keywords of the similar values if found in the title of the research articles on the academic journal websites. The research is listed as shown in Table 2. Among these articles some were not directly related to the research on rural woman of north India and therefore, were excluded from the literature listing.

For example, Modernity as a "Rain of Words": Tracing the Flows of "Rain" between Dalit Women and Intellectuals in Tamil Nadu (Ram and Kalpana, 2009) has investigated the rationalization of gender and caste owing to resonant phrases in movies, daily use languages of tradition across the division of social strata in the southern province of Tamilandu, India. Other articles, 'Critical Response to the Marginalized: Dalit Poetry in Telugu. (Rao, 2009); Can There Be a Subaltern Middle Class? Notes on African American and Dalit History (Pandey and Gyanendra, 2009); Contemporary Dalit Assertions in Kerala: Governmental Categories vs Identity Politics? (Devika, 2013); Master and Munshī: A Brahman secretary's guide to Mughal governance Kinra (2010) etc. (See Appendix 1.2) were not included as they were not directly related to the topic of investigation. One of the articles was focusing on politics, caste and religion during 18th century and another one was related to early modern India; yet another one was related to high caste Hindu woman in the US; and one of the articles was focusing on the immigration and caste based society at Stuart in the UK; seven articles were related to various kinds of caste based problem in the Southern provinces of India; and four articles were related to the caste based problems in Pakistan and Nepal (See Appendix 1.2).

Nevertheless, all the articles selected for literature review were mainly explaining the problems of Dalit people in India; none of the articles even suggested the problems faced by Brahmin woman from northern part of India, particularly Bihar.

Devika (2013) has pointed out that the Dalit identity politics has been perceived as a serious threat by Kerala's powerful left parties whereas the transformation of politics itself in the mid-1990s from the 'public action' mode to the 'liberal' mode, was rejected by the Dalit and tribal communities. The government of India initiatives has been to abolish the caste system but the wrong implementation of the policies has encouraged the lower caste people to keep their identity intact. The greatest Indian Dalit Messiah ever asked his Dalit followers separately to enlighten the Dalit, "Through your literary creations cleanse the prescribed values of life and

culture. Do not limit your objectives. Remove the darkness in villages by the light of your pen. Do not forget that in our country the world of the Dalit and the ignored classes is vast. Get to know intimately their pain and sorrow, and try through your literature to bring progress to their lives. True humanity resides there". Brueck (2010) agrees that the Dalits have been able to achieve striking success using new forms of literature as a vehicle for radical social change, "Dalit, no longer content to be represented by others, have now turned a critical eye on mainstream literature that claims to speak from a Dalit perspective. No longer wanting to be limited as objects of sympathy, revulsion, or desire, Dalit writers have embraced the call of Ambedkar to not only intimately reveal the 'pain and sorrow' of Dalit lives, but more significantly also to 'bring progress'". Especially the attempt to demonize the Brahmins from the title of the article, "Fighting Back: Good Dalits and Bad Brahmins" establishes the fact that the academia is blind folded due to the plethora research and literatures available in support of the Dalit community in India nowadays. The myth that the Brahmins are living a 'heavenly life' established through these literatures is a stark example of partiality by the academic researchers especially for the upper caste woman who are constantly facing 'multilateral' suppression.

METHODS

For this study, semi-structured interviews were used with long and extensive probing on political, cultural, educational and social disadvantages these rural Brahmin women perceive today. The information so obtained was starkly against the established presumption that the lower caste people are the real sufferers in India.

Fairbrother has rightfully stated the qualitative method as the best fit for such studies, "In the qualitative tradition objectivity is challenged, and the process of research and the facts it reveals are seen to be laden with values; Qualitative approaches see researchers themselves as instrument of data collection" (2007:42). The questions were asked in the colloquial language of the respondents and later were translated into English, then were cleaned as data. The 20 recorded interviews were transcribed and prepared for coding into NVIVO-10. On the basis of the grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) the themes were deduced. The coding was performed upon four main axes viz. social, cultural, political disadvantages and disadvantage in terms of getting a livelihood faced by them today. Being culturally too traditional, there were instances when the respondents found themselves culturally bound to not to answer some of the questions, especially if related to their marriage, husband and personal life but at the same time they did not hesitate much to explain their political, cultural and occupational expectations. These unclearly explained factors of this study are coded in GreyZone.

Proposed by JuLong Deng, the Grey system theory has also long been used by social scientists in order to provide techniques, notions and ideas for resolving and analyzing latent and intricate systems. Grey System has been defined by JuLong Deng as, "Grey (partially informed) system theory focuses on the system, structure and event that fall in between the white (informed) and black (un-informed system) and has been widely used in social world research today" (Deng, 1982:28-29).

The respondents of this research are from those Brahmin families who do not have any member working in the government sector currently. They were also asked about their perceptions of the consequences they are facing and remedies they expect under these unfavorable social conditions for them. Noticeably when asked explicitly they seemed not to recognize the government favored schemes made for them.

The themes deduced from the data were embedded in the free nodes of NVIVO-10, as illustrated in Table 3. How themes emerged and how these data were directed in the corresponding nodes would be explained by and by in the following sections.

RESULTS

The findings of this study illustrate descriptions of the categories that emerged from the interview data and also deal side by side on how these categories are inter-related with each other.

Apart from the demographic information that the informants have given in detail, the author was also interested in knowing their educational qualification, dependency for living, income in Rupee (Currency of India) per month, and the number of off-springs they have. Educational qualification and income were further categorized as shown in Table 4. The dependency-status of the informants was further divided into two categories.

The table explains that the incomes are sparsely scattered with different degrees of educational qualifications of the respondents. Though it seems to be less educated as less paid, as a matter of fact the more elderly ladies had reported to have less income than the younger ones. The reported data have shown the same kind of trends when education is compared with dependency for living and income is compared with education. A matrix between their educational qualification and status of dependency is explained in Table 5. These patterns would be later discussed in terms of law of conservation of resources theory and social capital theory.

The data collected for the rural Brahmin women identity from the informants were categorized into two distinct dimensions of advantages and disadvantages; moreover these two dimensions were further categorized symmetrically into political, cultural, social and occupational themes.

To respect the respondents' right to privacy, and giving due respect to the sensitivity of the informants' identity some questions were not further probed and hence some of the data were not obtained clearly enough to be categorized in any themes. These data have been put into the GreyZone (Chandrakar, 2013). Grey System has been defined by JuLong Deng as, "Grey (partially informed) system theory focuses on the system, structure and event that fall in between the white (informed) and black (un-informed system) and has been widely used in social world research today" (Deng, 1982:28-29). In terms of their identity, as a rural Brahmin woman, the data when coded have shown a distinct trend with the

Table 3. Emergent Nodes from the interview.

Name	Source	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
			Interviews_Rural_Manihari_Pokharia_Nepra			
Advantage	13	34	2013/11/12 15:02	CHN	2013/11/13 10:16	CHN
Demography	20	97	2013/11/12 15:10	CHN	2013/11/13 10:17	CHN
Dis-Advantage	17	101	2013/11/12 15:02	CHN	2013/11/13 10:17	CHN

Table 4. Income RS/Month Vs Education.

	A : Edu Qual	B : Univ	C : 12 to BA	D : 8 to 12	E : 1 to 8
1 : Income	20	0	5	5	10
2 : 1500_1000	3	0	2	0	1
3 : 1000_500	5	0	1	2	2
4 : Above 1500	4	0	0	3	1
5 : Below 500	8	0	2	0	6

Study conducted 06thOct to 20th Oct; 2013.

Table 5. Dependency Vs Education.

	University	12 to BA	8 to 12	1 to 8
1 : Self Dependent	0	2	2	0
2 : Dependent	0	3	4	10

Study conducted 06th Oct to 20th Oct; 2013.

Table 6. Education Vs Themes of Advantage.

	University	12 to BA	8 to 12	1 to 8
Gray_Zone	0	0	0	2
Political	0	0	1	0
Social	0	1	1	3
Cultural	0	3	2	6
Occupational	0	0	1	4

Study conducted 06th Oct to 20th Oct; 2013.

research dimensions as shown in Table 6. Most of the women do feel that they are culturally better but they do strongly feel that they are socially and politically backwards.

Lastly, if we could recall from the Table 2 above it is distinctly clear that the informants have reported themselves more disadvantaged if calculated in terms of their rural Brahmin women identity. Table 5 shows that those with lowest educational qualification have reported to be the most disadvantaged in all the themes. Those who were relatively well-off have described themselves as socially more disadvantaged (Table 8). The perception of being the disadvantaged was proportionate to the decrease in educational level (Table 7).There is an acute anger in these rural Brahmin women towards the government policies and they find the negligence of government in policymaking responsible for their marginalized plight today.

"Being a Brahmin woman, we could not get along with them and live the way they live. We pay three times more than Scheduled caste students for admission in schools, for job applications and we have the same income as that of theirs. They have 'reservation', and you know, governmenst make their home. Do we?"

DISCUSSION

The data and its varied projections in terms of advantage and disadvantage have brought the realities of these Brahmin women which against the prevailing myth in the

Table 7. Education Vs Disadvantage.

	Occupational	Cultural	Gray_Zone	Political	Social
University	0	0	0	0	0
12 to BA	4	3	3	4	3
8 to 12	8	6	3	8	6
1 to 8	6	6	4	7	8

Study conducted 06th Oct to 20th Oct; 2013.

Table 8. Income Vs Disadvantage.

	Occupational	Cultural	Gray_Zone	Political	Social
1500_Above 1000	6	16	1	24	1
1000_Above 500	5	14	3	5	8
Above 1500	5	3	1	19	12
Below	4	6	5	8	6

Study conducted 06th Oct to 20th Oct; 2013.

academia that presumes them to be wealthy and privileged. Keeping a very direct interface with the data, a constant comparison between the prevailing presumption and the reality about these Brahmin women has been discussed in this section.

There is a wide spread myth that Brahmins are at the top of the caste system forming the most dominant group in the social hierarchy (Dumont, 1980; Brown, 2000; Mitra, 1992; Deshpande, 2001). India, as a democratic republic, values the number of votes. This number is exercised as an index of dominance in politics by choosing the representatives of one's caste (Srinivas, 2002; Sahay, 2010). Sahay has expressed this dominance as a numerical strength, "Dominance is constructed through a range of measures, including numerical strength, and economic and political power, but it is also contested" (2010:412).

On the basis of the theory of conservation of resources, individuals with greater resource are less prone to resource loss and more capable of resource gain, and in contrary to this who lack resources are more prone to resources loss and less capable of resource gain. SC and ST side with OBC to form one interest group to retain and protect the affirmative actions taken by the government for them. This dominance is quite visible at the lower level of society. One of the respondents reports, "If I go out they behave in a very un-civilized way. They knowingly want to quarrel with us and take us to the police station. They are in all offices and government department. They would insult you on caste line". On the grass root level this solidarity of SC and ST with OBC has endangered the lives of the rural Brahmin women.

Another respondent blames the use of mobile for their insecurity, "*They use abusive words and do not know how to respect relationships. I really do not want to talk to*

these people. Why should I put my life in danger? If I go for college they would call each other on phones and would gather together to taunt me. There are so many in numbers. Why my brother does not do such things? They do not have good intentions towards us and our family".

One of the respondents who is 29 years old and is a widow explains her social status as,

"Your brother (her husband) died last year. I am left with two children and have the responsibility to take care of them. I could not eat everything, could not wear everything as I have restrictions (A widowed Brahmin woman does eat (vegetarian) and wear the simplest after the death of her husband. It's a wide known culture of Brahmins).

Those who make the rules must be pure (Declain, 2012; p123). A 36 year old dependent woman reports, "*It is not good to be Brahmin. They comment on us if we eat meat. They abuse us. My husband has opened a small shop even that is criticized by these lower caste people. They told my husband either you work like a priest or you sell things; could not do both*".

Besides, these rural Brahmin women are not aware about the government policies or schemes that are implemented for women and girl children in the state of Bihar, India. In most cases they think the schemes are only made for the scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and the other backward classes, "*They have everything better than us, and government gives them. They have home, food and even jobs. I have three children. Two of them are not able to study because of money. We asked the school headmaster for stipend. He replied we do not have schemes and funds for Brahmins*".

Gaps in government initiatives

Government already has implemented some schemes and programs, targeting rural areas, in most cases the lower caste people. For example, Jawahar Rojgar Yonjna (also called Gram Samridhi Yojna) which is in effect since 1989 to help scheduled caste and scheduled tribes but it also reserves 30% of jobs for women in the rural area. Planning Commission Report, PEO study no 147 reads, "Though the people below the poverty line were the target group for employment, the preference was to be given to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and freed bonded laborers. Thirty percent of the employment opportunities were to be reserved for women in rural areas. Gram Panchayats were to be involved in the planning and implementation of the program". Another government plan called Swarnjayanti Gram Swaozgar Yojna, (SGSY) was launched in April, 1999 by the central government (funding 75%) with the collaboration of state governments (funding 25%) to provide self-employment facilities to the rural people. Introduced as a 'holistic' plan to eradicate poverty from the rural area; the scope of this program reads, 'giving major benefits to the SC/ST in the rural area'. It majorly covers the families below poverty line in rural areas of the country.

SGSY, Online Government of Bihar has quantified the objective of this program as, "This programme covers families below poverty line in rural areas of the country. Within this target group, special safeguards have been provided by reserving 50% of benefits for SCs/STs, 40% for women and 3% for physically handicapped persons. Subject to the availability of the funds, it is proposed to over 30% of the rural poor in each block in the next 5 years".

Irrespective of the fact that the Bihar government has launched new programs and schemes for rural women yet these schemes are not reaching the rural Brahmin women. At the ground level, the government employees are mainly from the lower castes who have been getting reservation in government jobs since the very day India got independence. To conserve their resources, these employees use nepotism and side on the caste line while distributing these funding. One of the respondents in tears said, *"They would push us, abuse us and if we just open our mouth they would shout for SC & ST case. We are truly even afraid to talk to them, they abuse when they spot us. Could we leave home in such circumstances? The schools are made especially for them, the teachers are from their community. No one from us."*

Conclusion

Due to multiple layer of deprivation arising from the caste-kinship between the scheduled castes and the well-off OBC as interest groups of reservation polices, un-favorable government schemes and programs, traditional

values of culture, and the gender based discrimination have made these rural Brahmin women one of the most segregated and disadvantaged group of all in India today. They are forced to and destined to live a marginalized life.

According to rational choice theory one should assume that each individual is a rationally 'self-interested' and 'utility maximizing' agent, besides his behavior and transactions are driven by the interests (Rawls, 1993; 1999; Clements, 2005). When opportunities are provided to the caste it is very hard for the benefits of government policies to reach them, it becomes the demand of hour for the government to take initiatives for the Brahmin women residing in the rural areas of India. Reservation in education, jobs and other affirmative actions taken by the government get translated into 'interest' to form the interest group and as a 'resource' to conserve, it has made the rural politics quite detrimental for the upper caste Brahmins. Being traditionally employed as priests or teachers they are forced to lose their occupation and dignity today. The state government must take initiatives to reach this deprived lot directly through its schemes and programme.

Lastly a question which deserves to be the core of the answers of all the questions offered above is, "Who should be offered the economic and social opportunity to live a dignified life, a woman or a Dalit?

The fact of the matter is that the type and the quality of education as one of the most important factors determine the economic-competitiveness, health and hygiene (Shaw, 2010) of the society but due to the 'wicked problem' of caste based preferences, these rural Brahmin women have become the most deprived lot of India. Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, women need more preferences to live a dignified life due to biological and socio-cultural reasons in all kinds of societies in the globe.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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8) Appendix:

8.1. List of semi-structured interview:

1) How (Probing)
2) What is your status as a rural Brahmin woman compared to other caste woman? (Probing)
3) Which government policies you are benefited with? (Probing)
4) How advantaged or disadvantaged you feel while as a Brahmin women in terms of social, cultural, educational, political and opportunities for livelihood? (Probing).

Appendix 8.2. Literature Listing from Sage Publication:

Key Words	Journal	Count	Why Not Selected	Yellow: Not Applicable	Name of the Article
Dalit	SAGE	23	Kerala		Contemporary Dalit Assertions in Kerala: Governmental Categories vs Identity Politics? J. Devika doi: 10.1177/2230807512459400.History and Sociology of South Asia January 2013 vol. 7 no. 1 1-17
					Book Review: Towards a Biblical and Ethical Ecclesiology- a Contribution From a Dalit Perspective: Peniel Rajkumar, Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation: Problems, Paradigms and Possibilities (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2010. £50.00. pp. 206. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6513-7)
					Oral History And Dalit Testimonies: From The Ordeal To Speak To The Necessity To Testify
			Pakistan		The Impact of Tobacco Cultivation on Dalit Agricultural Labourers in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh, India Chikkala Kranthi Kumar.Journal of Asian and African Studies, August 2012; vol. 47, 4: pp. 363-376., first published on April 18, 2012
					The Politics of Form in Dalit Fiction: Bama's Sangati and Sivakami's The Grip of Change.Pramod K. Nayar.Indian Journal of Gender Studies, October 2011; vol. 18, 3: pp. 365-380.
					Book Review: Umrila Pawar, The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs and Ravikumar, Venomous Touch: Notes on Caste, Culture and Politics.Manu Bhagavan.Indian Economic & Social History Review, October–December 2012; vol. 49, 4: pp. 606-609.
					Education for Liberation: Ambedkar's Thought and Dalit Women's Perspectives.Padma Velaskar.Contemporary Education Dialogue, July 2012; vol. 9, 2: pp. 245-271.
					Feminine, criminal or manly?: Imaging Dalit masculinities in colonial north India.Charu Gupta.Indian Economic & Social History Review, July/September 2010; vol. 47, 3: pp. 309-342.
			Maharastra		Mahar–Dalit–Buddhist: The history and politics of naming in Maharashtra.Shailaja Paik.Contributions to Indian Sociology, June 2011; vol. 45, 2: pp. 217-241.
					Temple Entry in Odisha by the Dalit: An Ethnographic Study of Media Articulation.Bidu Bhusan Dash.Asia Pacific Media Educator, June 2013; vol. 23, 1: pp. 63-84.
					Book Review: Badri Narayan, The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950–Present K.V.Cybil.Contributions to Indian Sociology, October 2012; vol. 46, 3: pp. 413-415.
					Book Review: Ayyankali: a Dalit leader of organic protest. Chandran Komath. Race & Class, October–December 2011; vol. 53, 2: pp. 106-109.
					Book Review: The Flaming Feet and Other Essays: The Dalit Movement in India Ramnarayan S. Rawat.Indian Economic & Social History Review, July 2013; vol. 50, 3: pp. 390-393.
					Book Review: Badri Narayan, Fascinating Hindutva: Saffron Politics and Dalit Mobilisation and Gail Omvedt, Understanding Caste: From Buddha to Ambedkar and Beyond.Pooja P. Palicha.Contributions to Indian Sociology, February 2013; vol. 47, 1: pp. 164-166.
					Between two worlds: The predicament of Dalit Christians in Bama's works.K.W. Christopher.The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, March 2012; vol. 47, 1: pp. 7-25.
					The making of a political stronghold: A Dalit neighbourhood's exit from the Hindu Nationalist riot system.Nicolas Jaoul.Ethnography, March 2012; vol. 13, 1: pp. 102-116.
					Kancha Ilaiah, Post-Hindu India: A Discourse on Dalit-Bahujan, Socio-Spiritual and Scientific Revolution. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009. xvi + 302 pp. Glossary. Rs.295 (paperback). R. Srivatsan.Contributions to Indian Sociology, June 2011; vol. 45, 2: pp. 290-293.
					Synthesising the Gandhi–Ambedkar–Narayanaguru–Marx Visions for Dalit Liberation* P.S. Krishnan.Social Change, March 2011; vol. 41, 1: pp. 1-39.
					Meaning of Work in Dalit Autobiographies.Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay.Studies in History, February 2010; vol. 26, 1: pp. 31-60.
					Good Dalits and Bad Brahmins: Melodramatic Realism in Dalit Short Stories.Laura Brueck.South Asia Research, July 2010; vol. 30, 2: pp. 125-144.
					Book Review: Mary C. Grey, A Cry for Dignity: Religion, Violence and the Struggle of Dalit Women in India. London: Equinox Publishing, September 2010. 172 pp. ISBN-13 978 184553 605 3 (hbk), 978 184553 606 0 (pbk).Rosemary R. Ruether.Feminist Theology, January 2011; vol. 19, 2: pp. 208-209.
					In the Name of 'Poor and Marginalised'? Politics of NGO Activism with Dalit Women in Rural North India. Radhika Govinda.Journal of South Asian Development, April 2009; vol. 4, 1: pp. 45-64.
					Chhadi Lage Chham Chham, Vidya Yeyi Gham Gham (The Harder the Stick Beats, the Faster the Flow of Knowledge): Dalit Women's Struggle for Education.Shailaja Paik.Indian Journal of Gender Studies, June 2009; vol. 16, 2: pp. 175-204.
Brahman		3	MUGAL		Master and Munshi : A Brahman secretary's guide to Mughal governance Rajeev Kinra; Indian Economic & Social History Review, October/December 2010; vol. 47, 4: pp. 527-561.
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