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Navigating Modernity: Social Dynamics and Cultural Resilience in Post-Contact Igala Society

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Abstract

This study investigates the social dynamics and cultural resilience of the Igala society in the context of post-contact modernity. Existing literature predominantly focuses on the historical narratives, kingship structures, and cultural myths of the Igala people, often overlooking the nuances of their social practices in response to external influences. Employing a qualitative-dominant methodology, this research leverages both primary and secondary sources to explore the evolving trends within Igala historical development, particularly in the face of foreign religions and Western ideologies. The findings reveal that despite being a society in transition, the Igala community has demonstrated remarkable adaptability, navigating the challenges posed by modernization while maintaining core elements of its cultural identity. This study highlights the processes through which the Igala people absorb and renegotiate external influences, achieving a delicate equilibrium in their social fabric. By shedding light on the interplay between tradition and modernity, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural resilience in contemporary African societies.

Keywords: Igala Society, Modernity, Cultural Resilience, Social Dynamics, Post-Contact, Cultural Adaptation

Introduction

The Igala society, a traditional African community, has experienced significant transformations in its sociocultural development since its encounters with Islam, colonial administration, Christianity, and Western education starting in the 19th century. These changes have not been without accompanying challenges. Igala land is situated at the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers in Nigeria, and according to the 2006 National Population Commission report, the Igala population stands at approximately 1,484,345. While the Igala ethnic group is predominantly located in Kogi State, smaller communities can also be found in Anambra, Enugu, Edo, and Delta States.

The geographical positioning of Igala has drawn considerable scholarly attention. Scholars such as J.S. Boston (1968), J.O. Ijoma (2010), and T.A. Miachi (2012) argue that this advantageous location has significantly contributed to the historical development of Igala over the centuries. This development has resulted from interactions with neighboring groups, including the Benin, Jukun, Nupe, Idoma, and Igbo peoples, profoundly influencing Igala's sociocultural practices.

From the 19th century until the mid-20th century, the introduction of foreign religions and Western culture into Igalaland prompted substantial cultural transformations. The competitive dynamics among these change agents have exerted considerable pressure on Igala culture, inducing both cultural resistance and assimilation, as well as fostering syncretic practices. In navigating the challenges presented by these competing influences, Igala's journey toward

modernity has been complicated, resulting in a blend of cultural nuances that preserve a strong sense of Igala ethnic identity while charting its development trajectory.

Although there is a wealth of literature on various aspects of Igala society throughout the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods—including topics such as kingship, political development, history, tradition, culture, and the impact of Islamic penetration—there remains a notable gap regarding Igala's transition to modernity and the associated challenges within the changing social landscape. This research aims to address this deficiency.

Boston (1968) examined the traditional heritage system centered around the Igala king, the Attah, and the kingmakers, emphasizing the Attah's dominance over subordinates. Additionally, the author explored Igala traditional festivals, such as the Egwu festival, illustrating their role in maintaining the Attah's authority and perpetuating the Igala traditional worship system. In his analysis of the effects of Islam and Christianity in Africa, Ayandele (1996) posited that these two religions exert contrasting influences on the continent. He argued that Islam is typically more integrative with African culture than Christianity, which often tends to be disruptive.

Adegbe (2006) focused on the religious life of Attah Aliyu Obaje, who ruled from 1956 to 2012, highlighting his role in the development of Igala society and the coexistence of Islam, Christianity, and the traditional Igala system. Ijoma (2010) discussed the socio-cultural exchanges facilitated by the proximity of Igala to neighboring communities, which led to a rich interchange of cultural practices. Miachi (2012) examined the role of the masquerade cult in sustaining Igala culture and facilitating kingship authority, noting how masquerade activities contribute to the social, political, religious, and economic harmony within Igala society through collaboration.

Abdurrahman (2016) pointed out that the advent of Western education in Ankpa, a notable town in Igalaland, resulted in decreased patronage of Islamic education among Muslim parents during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Many parents believed that Western education offered better economic prospects, leading to the conversion of numerous Muslim children to Christianity in Ankpa and surrounding Igala communities.

Given this context, it is evident that published literature on Igala has overlooked the evolving challenges of transitioning to modernity, particularly in light of the competitive stances of various change agents within the society.

Conceptual and Theoretical Clarification

The concept of 'modernity' is built on the idea of attainment of a certain level of progressive movement within a society, consequent upon changes in the socioeconomic and political spheres from an earlier position. This may explain the position held by S. L. Snyder that modernity implies "innovation in technological, governance and socioeconomic" spheres, from an earlier state of communality to

“individual subjectivity”, with disinterest in religion to...” growth in bureaucracy and urbanization”. The conceptualization of modernity according to the sociology discipline does not differ much from the above definition. Modernity is seen here as the “era of human development which started in Europe around the year 1650 and ended around 1950, characterized by changes in scientific, technological and socioeconomic...” spheres. This era, according to this assertion, saw “the rise of intellectualism and individualism”, marked by “development of stable and centralized government in countries”(Smarter UK, n.d). In the efforts to further explain the concept of modernity in relation to traditional societies, attempts have been made to equate the concept, modernity, particularly with Europe, while Africa was seen as being synonymous with traditional society.

However, it is important to note that traditional societies were never static, and that Africa and Igala society in particular, prior to contact with Western culture and Islam, had factors such as trade, migration, conflicts, and so on, which engendered change/transformation. Thus, the idea or concept of modernity as used in this work does not in any way suggest that Igala society was a static society until these change agents came to Igalaland. The work argues that the activities of these variables in Igalaland, though engendered changes in Igala socio-cultural lifestyle, also led to competition for influence among them, which in turn resulted in cultural resistance and assimilation as well; the endgame being the manifestation of compromise in the area of sociocultural development. R.A. Kumar notes that “modernity does not necessarily weaken tradition”, since it “needs tradition in order to overcome its limitations..., which serves as “the backbone of modernity” (2011:38). In other words, there are certain elements of survived tradition within the arena of modernity which are resilient to changes and act as enduring pillars to absorb and, to as well resist the shocks inherent in culture contacts and changes.

In his work, *A Study of History 1934–1961*, Arnold J. Toynbee made a theoretical postulation of historical events by means of “Civilization”, as they occur within the context of nation-states. He argues that civilizations as they occur in history “are rarely immune from outside influence, either from past civilizations or present ones”. Toynbee’s position is that in the clash of civilizations or cultures whenever it occurs, the result will usually lead to “fruitful exchanges, some to near total collapse and others to retrenchment and resistance.” Toynbee’s theory of clash of civilization may well explain the incidence of Igala’s challenge of transition to modernity amid competing variables, and Igala efforts to navigate and to as well resist the encroachment on her cultural identity. In other words, the arrival of Islam, colonial rule, Christianity, and Western education in Igalaland led to some changes in Igala socio-cultural lifestyle, but at the same time, it engendered compromises and cultural resistance as well.

The fact of inherent resilience displayed in Igala’s response to contact with foreign cultures, including the challenges of navigating and absorbing the shocks emanating from such encounters, informs the adoption of a qualitative-dominant approach methodology, which in essence highlights the evolving trend in Igala historical development lucidly and narratively. Interviews constitute part of the source of this work, which also includes written works.

The Impacts of change agent variables in Igala society

Among the earliest incursions of foreign religion to Igala territory from the 19th century was the Islamic religion. According to T.A. Miachi, Islam was introduced to Igalaland as a result of the secondary effect of the 19th-century Fulani jihadists' activities in Northern Nigeria, which led to the dislocation and settlement of fleeing Islamic adherents in Igalaland. T. Makar has pointed to the prominent roles of economic and political factors, besides religion, in explaining the 1804 Jihad in Hausaland (cited by Kukah, 1993:2). Miachi points out that

...the migration of some Hausa stock from Bebeji area of Kano, or of Nupe, and Gwari or Bassa, into Igalaland, for fear of the jihadists, has led to the permanent establishment of their descendants respectively identified as the Angwa, Akwuchi (from Kano), the Bassa (from the Nupe Stock) and Bassa Komo (from Gwari or Bassa stock) living in Igalaland today (2012:112).

Miachi's position on the coming of Islam to Igala territory seems plausible, as an event of the 19th century, as against the proponents of the pre-jihadist period, considering that Islamic clerics like Alhaji Suleiman Adamu (2016), the Chief Imam of Ankpa Central Mosque, and Alhaji Seidu Mohammed (2019), Chief Imam of Dekina community, asserted to the claim. Ankpa and Dekina communities are known as the foremost posts of Islamic penetration in Igalaland, as the two communities have continued to play significant roles in the development of Islam in the area.

Islam in Igalaland was initially resisted by Igala nobles who felt that the religion was a threat to their age-long indigenous traditional religion and culture. However, over time, resistance relapsed as a result of the support given by Muslim clerics and scribes to the Igala monarch, in the form of performing the roles of advisers, courtiers, and administrators of charms. This, in the long run, contributed to toleration and the subsequent conversion of Igala indigenes to Islam. The acceptance of Islam in Igalaland, was however facilitated by some underlying factors such as the existence areas of similarities between Islam and Igala traditional religion and culture (M. Adegbe, 2006:9). For instance, both religions accept the practice of polygyny in the sense that a man could be married to more than one woman at any given time. The idea of having a large family with many children, who could help the household during farming season, was one of the major reasons behind the practice of polygamy in most pre-colonial Nigerian communities. Since Islam supports polygyny, it was not difficult for a traditional Igala family to easily switch over to the new faith, considering other accruing benefits. In the same vein, the practice of traditional medicine in the form of spiritism, magic, and sorcery as obtained in Igala traditional religion, has a similar application in the activities of Muslim mallams, whose stock-in-trade as medicine men revolves in the sell of, and the administration of charms and medicine for curative purposes. This was usually done, in most cases, in conjunction with the proselytization of Islam to Igala indigenes. Furthermore, the idea of unchallenged position of male-headship over their wives, which is obtained in most African communities, has a similar teaching in Islam, where the man is permitted in the Qur'an to flog his wife (s) where necessary to get their submission (Surah 4:34).

All these beliefs and practices found in both Igala traditional religion and Islam are, however, seen as barbaric and pagan practices to the Christian faith. The existence of the above-mentioned common grounds was significant to Islam penetration in Igalaland, as they helped to create an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition between Islam and Igala traditional religion and culture, which engendered conversion and syncretic practices as well.

With the coming of the colonial government following the capitulation of Igalaland, from the early twentieth century, and the imposition of the indirect rule system in Nigeria, the lot of Islam in Igalaland seems to have improved. The colonial policy of imposing non-indigenes as resident administrators in places like Ankpa and Dekina was known to have aided much conversions to Islam in Igalaland, though the policy equally led to protests in those areas. O. Kalu points out that, "it can hardly be doubted that the practice of placing large numbers of pagans under Fulani District Heads and supporting the authority of these by the powers of government when and where necessary led to an extension of Islam (1978:57).

During the colonial rule in Nigeria, the knowledge that political and economic upliftment correlates with identifying with the ruling class and 'the superior religion' further aided much conversion to Islam in Northern Nigeria generally. For instance, the conversion of Igala Crown Prince, Aliu Obaje, in 1956 to Islam, was seen as something 'curious' because of the circumstances surrounding his coronation and conversion, with the presence of "the premier of Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Mr. Sawa Smith the representative of the queen of England" (Adegbe, 2006:12).

Islam, as a religion, lays claim to the supremacy of its teaching over other competing faiths. But, in its long stay in Africa, it has manifested variegated postures towards indigenous religion as well as to the Christian faith (Holt, 1970). This occurrence has brought about syncretic practices. However, Islamic scholar like A. R. I. Doi is of the view that as long as the fundamental articles of faith—seen in the five pillars of Islam, are not tampered with such cooperation could be allowed (1970). The five pillars are: the confession of faith (Shahada), prayers (Salat), alms-giving (Zakat), fasting during the month of Ramadan and pilgrimage (Hajj).

Islam in Igalaland before colonial rule was peripheral and minor in terms of acceptance. With the institution of colonial rule in Igalaland from the early part of the 20th century, which coincided with the introduction of the Christian religion and Western education, Islam felt threatened. This scenario led to some countermeasures employed by Islam adherents to forestall conversion of their members, and which would also help to strengthen and stabilize the faith in Igalaland.

The administrative policy of colonial rule in Nigeria was based on the indirect rule system, through an indigenous established political system. However, in the case of Igala and other designated non-Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria, the colonial administration differs, with the imposition of non-indigenes as resident rulers. Some reasons have been adduced for the attitude of colonial Britain towards the non-Muslim areas. One such claim was the belief that Islam, being a mono religion,

was superior to pagan religion, and next to Christianity (Clarke, 1982). The other reason was the claim of ascribed racial superiority of the light-skinned Fulani rulers over the blacks. F.A. Salamone notes that the British colonial policy in Nigeria towards the Muslim North and non-Muslim South had a racial undertone. He points out that:

The evolutionary anthropology posits people at various stages of development. Hamatic peoples, presumably, were further advanced than various "Negroid" peoples, and Muslims were closer to Christians than 'pagan's. The fact that the Fulani claimed non-negroid, Arabia ancestry and were Muslims allowed them to be categorized as 'true rulers' and natural allies of the British (1971:53).

This perhaps could explain why, from the onset of colonial rule in Nigeria, Igala land was divided into two, from 1906 to 1918, with some parts ceded to the Northern and Southern zones. Idah, the seat of Igala traditional authority, was ceded to Southern Nigeria under Onitsha province, while Dekina and Ankpa came under Bassa and Munshin provinces in Northern Nigeria. Igala traditional authority under the Attah during the colonial rule lost its power and influence with this division. In 1956, the Attah Igala, Umoru Ame Oboni, was deposed on the accusation of human sacrifice during the annual celebration of the Ocho festival at Idah. Miachi viewed the action of the British authority at Kaduna, in deposing the traditional ruler, as "an irreplaceable gap and damage in the political history as well as in the social and cultural development of the Igala people" (2012:131).

Colonial rule in Igalaland was further supported by the two arms of Western imperialism in Africa, that is, Western education and Christianity, though the Christian faith in its pristine state remains apolitical. According to Ayandele's postulations, the Bible is 'the spiritual arm' of colonial domination in Africa. In the case of Igala, due to the negligent attitude of the colonial administrators in Igalaland, who focused more on Muslim areas, Western education was late in coming. The missionaries, on the other hand, who were the harbingers of Western education in the colonial era, were much engrossed in conversion and evangelization than in secular training from the 1900s. The missionaries who were left with the responsibility of education development, when they eventually began serious work in the area from the 1940s, focused on the production of manpower needed for the mission works. Education from a colonial point of view must be tailored to address colonial needs and to maintain the status quo ante. According to the Education Report of the North of 1940, it was noted, for instance, that,

In matters of dress, correct practice in the form of salutations and courtesies to chiefs and those in authority, and general/behaviour and mode of life, the school boys were required to conform to the best traditions of local society (Turaki, 1993:83).

The education policy of the colonial administration in Igalaland revealed the duplicity of the colonial rule, as one built on self-interest and exigency, without addressing the needs of the people in terms of development and relevance. However, it was obvious that the effect of missionary schools in Nigeria and Igala in particular had a mixed result. This was as a result of the fact that their primary

aim, as earlier noted, was the propagation of the Christian religion and conversion. They were also involved in the indoctrination of Western culture among the pupils. They were also known to have advocated mainly the use of the English language as the sole means of communication in the schools, with little or no effort made to incorporate the native Igala language in the school curriculum. It could as well be said that the same pattern of neglect of the Igala language noticed in Native Administrative Schools, while projecting the Hausa language, because of interest in Islamisation of the north, was adopted by the missionaries in Igala. But considering the diversity of the emerging Nigerian polity, it was necessary to have a common central language to carry along.

With the colonial rule and the introduction of western education through the mission schools in Igalaland from the 1900s, new vistas of opportunities for the educated Igala elite emerged in the new dispensation. Acquisition of western education not only broadened the people's knowledge in the whole area of life, but also created new economic, political, as well as religious elite. This, perhaps, was among the reasons the colonial authorities were reluctant to allow the missionaries a freer access to the north, apart from the often claimed purpose of providing a shield to Islam from Christian encroachment. It was also partly the reason that in Igalaland, the Native Administrative Schools continued with the northern curriculum system of education, which was tailored to suit the Emirate system in the 'core north'. Therefore, education which acts as a natural agent of transformation in any environment with the potential to engender change, (similar in degree or scope to such known indices of change, like roads, railways and other means of communication), became a veritable partisan tool in the hands of both the colonial government and the Christian missionaries in Igalaland.

Generally, the acquisition of education acts as a bridgehead in both intra- and inter-ethnic relationships among the Nigerian peoples, especially among the educated ones. One important effect of Western education in Igalaland, which cannot be drawn far from the influence of Western culture, was that it led to changes in the people's lives, aspirations, and orientations. The result was the adoption of the culture of individualism, akin to the Western lifestyle, by a good number of them. Thus, Western education in Igalaland brought about some results different from the lifestyle found in Igala traditional setting, where education, thought, conducted informally, was communal in character formation and learning. This may also help to explain the behavior of detachment, which some Western-educated Igala elite began to exhibit towards aspects of Igala cultural practices, especially the ones they see as not in tandem with their new perception of reality. However, the manifestation of such a behavioural attitude (from the perspectives of the generality of the people) was seen as a disrespect to their cultural norms and identity. This explains why Islam, which seemed to be closely related to the communal nature of Igala lifestyle, was more congenial and acceptable to a greater number of the people.

On the other hand and as noted above, some of the Igala educated elite, as well as Christian converts during the period did not only manifested evidence of detachment from their cultural norms, but also began to act disdainfully towards their traditional institutions. These incidents were to become a sour point in

intercultural relations, and some staunch Igala adherents of A.T.R. and Islam subsequently refused to send their wards to mission schools for fear of conversion. However, since the mission schools became from the 1940s, the main providers of education in Nigeria and Igala in particular, it became obvious that willy-nilly, the people do not seem to have much option than to accept it, except where they opted for Islamic education, which has little prospects in the emerging Nigeria setting for those intending to further their education career. As noted earlier, a combination of the activities of the Native Administrative School (NAS), mission schools, as well as Islamic schools played significant roles in giving Igala society its distinct form, where, for instance, in a family, adherents of A.T.R., Islam, and Christianity became a common sight.

Igala Development in Perspectives

Mbiti notes that there is a degree of change in African cultural practices due to the level of her contact with foreign culture. He notes that “between the period of the second half of the nineteenth century..., to the middle of the twentieth century, such contact led to fundamental changes in areas of religion, economy, politics, and social life as well. (1989:211). This implies that in the march to modernity, African cultures have been challenged, leading to changes in some cases as well as resistance; while in other instances, compromises or syncretism emerge.

M.S. Abdulkadir writes that even though Igala had a centralized political system, which enhanced trade, unlike some ‘stateless communities, their ‘traditional religion was one of the supporting pillars of the monarchy, since many of their functions were spiritual” (2011:1-20). In other words, any threat to their religion became a threat to their authority, since Islam abhorred many of the traditional practices they engaged in. In addition, Abdulkadir further argued that the Igala were traditionally agriculturalists, not traders, and therefore, their rulers engaged in lots of rituals. Moreover, the festivals that are connected to their beliefs have religious practices attached to them, which run against the teachings of Islam.

Since Islam challenges some of these privileges and prerogatives of the rulers, it was natural that conversion became difficult from the top down and then to the ordinary people, despite the hierarchical nature of the society. (Abdulkadir, 2011:1-20).

Therefore, despite the fact that the Islamic religion may have had a long history and contact in the land, it was not until the colonial era, following the dismantling of the Igala political authority, that many conversions to Islam in Igalaland began to take place. But, even at that, with the emergence of Christianity and Western education, aligned with the knowledge that social, economic and political advancement were anchored on advancement in western education, it was not a free fall for Islam in Igalaland even though certain colonial policies and activities encouraged conversion to Islam in Igalaland during the period.

In the efforts to counter perceived threats from Christianity and Western culture in Igalaland, Islam adopted some counter-measures. These measures were a reaction to perceived threats from other contending variables, which implies that the changes that ensued were not indigenous to Islam.

One of the major effects of colonial rule on Igala society in their education policy was revealed in the decline of interest in indigenous and Islamic education, primarily because of the economic and political values attached to its acquisition. Though indigenous education, and to a lesser extent, the Islamic education were informal in nature and practice, yet they were foundational to the acquisition of knowledge in pre-colonial times. While the indigenous Igala knowledge system, as it occurred in most Nigerian communities, capitulated with the coming of colonial rule, Islam, on the other hand, reacted differently. Their reaction led to the founding of upgraded forms of Islamic schools known as Islamiyya schools in Igalaland. The significance of these schools lies in their ability to incorporate Western education principles to strengthen Islamic education. This was similar to the reaction of Yoruba Muslims in the Southwest of Nigeria to the threat of Western education to their faith, which led to the provision of "Western education for Muslim children within the context of Islam" (Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, 1980:355). This was what the Igala and most African countries failed to do concerning indigenous knowledge systems from the onset of colonial rule in Africa, which would have made current education programmes more relevant to the needs of contemporary society than what we have today. Further response of Islam to the Christian conversion threat through western education led to the formation of Muslim organizations such as Jamiyya Juma'at, essentially a women's Friday congregation, patterned after the Christian Mother Union and Women Guild Organisation, which emerged in Ankpa in 1963. (Mohammed, 1986).

In the same vein, the relationship that flourished between Igala and Islam as a result of area of similarity, such as the practice of polygamous marriages, which supported conversion to Islam, which had its foundation on the existence of the culture of early marriage system, has become challenged by the emerging socioeconomic realities in the country. Though the practice of polygyny has not stopped in Igala society, especially among the adherents of Islam and the traditionalists, there is no doubt that the combined effect of Western education, the Christian religion and economic crunch emanating at times from (climate changes) have whittled down the practice in Igalaland (Apeh 1989:56-57).

But, despite the onslaught of Islam and Christianity in Igala society, the belief in Igala tradition and culture has continued to wax strong among certain adherents of Islam and Christian converts as well. For instance, Chief Mohammed Isa Ekele, the traditional ruler of Alloma-Igala-Owa district of Ofu Local Government Area, though a Muslim, believes strongly that the Igala cultural identity clause should not be subsumed by Islamic culture or any other in the area of marriages, intra-cultural relationships, burials, among others (2019).

In his assessment of the effects of modernization on Igala Muslims of Kogi State, Muhammad Sani Haroon, an Islamic scholar, made three postulations. In the first category are those professors of Islam who have tried to remain firm to the tenets of Islam by way of conscientious efforts to obey, and submit to the words of Islamic Holy book, the Qur'an, and the sayings of Prophet Muhammed, the Hadith, despite the push and pull of modernizing influence to lower their guards. In the second category are those adherents of Islam found to be in the middle-ground of faith who could bend their belief and faith in order to accommodate extraneous influence

coming from the surrounding environment. The third category of Haroon's postulation falls on those who are seen as mere professors of Islam, and who do not see any difference in their lifestyle and that of non-Muslims in their midst. Their behavioural tendencies tend to depict no difference between them and people of other faiths. (M.S. Haroon, 2016).

It should be noted that the above postulation of M.S. Haroon can be widened to capture similar reactions of people of other faiths in Igalaland to explicate the influence of modernization in Igala society. Though it might seem to be a hasty observation, however, available evidence tends to suggest that in their relationships to the influence and effect of agents of modernization, Igala society's reaction is dictated more by immediate exigency than by faith-belief.

It is therefore not surprising that even among the adherents to Islam and Christianity in Igalaland, a good number of them still consult native traditional healers secretly when faced with some persistent challenging problems like health issues, spiritual problems, and economic downturn (Omede, 2018).

These behavioural tendencies seem to align with the assertion of Simon Ottenberg, who is of the opinion that in cultural contacts, it is usually difficult for a foreign, domineering ideology to destroy or eradicate all the elements of congeniality found in a local one. This could be seen in the early culture contact between indigenous cultures and Western cultures, during the colonial era, generally. It was also evident in the contact which Igala culture had with Islam, Christianity, and western culture, which, though it brought some changes in Igalaland, did not succeed in totally eradicating aspects of Igala culture among the adherents of Islam and the Christian religion, which have persisted in Igala land. The various Nigerian peoples and cultures resisted the early onslaught of Western culture through various local mechanisms available to them, such as outright rejection and exclusion. The incidence of culture clash at this period, between the Igala culture vis-à-vis western and Islamic cultures, aligns with the adoption of Toynbee's theory; 'the clash of civilization' in this work to explain the challenge of transition to modernity in Igala traditional society, and how they have managed to navigate the imbroglio. In other words, the transition to modernity in Igalaland was not a straight-jacket occurrence, but one interjected by factors like Igala tradition, Islam, Christianity, and Western education culture. This explains the varied reactions to the transition in Igalaland, seen in acceptance, rejection, changes, syncretic practices, as well as resistance in some cases.

Findings

The pre-colonial Igala society, situated at the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers and in proximity to neighboring groups such as the Idoma, Igbira, Jukun, Benin, and Igbo, experienced significant intercultural exchanges that contributed to its sociocultural development. This geographical location facilitated various interactions that enriched the Igala cultural framework.

From the 19th century onwards, Igala land faced the advent of modernization through the introduction of Islam, Christianity, Western education, and new

cultural practices. The impact of these agents of change was profound, particularly when the colonial division of Igala land between 1906 and 1918 created Northern and Southern protectorates. This division disrupted the sociocultural development of the Igala people, undermining their political and religious authority over the majority of the populace and leading to various conflicts among emerging cultural and religious influences.

Initially, the Igala people reacted to the introduction of foreign religions – Islam and later Christianity – with outright rejection. However, as awareness grew regarding the economic, political, and social advantages associated with conversion, interest in these faiths increased, ultimately leading to acceptance and conversion among some members of the community.

Islam was the first change agent to establish a presence in Igalaland, gaining legitimacy among the masses due to certain similarities with the indigenous Igala religion. In response to the rising influence of Christianity, which came with Western education and culture, Islam sought to preserve its followers by incorporating practices from Christianity to prevent mass conversions and maintain its influence over Igala Muslim adherents.

While the arrival of these change agents brought notable shifts in the socio-cultural practices of the Igala people, it also led to both compromises and resistance in various aspects of life. In the face of challenges posed by these new influences, Igala culture displayed remarkable resilience, demonstrating the community's ability to adapt while resisting certain emerging scenarios that threatened their traditional values and identity.

Conclusion

Igala society, a traditional African society, has undergone some level of sociocultural changes over the years of its encounter with foreign change agents like Islam, Christianity, and Western education. Partly due to the nature of its demographic impact, in addition to the competitive and divergent goals expressed by these change agents in Igalaland, the encounter led to rejection, resistance, assimilation, compromises, and uneven development in Igala sociocultural lifestyle. Furthermore, despite the continual impact of Islam, Christianity, and Western education and culture in Igala society and their contributions to Igala sociocultural development, Igala culture has remained resilient in its encounter with these agents of modernization in Igala society.

The investigation of the social dynamics and cultural resilience of the Igala society in the context of post-contact modernity reveals a complex tapestry of adaptation and preservation. Despite facing significant challenges brought about by the introduction of foreign religions, colonial influences, and Western ideologies, the Igala community has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to navigate the turbulent waters of modernization. This resilience stems from the community's ability to absorb and renegotiate external influences while retaining core aspects of their cultural identity.

Throughout the study, it has been illustrated that the interwoven relationships between tradition and modernity enable the Igala people to foster a unique cultural landscape rich in diversity and adaptability. The processes of cultural resistance and assimilation have allowed the Igala to maintain their ethnic identity while simultaneously engaging with new social and religious paradigms. The resilience displayed by the Igala community serves as a testament to their strength in the face of modernization, highlighting their agency in shaping their sociocultural trajectory.

Understanding the Igala society's transition into modernity enhances the broader discourse on cultural resilience within contemporary African contexts. It underscores the vital importance of recognizing and respecting local traditions while navigating external pressures. As such, this study not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge on Igala history and culture but also emphasizes the need for continued exploration into the responses of traditional societies to the ever-evolving landscape of modernity.

The findings from this study highlight several critical aspects of the Igala society's response to modernity, emphasizing the interplay of cultural resilience, adaptation, and the broader social dynamics at work.

Firstly, the Igala society exemplifies how cultural resilience is not merely about maintaining traditions; rather, it involves the dynamic process of negotiating identity in the face of change. This resilience manifests through practices that allow the Igala people to incorporate beneficial aspects of foreign cultures while resisting elements that threaten their core values. For instance, the integration of certain Islamic practices into traditional Igala beliefs reflects a syncretic approach that acknowledges change while celebrating indigenous identity. This duality highlights the flexibility inherent in cultural identities, which can adapt over time without losing their fundamental essence.

Secondly, the study reveals that foreign influences—particularly Islam and Christianity—have played significant roles in shaping the social fabric of Igala society. The initial resistance to these religions points to a strong commitment to traditional beliefs; however, as the community recognized the socio-political and economic advantages associated with conversion, a transformative dialogue emerged. This illustrates a broader trend observed in many African societies, where the interaction of traditional and newly introduced belief systems leads to unique cultural syntheses, creating rich tapestries of practice and belief.

Furthermore, the colonial experience, particularly the division of Igalaland into Northern and Southern protectorates, significantly altered traditional political structures. The undermining of local authority—especially that of the Attah and the kingmakers—created a vacuum that reshaped social dynamics, prompting the Igala to redefine their identities and governance structures in response to new political realities. This demonstrates how external political changes compel societies to rethink and revise their internal governance, often leading to new forms of leadership and community organization.

In addition, the role of Western education emerges as a key transformative agent in this discussion. The adoption of Western educational practices led to a shift in priorities among the Igala populace, as families began to perceive Western education as a gateway to economic opportunity. This shift not only affected religious affiliations but also altered social hierarchies within the community. The decreased emphasis on Islamic education in favor of Western schooling underscores a broader trend in African societies, wherein modernization often leads to changes in educational values and religious practices, further complicating the cultural landscape.

Cultural hybridity also plays a pivotal role in analyzing the Igala society's response to modernization. As the community assimilates various aspects of Islam, Christianity, and Western culture, they create a new cultural identity that reflects both traditional values and modern influences. This hybrid identity challenges the binary opposition often drawn between tradition and modernity, highlighting the coexistence of these concepts, which influence and reshape one another in complex ways.

While the Igala society has shown remarkable resilience, it must also confront ongoing processes of globalization and modernity that present new challenges to cultural practices. The influx of global media, technology, and lifestyle changes can erode traditional values, resulting in potential disconnection from historical practices and beliefs. Therefore, as the Igala community continues to navigate modernity, it must find ways to preserve its cultural identity amid these external pressures. Promoting traditional knowledge systems, encouraging community engagement, and fostering pride in cultural heritage are essential for maintaining a sense of identity in an increasingly globalized world.

Finally, the observations derived from this study open avenues for further research that can explore various aspects of Igala society in greater depth. Future studies might focus on longitudinal analyses examining how cultural practices evolve over time, providing insights into how identities adapt across generations. Additionally, comparative studies involving other ethnic groups in Nigeria or the broader African context could yield rich comparisons regarding responses to similar forces of change. Investigating the perspectives of younger generations on negotiating their identities in light of both tradition and modern influences could also add valuable dimensions to this discourse.

In conclusion, the discussion surrounding the socio-cultural dynamics of the Igala society in the face of modernity demonstrates a rich and multifaceted engagement with change. As the Igala people navigate their unique cultural landscape, the resilience and adaptability they exhibit serve as powerful examples for other societies experiencing similar transitions. This resilience, rooted in a profound connection to their cultural identity, emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting traditional practices while engaging with modern influences. The Igala experience offers a framework for examining cultural resilience across diverse contexts, highlighting the critical balance between adaptation and preservation in the journey toward modernity.

This research advocates for a broader recognition of the intricate dynamics at play in societies like the Igala, where cultural resilience and adaptability continue to shape the experiences of communities amidst the challenges presented by modernity.

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