

A culturally endangered youth.

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



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A Culturally Endangered Youth. Introduction The combined forces of colonialism, westernization, and modernization have perfectly combined to drive Igbo culture to the margins of existence. What is dominant among the Igbo now is the payment of lip service to culture, especially by way of tourism and so-called inculturation. The people most affected are the young ones, mainly because the usual framework of learning by participation is no longer available to a greater percentage of them. Since the youths are said to be the leaders of tomorrow, this implies that the future is culturally bleak for them.

Colonialism The colonization of Nigeria by Britain saw the forceful imposition of British/European values upon Nigerians. The political culture, the religion culture, the economic system, the traditional modes of education and socialization, etc. were first denied, then condemned as “ primitive”, and then forcibly displaced. New ways of political administration, religious conduct, cultural values, economic systems and management, as well as socialization of the young were deliberately and forcibly imposed on the people. No form of dialogue took place except when a conflict ensued that was not resolvable by force, or except when the British saw the use of dialogue as a more beneficial option than to recourse to violence.

Westernization This term refers to the conscious and unconscious adoption of western colonial values by the colonized people. Western education and Christianity are the major agencies through which the Igbo become westernized, that are the agencies through which the Igbo began to both acquire western values and devalue their authentic indigenous values. People woke up to attend school every day and to go to church on Sundays. These displaced the activities of going to farm, to hunt, to fish, and to

engage in other daily routines concerned with livelihood. The deities also became neglected and abandoned by the Igbo, especially the young ones who were taught that their religious practices were evil and demonic.

Modernization This refers to a process through which new technologies originating from Europe displaced the old indigenous technologies of the Igbo. New ways of dressing, cooking, farming, fishing, travelling, communicating, etc. were introduced. These in spite of whatever disadvantages they had, proved more effective than the old way they replaced. New ways of courtship and marriage were also introduced. A whole lot of things have changed among the Igbo, and the old and ancient ways of doing things have given way to the modern. **Effects on the Youth.** It is known that language and religion are the best makers and preservers of identity. It is also known that learning is most achieved through the process of participation. Those who were brought up entirely in Igbo language and also participated in the prevalent occupation in their communities were known to be at home in their environment. They knew the names of all the birds, all the animal, and virtually the names of a variety of plants, fish, and other things in their ecosystem. The young people of today have no opportunity to participate in these activities. As a result, they are generally ignorant of local knowledge. They do not know the names of plants, wild animal, grasses, insects, etc. around them. Many young people do not even know how to speak the Igbo language, let alone knowing how to speak their various dialects. This is because some parents prefer to bring up their children in the English Language. In February 2012, a year one secondary school girl was asked the name of “aku”, palm kernel in Igbo, and she replied that it is

called " small coconut. " When I was doing my essay on Ajija, I discovered that many young people had never heard the word used. Currently, I am working on another essay, " Akamha" / " Nhatanha", but this term sounds strange to many young people. In my entire household, only a girl living with us knew the word and its meaning. This is because the father is the oldest man in their village, and according to her, the father would always mention it when he prays with kolanut every morning. Language is the carrier of culture. When one is brought up in a foreign language, such a person becomes totally ignorant of his or her culture. Such a person is said to be a " floating person", by which is meant that the person is not rooted in his or her culture. The great havoc this does to the individual is that he or she is alienated from his or her indigenous culture. This alienation negatively affects the identity formation of the person. Consequently, such a person finds it very difficult to integrate with members of his or her native community. It is therefore said that such a person has been educated away from his or her culture. This is not good for the overall development of the individual. Religion is another great marker of identity. Many young Igbo persons in Nigeria do not know anything about Igbo Traditional Religion. This is not the fault of the young, but the fault of their parents, many who themselves know little or nothing about Traditional Religion. Unfortunately, many young persons come to learn about Traditional Religion through wrong channels. For instance, my nineteen years old son was pointing out an ofo tree to a twenty three years old graduate, but the person did not agree with him. His reason is that the ofo is usually a short big stick with a red cloth tied around it, at least as he sees it in African Magic films. It took a lot of

persuasion to agree with my son. Where parents fail to do their duty, wrong channels will do it wrongly for them. In Traditional Religion, practitioners offer kolanut to God and deities and ancestors every morning. This takes place in the form of prayer. The occasion for such prayers offers the practitioners the opportunity to recite a litany of their ancestors. It also offers the practitioners the opportunity to recite the pantheon of deities in the community. It is through this process that the participants come to have knowledge of these issues, it is now the case that the youth in Igboland could recite the genealogy of Christ and name all the Christian saints, but may not have knowledge of their ancestry beyond the grandfather and grandmother level. The bad thing about this is that the youth are brought up to be strangers to their ancestral heritage. Moreover, it is said that knowledge of indigenous religion helps converts to other religions to master them at a very deep level. Of course, it is obvious that the religious identity of many young Igbo persons in the contemporary times is anchored on foreign religions. Conclusion. The youth among the Igbo definitely cannot go back to their primordial past, even if it were still available. Times have greatly changed, and people must change with the changing times. All the same, it must be observed that for more than two thousand years, the Jews have remained loyal and faithful to both their language and religion. This is one reason while the Jews have a very strong and enduring sense of identity. Similarly, the Chinese have remained very faithful to both their language and religion. The Indians too have acted likewise. These people have on the same time changed with the changing times, and have indeed become part of the mainstream of high industrialization and have also achieved great

technological feats. This demonstrated very adequately the fact that you do not have to lose your language and religion for you to be in sync with contemporary civilization and technology. This is a lesson the Igbo youth must learn.