

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Promoting Cultural Literacy among Children and Youths: Effiong Johnson's Drama in Focus

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### **Abstract:**

*The process of enculturation provides a platform for children and youths to become acquainted with their society's way of life. This enculturation can be achieved through constant exposure of this class of learners to classroom situations where they can interact with relevant dramatic texts, cultural video films, arts and crafts, etc.*

*Culture is very relevant to any society because of its ability to promote and protect a people's identity and freedom. The paper discusses the cultural contents of Effiong Johnson's play 'Son of The Land' and its suitability in providing cultural ideas that can help boost development among children and youths. The paper therefore aims at projecting the positive aspects of the Ibibio culture, and by so doing, attempt to change the negative mindset of youths towards the adoption and dissemination of their culture. 'Son of the Land' is chosen as a typical text that reflects relevant aspects of the Ibibio culture that could be used in the classroom to expose children and youths to new ways of thinking. The study therefore proposes the use of culturally based dramatic texts as teaching materials for effective transference of cultural ideas.*

*The study concludes that the rich cultural heritage of the Ibibio people of Nigeria (as reflected in their language, proverbs, clothing, religion, games, food, songs, rituals etc..) contain elements with moral values and provide veritable resource materials for furnishing the younger generation with knowledge and new ideas that will help develop them and shape the society.*

**Keywords:** Cultural, literacy, children and youths

### **1. Introduction**

According to Wikipedia, 'literacy of a given culture seems to arise overtime with consistent exposure to and participation in that culture especially certain key cultural stronghold, like business, story, arts, education, history, religion, and family ([https://en.wiki/cultural literacy](https://en.wiki/cultural%20literacy). Retrieved November, 8,2018) Cultural literacy may be defined as 'familiarity with and ability to understand the idioms, allusions, and informal content the create and constitute a dominant culture. From being familiar with street signs to knowing historical references to understanding the most recent slang, literacy demands interaction with the culture and reflection of it'. ([https://www.definitions.net/definition/cultural + literacy](https://www.definitions.net/definition/cultural%20literacy). Retrieved November 8, 2018).

Through reading culturally relevant literature, watching relevant films etc. one can obtain needed cultural knowledge for self development.

Drama, as an art, is one of the major vehicles needed in the promotion of a people's culture. The role of drama in any society revolves around representation of all kinds of actions and identities within the set environment. For effective representation of these actions and identities, an exploration of aspects of culture becomes highly indispensable. Every dramatic action expressed in a play is founded on the "cultural setting-belief system, folklore and history, myths, legends and folk-tales, philosophy, ethics, language and linguistic expressions, gestures and facial expressions, music and dance ..." (Owusu 2005:14). Drama therefore has a vital role to play in the current struggle to preserve, promote and propagate traditional arts and culture. Culture as a global reality is ubiquitous and inescapable and is capable of contributing to a better understanding of a society, its people, as well as position that society for development when well tapped. Beyond the popular recognition that culture is the sum total of the people's way of life, its role in positioning the values of the society and its ability to create templates of reimagining the knowledge systems of that society is paramount. An Internet Free Encyclopedia also considers culture to be "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. It is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts" (March, 21, 2018). According to On-line Business Dictionary, culture is: broadly, social heritage of a group (organized community or society). Is a pattern of responses discovered, developed, or invented during the group's history of handling problems which arise from interactions among members, and between them and their environment. These responses are considered the correct way to perceive, feel, think and act and are passed on to the new members through immersion and teaching. Culture determines what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable. It encompasses all learned and shared explicit or tacit, assumptions beliefs, knowledge, norms, and values, as well as attitudes, behaviour, dress, and language (retrieved September 20,2018).

Seen from this perspective, culture is an 'all-embracing' force around which everything else revolves. Culture is used to denote the complex networks of practices and accumulated knowledge and ideas that is transmitted through social interaction and exist in specific human groups, or culture, - Some aspects of human behaviour, Language, social practice such as kingship, gender and marriage, expressive forms such as art, music, dance, ritual, religion, and technologies such as cooking, shelter, clothing are said to be cultural" (internet source). Material culture covers the physical expressions of culture, such as technology, architecture and art, whereas the immaterial aspects of culture such as principles of social institutions, mythology, philosophy, literature (both written and oral), and science make up the intangible cultural heritage of a society. Our culture guides us in how we behave and is what we ought to be doing. We must nurture and encourage our culture, as it is the expression of our values and belief" (Ayaoge 2013:96).

Drama has proven to be one of such viable instruments employable for both cultural production and representation. Therefore, through plays, such as Johnson's *Son of the Land*, culture finds a platform for further transmission to the younger generation. Cultural literacy therefore becomes an important factor here, for, as observed by Olundare (2013:190), the role of education is to "develop the capacity in individuals within the society for a rational and well-planned life. It helps individuals to develop required attributes and value systems, leading to the formation of appropriate character traits ..."

The play, *Son of The Land*, like many other plays, is a cultural piece and source of education. Moreover, plays incorporate materials from daily human experiences and above all, reflect life, and human life is culture-based. Therefore, in writing plays, one is invariably reflecting the culture of the people one belongs, and thus, extends the boundary of public knowledge and understanding of such culture. Johnson makes use of the cultural wealth and identity of the *Ibibio* people in his play to make statements about his environment. He explores the cultural milieu structurally in his play through the use of local resources such as proverbs, idioms, rituals, expression of traditional beliefs, dress code, occupation, food, etc. to furnish his readers with the peculiarities of his people's culture. This has made the play a very good resource for the transmission of values to the children and youths. The transmission of culture is, by itself, a process of education which Fafunwa (1974:17), describes as:

... the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. That is to say, it is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both.

The need for this cultural education is to:

- enable young people discover and embrace their cultural values
- help young people come to terms with existing cultural diversities
- provide opportunity for young people to place contemporary and historical values side by side in order to determine their conduct
- Lead them into appreciating the dynamics of change that is constantly impressing on young minds and calling for new ways, new attitudes and social behaviour.

It has therefore become pertinent to educate the children and youths on the need to esteem their culture above foreign cultural ideas and influences. The importance of teaching children and youths is that it will make them appreciate their own indigenous resources, and help them understand the dynamics of their culture and the world around them. In a larger sense, values give meaning to life, they establish priorities, set moral standard and define the rules of actions. In other words, the social, educational, economic and moral developments of a people depend on practical observance and maintenance of their set of cultural values. These can only be best achieved if children and youths are exposed to these cultural values early in life. According to Owusu, 'if culture must be appreciated by the society, it must be introduced early to the child. At no level is the dramatic method of teaching cultural and social values and civic responsibilities, our world, the environment, morality more appropriate than at the basic level. Thus, it could be said that values form an essential part of a people's existence and survival. However, globalization has brought with it some complexities that sometimes create in young minds an inordinate desire to embrace new ideas, lifestyle etc., without a thought on the implications of such action. One of such complexities is failure to form clear values or form values that are congruent with traditional cultures and customs as we know them. According to Internet Free Encyclopedia globalization is the process of "international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture". An Internet Business Dictionary sees globalization as implying the opening of local and nationalistic perspectives to a broader outlook of an interconnected and interdependent world with free transfer of capital, goods, and services across national frontiers. This "interdependence" and "free transfer" of ideas account for the foreign lifestyle common among our youths as reflected in their communication, dressing, relationship, religious attitude and general social behavior. As prospective leaders, there is need to help children and youth strike a balance between modern realities as brought about by globalization and the established basic social, spiritual and temporal lessons of the society as enshrined in their culture to enable them gain a wholesome humanistic experience.

In view of the fact that cultural values contain the child's idea of what is considered right or wrong for himself and his society, the focus here is on how to develop positive character and attitude in young children to the end of raising well-behaved, well-nurtured and well-cultured young persons that shall grow to improve and maintain good societal standards of behaviour.

### 1.1. Synopsis of "Son of the Land"

The play, narrates the story of Ekpema whose life with his foster father – Usua for about twenty years, has been replete with abuses (verbal and physical attacks) due to Usua's insistence that he (Ekpema) is not his biological son, but was only compelled to adopt him because of his love for the mother, Nneka who was already pregnant for another man when he married her. Hence, he had to lie to members of the village council (when he was summoned), that the unborn child – Ekpema was his child. But now, having lost the mother many years back, he is no longer comfortable "rearing somebody else's son."

With the new development, Ekpema becomes confused, anxious and very determined to discover his true paternity. Ekpema later discovers that Usua is not his biological father. When eventually Ibom, the real father appears and takes Ekpema away, Udo, Obong and other elders of the community resist the idea of losing their "son", Ekpema to a 'stranger', and therefore plead with Usua (their kinsman) to go and reclaim Ekpema. Usua refuses, insisting that Ekpema is not his son. As the debate on the issue continues, Obong sends Udo to Ibom to summon him to appear before the village council to explain the audacity he had in taking their son away. Udo, however, returns reporting that he narrowly escaped death after being beaten up and charmed by Ibom and his "unseen" powers.

Back in Ibom's house, Ibom does not want Ekpema to go into stockfish business because his rival – Usua (with whom Ekpema lived for twenty years) was a trader on the same commodity. Beyond this, Ibom claims that Ekpema's mother Nneka became attracted to Usua because he was trading on stockfish, and stockfish happens to be the late Nneka's favourite fish. Ekpema is opposed to Ibom's position on the matter and therefore becomes bent on pursuing his dream. This leads him to stealing money from Ibom's sacred raffia bag, and in the process breaks the "ancient skull" contained in the bag. As a result, Ekpema becomes mentally deranged.

### 1.2. Cultural Elements in the Play

#### 1.2.1. Proverbs and Wise Saying

Wise sayings beyond being informational are also very inspirational. Proverb is a form of speech with hidden meaning. These proverbs and wise sayings have many functions including the portrayal of excellent skills in communication, serving as vehicle to drive thoughts and words right through the human minds and providing knowledge that is deep in understanding the language. They contain philosophical and moral expositions expressed in few words, but with very deep meanings. According to the submission of Finnagan (1970: 391):

In many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs. The figurative quality of proverbs is especially striking; one of their most noticeable characteristics is their allusive wording, usually in metaphorical form. ... They also frequently occur in general conversation and in oratory to embellish, conceal, or hint.

She notes that, "Proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw" (389). According to Nwadike (1989:32), "phraseology of many of our proverbs has been influenced by our natural environment, which in turn influences our cultural attitude and system of values"

Furthermore, Ibibio proverbs and wise sayings are drawn from the wide gamut of Ibibio cultural experiences which include folklore, beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, emotions and the entire system of thought and feelings of the people. Mieder, cited in Johnson and Ekpenyong (2013:62), gives further insight to what a proverb is: "A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk, which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphysical fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation". Traore (1972:65), states that "customary laws are very adequately formulated in the wide range of proverbs and maxims which embellish the plays".

In *Son of the Land*, the playwright has made an extensive use of proverbs and wise sayings. Below is an exploration of some of these proverbs and wise saying and their implied meanings:

- Two rams hardly live together without broken horns (p.1-2) (There is bound to be conflict where two authorities rule simultaneously).
- ... Waste salt on the porcupine's intestines (investing resources or energy on unproductive ventures).
- The mother hen's foot, no matter how heavy, cannot kill her chicken ... (p.30) (The discipline of a parent is not aimed at destroying, but correcting that child).
- A baby does not refuse the milk from his mother's breast (p.37) (What a parent has to offer the child is essential for the growth of that child).
- The fish is not afraid of water no matter how deep (p.37) (there is boldness and courage, while traversing a familiar terrain).
- The chameleon may look harmless but its colour is deceitful ... (p.38) (There is a real face behind the mask/facial appearance can be misleading).
- The man who sees his shadow in the day does not ask whether the sun is shining ... (p.42) (Seeing is believing/the available evidence speaks volume of the fact of the situation).
- The scorpion does not sting the air, but the careless foot that rests on it. (p.43) (Punishment awaits waywardness/there's a price to pay for any act of irresponsibility).
- A hunter does not leave behind his gun when going to the bush (p.44) (Success on a task depends on the undertaker's preparation and skillful application of tools).
- The hunter of antelopes must know how to run, or he will be wasting his time going to the bush (p.54) (master your skills for technical effectiveness/engage your skills for maximum productivity).

Because they are pungently and wittingly stated, proverbs are ideally suited for commenting on, and correcting the behavior of others irrespective of their age and status. As the child finds himself participating in classroom activities, presented to him through the literary study of dramatic text of this nature, it becomes a training ground for his communication and social skills.

### 1.2.2. Names as Symbolic Cultural Elements in the Play

In Ibibio culture as in other cultures of the world, names are very important cultural elements and are significant in identification of the bearer and his environment. They sometimes give a clue to certain circumstances surrounding the bearer's birth, especially if such names are native in nature. Such native names are not usually without symbolic meanings. In the play for instance, Ekpema, (meaning 'who would love?') is a symbolic representation of someone not loved by his people. This name (Ekpema) speaks of the controversy surrounding the paternal birth of the character (Ekpema). The effect of this name on the bearer is revealed in the experiences surrounding his existence. In other words, it can be said that names are rarely given without meaning and reason.

Names can also be used to expose the bearer's character, attitude and influence on his environment. Typical examples are the names Usua (hatred), Ibom (mighty), Imaobong (God's love), Obot (nature/creation), Obong (king), Koko (pet name for 'namesake'). In the play, Usua exhibits hatred towards Ekpema and this attitude also attracts hatred from the community towards him (Usua). The name "Ibom", literally means something or someone great, (mighty) and influential. This word is often used to describe the 'mightiness' of the Supreme Being-God (Abasi Ibom) which is represented in Ibibio cosmology by the smaller gods (deities, which are called abasi in the native language). These supernatural beings are held in very high esteem in the Ibibio cosmology. In the play, the character 'Ibom' wields a very terrifying and domineering influence over the people and the environment, because of the sacred and supernatural powers he has acquired. The character, Imaobong, on the other hand displays love towards Ekpema and people around her.

As a character, 'Obong', literally meaning, Lord, King, Traditional Leader or Village Head, represents the traditional institution, and is expected to be well vested in the general knowledge of the cultural norms of his community. He is in charge of the government, the general ethno-religious and, socio-cultural administration of the community. He knows the taboos of the land and should guide the people on general ways of living that will help promote the communal existence of the people. In the play, we see Obong feeling so concerned about Ekpema and all the events happening around him. As a communal head, a king is expected to do everything to defend his territory and guarantee his people's security. This explains why Obong fights hard to convince Usua to rescind his idea of giving away Ekpema to Ibom. His desperation towards defending, sustaining and securing the life and property of his subjects is further revealed at the last scene where he is seen with a board bearing the picture of the sun challenging Ibom for causing Ekpema's insanity. His intention is to use this symbol of the sun to compel Ibom to provide solution to Ekpema's sick condition. He says: ... 'I have not known of anyone who has withstood the damning heat of the burning mid-day sun. I will consume you with heat of the sun, unless you restore to our son his correct head, you too will die ... (p.71).

Another name identified in the play is 'Obot'. According to Mbon (1994:48), the name Obot:

... literary means nature or creation. It is a derivative of the root word "bot", meaning mould, fashion, or create. This name indicates the people's belief in the reality of nature and creation as the work of Abasi Ibom who is believed to be, above all else, the Supreme Creator (Andibot), the Great Moulder or Fashioner of the Universe ....

By way of relating this name to the play, we see Obot's attempts at helping to mend the broken fence between Ekpema and Ibom. He encourages Ekpema to return Ibom's money even though the ancient sacred skull cannot be mended. His concern at molding the broken relationship between Ekpema and Ibom is a symbolic drive that portrays his nature as propelled by his kind of name. Names are therefore cogent statements in revealing character personality, cultural and religious affiliations.

### 1.2.3. Language as Cultural Element in the Play

Language and thoughts have a subtle co-relationship, and language is a true reflection of how the users of such language feel and think. According to Essien (1994:56), language is the only channel through which humanity "can best think, imagine, create, aspire, desire, feel and express our soul, enlarge our mental horizon and fulfill all that man is capable of". Prah (2009:18), asserts that language as "... the central pillar and the transactional medium through which culture is created, shaped, adapted and adopted ... a register of the records of humanity. It is indeed a representation of the history of humankind. It is the collective memory par excellence of its owners and users".

Language becomes central to human development because of its role in helping culture assemble "ideals, values and patterns of institutionalized behaviour, socialized symbols and shared meanings". According to him, the social character of language and its function as the key transactional instrument for human groups makes it both the principal divider and at the same time, invisible instrument for uniting people" (18).

Drama has a way of facilitating the development of a child's language – reading and speaking skills. It helps in the improvement of reading comprehension and communication skills. It also serves as a matrix that stimulates and synthesizes a child's experience in related arts. Hence, adopting the play to the classroom will help improve the reading and speaking of Ibibio language as a way of expanding the borders of Ibibio culture. This exposure will enable the children and youths to become educated on the peculiarities of their local language that make them distinct individuals.

### 1.3. Food, Feeding and Housekeeping as Cultural Elements in the Play

An individual's well-being has much to do with his food and the ingredients of such food. Food represents anything (especially solid substances) eaten by either human or animals to derive strength and nourishment.

The Ibibio culture has in its stock varieties of food comprising vegetables which are rich in vitamins and minerals (for example, pumpkin leaves- editan, atama, water leaf, bitter leaf, afang, mmeme, mkpafere, etc., root crops (carbohydrates) represented by such ones as cocoyam, sweet yam, yam, maize grain, cassava, plantain, banana, etc, herbs and spices such as uyayak, iko, ntong, etc. flavourings and additives such as crayfish, pepper, melon, etc. The tropical location of Akwa Ibom State, the State where the Ibibio people belong, places the land at an advantaged position which makes for the rich food diet it is noted for. Akpan and Ekpo observe that traditional diet in Akwa Ibom State is: "... dominated by root crops, vegetables, games, domesticated animals and sea foods. All these items are in season for a large part of the year, soil and climatic conditions favour the growth of some plants and crops in specific areas" (103).

In the play, the playwright explores the characteristic traits or features of a typical Ibibio household task performance ranging from caring for members of the family, meal preparation and presentation, shopping from the market, to providing fodder for domestic animals. In Usua's home though there is no wife or mother figure (as Usua's wife died some years back), Arit and Ima, his daughters, are saddled with the responsibility of taking care of the home. They take care of both the domestic animals and human members of the family, while Usua, the father provides money for the running of the home.

In situation two, the sound of the bleating of goats attracts reactions from Ima and Arit. Ima complains that the goats are consuming too much of the "herbs". She registers her anger by refusing to go and fetch any more of the "herbs". The dialogue below explains further:

Ima: (The goats start to bleat) There they go again. They have finished the herbs I gave them yesterday. Today those greedy throats of theirs will dry up and crack because I am not going to the bush again (p.19).

Arit: I will do it today so that we all can sleep peacefully. In fact, let me go now so that I can return in time to go to the market ... (p.20).

While Arit leaves for the bush, Ekpema sneaks into the house, and because of her caring nature, Ima brings food from the kitchen for him, despite Usua's warning that he should not be allowed into the house. Ima even proceeds to give Ekpema the spare key to the kitchen to enable him gain access to the kitchen whenever he was hungry.

In situation three Arit and Ima bring food and water for Usua. According to Arit, the soup is "abak" soup. "Abak" soup is usually prepared with palm fruits oil. Often, some quantity of ripe palm fruits is boiled to become soft, pounded and stirred in water (just a commensurate quantity with the food condiments), sifted, and oil extracted for use. The leaf, 'atama' is usually the vegetable type used in cooking 'abak' soup. With the complementing help of other spices, additives and flavouring like onion, crayfish, salt, fish, meat, pepper, etc. "atama" soup is always very aesthetically appealing in taste. After Usua finishes the meal, his bathing water is made ready to enable him have total refreshing experience. The above described household activities agree with Akpan's (1986:28) opinion that:

Household tasks are those productive activities that are performed for direct use in the home. They include: meal preparation, fetching water and firewood, laundry, washing of dishes, cleaning the house, shopping, caring for the children, husband and other adults, caring for the sick, caring for domestic animals, gardening, home maintenance, running errands and all the travelling that are required for the purpose of accomplishing the various tasks.

### 1.4. Religion as Cultural Element in the Play

The following submission by Mogu (2002:135) sums up the role of religion in providing cultural cohesion among a people

Ordinarily, the received dogma which affirms the existence of an all-knowing, all-powerful and all-caring God serves as a check on the attitudes and behaviour of individuals in a normal society. A set of dos and don'ts therefore emerges in such a setting to guide members from acting out of step in order to maintain parlance. Anyone who goes against the established norms will automatically be checked by mores of the society or pricked by his conscience. Every culture has its form of traditional religious practices that identify and further establish its supernatural and metaphysical inclinations. The Akwa Ibom people for instance are popular in their believe in the presence of a supersensible world inhabited by a supreme personality called 'Abasi Ibom'. This personality is believed to be the originator of the universe, the creator or initiator of "all seen and unseen realities and forces" (Mbon,1974: 47). However, there are other smaller spirit beings believed to be messengers of Abasi Ibom with whom man easily relates through prayers, incantations and sacrifices and other rites. As observed by Mbon (1974: 47):

To serve as messengers or intermediaries of this supreme creator are ancestral spirits and deities known by different names and designations, and believed to live also in the supernatural world. As intermediaries between Abasi Ibom and man ... these spirit beings are also believed to be able to take back to Abasi Ibom petitions, prayers, sacrifices, offerings, and worship of man).

It is also believed that these spirits are in two categories, "the good and the malignant". According to Mbon (1994:47) 'The former may be invoked by diviners (Mbia Idoing) for the good of man – for healing, protection, fertility, procreation, etc. – while the latter may be invoked by the wicked (Ifot) for the evil purpose of metaphysically hurting, harming or "charming" and killing people".

In the play, the presence of 'Ibom' and the pouring of libation speak volume of the centrality of divinity in traditional religious practices. In situation four, the playwright describes Ibom's stage business thus: "sitting with a bottle

of schnapps in his left hand and a glass in the right. Before he begins his speech, he pours some drops on the ground" intermittently Ibom keeps pouring the drink in the course of his speech and at the end of his speech "he drinks some and gives some to Ekpema" (p.54). The arts of divination and enchantment are very basic rituals in Akwa Ibom traditional religious practice because it serves as a platform upon which the enchanter or priest communicates with unseen forces and ancestors believed to have much role to play in human affairs. The sovereign existence of the supernatural forces who must often be intimidated of human activities through these enchantment, divination, and sacrifices is central to the religious belief of the Ibibio people. Such rites as serving cola nut and hot drink to the spirit agents through enchantment is seen to be an invitation to the gods or spiritual agents to be part of an event or run an errand for the enchanter. It could also serve as a form of settlement to appease the gods in cases where they had been offended. Beyond their belief in the supreme God, and small deities, Akwa Ibom people also hold tenaciously to their belief in the continuous presence of their ancestors. According to Esema (2002), "it is believed that those who died do not actually die but are transformed into the spirit world, and do come out as 'spirit beings' from time to time to participate in human activities especially during festivals and other traditional ceremonies. The ring in Ibom's finger and his constant action of adjusting it when confronted by supposed enemies speaks volumes of his occultic inclination. The ring is a symbol of his idolatrous worship of the mundane. The skull and the other traditional paraphernalia in his raffia bag identify Ibom as a core traditional worshipper.

## 2. Cultural Values in the Play

### 2.1. *The Value of Parenting, Child Adoption/Rejection in Ibibio Culture*

The subject of parenting or child rearing refers to the process involved in promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth of a child till he matures to adulthood.

Beyond caring for one's biological child, parenting also involves raising and caring for a child adopted or inherited from biological parents or fostered from orphanage homes.

The child factor that reveals the emotional or sentimental attachments between parenthood and the child figure is a theme that expresses the character, the hopes, dreams and yearnings of every responsible man or woman. In Ibibio culture, the child is considered to be a very important member of the family and therefore, his place in the home is uncompromised. However, cases abound where children are disowned by their parents mostly because of their involvement in some actions considered to bring shame and dishonor to the family. Such acts may involve armed robbery, wayward living and exhibition of other anti-social behaviours. A child can also be rejected or disowned if his parenthood is in doubt. These situations are portrayed in the play. Beyond Ekpema's physical presence which attracts Usua's anger and hatred, the thought of Ekpema bearing Usua's family name (when, in the real sense, he is another man's blood) is very upsetting, making Usua get impatient and aggressive towards Ekpema at every slight provocation. When reporting the case to Ekpema's friend, Koko, Usua states:

... when the chicken grows up it goes feeding alone. I have done what I could for him these years. I did that because of his mother... tell him to leave my house and find one for himself or go to his father. I am not ready to receive his troubles again. Tell him, if he loves his life, he should avoid me and this house like a plague, because I will not hesitate in using this matched any time, he misses his way to this place. Bastard thing! (p.12).

Usua also reacts to Ima's plea for mercy for Ekpema thus:

Shut up your mouth, Ima! He is not a brother to you ... he is another man's child and there is no reason why I should continue to keep him when his father is there, alive and healthy (p.15).

In another development, Ibom exhibits rejection towards Ekpema due to his (Ekpema's) dishonest behaviour. When appealed to by Obot to be lenient with Ekpema, Ibom's reaction is captured in the following dialogue:

Ibom: And he will die a stranger because I am not going to accept him again. I don't even have all the power to help him even if I wanted to ... I shall not add to my name another loads of theft (p.70). ... The blood of thieves does not run in my veins. He is not mine. If he were mine, he wouldn't have stolen my money. I desire to die known only as a mysterious man, not being identified with thieves. I say these things to your hearing now that I am still alive so that when I dance my last steps, the mouths that wag against the dead will be cautioned when they hear that Ibom refused to be identified with thieves and had disowned the one, he thought was his son, because he stole. (p.70- 71). Ekpema's rejection by the people and environment he grew up to see and accept as his own, produces a serious dent on his personality and exposes him to psychological torment, making him a social misfit and of course a menace to the society.

#### 2.1.1. The Value of Provision and Responsibility

The demand by Usua that Ekpema should go and fetch fodder for the goats is a training to instill the values of care and social responsibility in Ekpema. His refusal to condone Ekpema's lazy attitude is an indication that a parent should prepare his children for hard work and domestic commitment which are some of his basic responsibilities to his family.

#### 2.1.2. The Value of Obedience and Humility

This is a cardinal element that promotes peaceful coexistence in every responsible home. Hence, Usua's frowning at Ekpema's attitude at flouting his instructions is indicative of a parent who is determined to confront and exterminate every act of indiscipline, disobedience and irresponsibility in his household.

## 2.2. *The Value of Integrity in Socio-Economic Management*

Maintaining a large kinship network is very advantageous towards promoting economic well-being of communities. The reason being that it offers members opportunities to invest on all kinds of project and building personal savings thereby increasing wealth. Communities have over the years been known to engage in savings through collective contributions called *osusu* in some Nigerian communities and *Afe Etibe* in *Ibibio* land. In the ancient times this contribution took the form of goods being exchanged for other goods depending on the needs of the people concerned. According to Esema (2002:93). "The people exchanged their surplus or occupational products to meet individual needs. It was the custom of *Akwa Ibom* people (who were then part of *Cross River State*) to trade by barter. That is, one member of the community would take palm kernel and exchange for salt". The above situation was in vogue until when money began to be used when people formed themselves into groups, pulled resources together and gave to one member of the group at a time to enable him take care of his welfare needs with ease.

This situation may have informed the playwright to create room for the *Traders' Union*, which *Usua* is seen to be a member. In an association of this nature, the people appointed to administrative positions are often expected to be persons of proven integrity with whom other peoples' resources are entrusted for safe-keeping, accountability and service delivery. However, in the play, *Usua* registers his disappointment at the attitude of the Treasurer of the *Traders' Union* who claimed to have lost fifty thousand, five hundred naira of the Union's money. This lost sum no doubt, affects the welfare of the members of the union and calls for disciplinary action against the culprit thus:

*Usua*:

And we have ordered him to bring the money in two weeks or we shall hand him over to the police ... (p.29).

The above situation therefore questions the integrity of the Union's Treasurer in managing people's resources. This is a lesson that traditional culture respects honesty, self-discipline, and abhors avarice, fraud, trickery and falsehood.

## 2.3. *Implications of the Study to the Educational Drama Teacher*

Children and youth theatre are branches of educational theatre practice that allow drama facilitators and teachers to engage dramatic approach in providing lessons to learners of all ages. Educational theatre/drama practice according to Courtney (1966:41) "places the child at the very cornerstone of educational philosophy, with the fundamental objectives of developing his or her personality to the fullest possible extent". In her reference to the work of Peter Slade, Nkanga (2010:45) observes that dramatic experience during learning "provides one of the most potent channels through which knowledge or information can be passed unto the child" (45). According to Nkanga, (2010:45) because "dramatic activity is the human being's means of assimilating experience, it becomes very fundamental to education and learning". In his "Play Way" method, Cook sees acting as the sure way to learn, and Courtney's observation that Cook's method was founded on three principles is worth noting thus:

- That for learning to be effective it must not depend on reading and listening, but rather must be depended upon action, doing and experience,
- A good work can only be achieved through spontaneous effort and free interest than through compulsion and application of force,
- Play is the only natural means of study in youth (quoted in nkanga,2010: 46).

The play leaves the drama/ theatre-in-education teacher with ample themes from which he/she can draw useful lessons for the children. Such themes as, the dangers of engaging in social vices, covetousness, dangers of disobedience, 'effects of idol worship' etc. Such subject areas like Home Management, Home Economics, Food and Nutrition, Agriculture (Animal Farming), Commerce, Economics, religious Studies, Government, etc., constitute areas of exploration for the drama teacher. Beyond this, the theatre in education teacher can use *Ekpema's* experience in the play to teach against such anti-social behavior as lying, stealing, disobedience, etc. to instruct the children on the need to maintain integrity and moral rectitude in the society. This lesson could be used as basis to teach the need to keep to rules and maintain discipline, good social and moral etiquette. The devastating and dehumanizing experience that *Ekpema* attracted to himself as a result of disobedience and neglect of moral behaviour will serve as a warning to youths and children to shun all forms of social misbehavior.

Role-playing the characters and situations in the play will provide and expose the learners to the various cultural elements, values and symbols found in the *Ibibio* culture.

## 3. Conclusion

Dramatic text such as *Johnson's Son of the Land* captures cultural ideas and reflects the life and the ethics of the people within whose cultural environment they are set. Through this kind of text, the playwright "makes man conscious of his place in order to make him accept his social obligations" (Traoré, 1972:65).

In adopting this kind of play during Theatre in Education projects, the children and youths are presented with the lessons to be learned from the deeds of others. The social significance of a play of this nature lies in the moral lessons that can be extracted therefrom. According to Bamidele (2000:56) ... "Drama more than any other literary genre and because of its opportunity for staging or performance, could serve as a cultural data, or as a mind of information on both the material and non-material culture of the people".

Through this play, *Johnson* presents himself as one of the "privileged elites who must defend tradition from the traumatic assault of modern, albeit largely western European culture" (Ohaegbu,1985: 179). Through this creative

writing, the playwright has opened a window to the understanding of the ways of life of Ibibio people. And has by so doing provided a learning facility for providing a new orientation and direction for the younger generation.

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