

The Relevance of Indigenous Toponyms in Preserving Culture and Heritage in Igbomina-land

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Abstract

This paper delves into the cultural significance of toponyms in Omu-Aran, Nigeria, and their role in shaping the indigenous population's cultural identity and heritage. By examining the interplay between toponyms and cultural expression, the paper reveals the complex dynamics of colonialism, religion, civilisation, and modernisation on the town's cultural landscape. The findings indicate that settlement expansion and fragmentation led to toponymic adaptations, while war and colonisation had a minimal impact. The paper underscores the importance of integrating indigenous toponymic values to preserve cultural heritage in Omu-Aran and other West African communities, striking a balance between tradition and modernisation. By illuminating the significance of toponyms in shaping cultural identity and heritage, the paper highlights their potential for promoting cultural preservation and revitalisation.

Keywords: culture, heritage, indigenous, Omu-Aran, preservation, relevance, toponyms

Introduction

Toponyms are “place names or names given to geographical locations, including towns, streets, and tourist centers” (Oha, Anthony 2017). Naming of such places goes beyond ordinary labelling or identification. According to Soyinka, a Nigerian Nobel laureate, playwright and essayist, “naming is a critical business in traditional African society because names comprise meaning and history. They are also “intimations of hope and affirmations of origin” (Soyinka 1988). In another view, in an annotated bibliography on African Ethnonyms and Toponyms in Columbia Library Journals, an African Associate Professor, Monographic Cataloging Librarian, University Library, Center for African Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana, Batoma 2006 states that African names are oral records that can be “meticulously processed and analysed by African and Africana scholars” (Batona 2006). He added that toponyms constitute fixed landmarks that are important data for research because of their durability. He also categorised the meanings of toponyms into five facets namely: the geographical, the historical, the linguistic, the symbolic, and the socio-political facets. In the same text, Batoma goes further to compile an annotation of sources on ethnonyms and toponyms from the Maghreb region and Sub-Saharan Africa dating from 1930 to the present irrespective of the author's origin, nationality and race.

In a similar vein, Momin, a Nigerian academic and researcher in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, states that the name a person, town, city or village bears “evolved out of the people’s needs, desires, hopes and aspirations, and which provide an insight into such people’s personal lifestyle” (Momin 1989). According to Momin such names help throw light on a number of geographical, historical, religious and other aspects of the town’s life as well as on the various natural resources which attracted men

to settle and how the settlement started. Aleru and Alabi, Nigerian researchers and archeologists, posit that when broadly applied, “toponymy encompasses names of inhabited places, countries, natural features such as mountains, rivers, and even the stars and planets, and man-made features such as roads and buildings” (Aleru and Alabi 2010).

In his own perspective, Odebode, a Nigerian researcher and university lecturer, looked critically at the historical and oral accounts of six place-names in Nigeria and opines that the names impact on the history, religion, economy, politics, customs and traditions of their immediate communities “rather than resonating mere illocutionary act of describing...and a thorough dissection of the names will generate further onomasticity, historicity and narrativity attesting to their socio-cultural significance in the lives of the people” (Odebode 2015)

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the names of places in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, hold valuable information that offers a glimpse into the historical, cultural, and developmental narratives of a region. This study delves into the significance of indigenous toponyms in preserving the culture and heritage of Igbomina-land, with a focus on Omu-Aran. By examining the relevance of these place names, the study aims to:

- Identify and elucidate the cultural and heritage practices of Omu-Aran indigenes, including their traditions, customs, and beliefs; and
- Analyze the impact of indigenous toponyms on the cultural and heritage preservation of Omu-Aran indigenes, including how they shape identity, community, and sense of belonging.

Through this exploration, the study seeks to uncover the hidden stories and meanings behind Omu-Aran's place names, shedding light on the town's rich cultural tapestry and its people's traditions. By doing so, it highlights the importance of indigenous toponyms in understanding the cultural and historical context of a region, and demonstrates how they can serve as a valuable tool for cultural preservation and education. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the broader discussion on the significance of place names in African cultures and their role in shaping community identity.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach, relying on primary and secondary sources of data to gather information about Omu-Aran. The primary source of data consisted of oral interviews with three prominent indigenes of the town, carefully selected for their wealth of knowledge and experience. These individuals included:

- Oba Abdulraheem, the king of Omu-Aran, who provided valuable insights into the town's history and cultural heritage.
- High Chief Emmanuel Olusegun Oyedepo, a respected elder and custodian of traditional knowledge.
- Oluwaponmile Abigail Bankole, an elderly woman who had lived in Omu-Aran for almost ninety years, offering a unique perspective on the town's evolution.

The majority of the information gathered came from the interview with the king, who possesses extensive knowledge of the town's history and cultural practices. Supplementing the primary data, the researcher drew upon secondary sources, including:

- Personal observations and experiences gathered during twelve years of residence in Omu-Aran.
- Consultation of relevant materials, although limited in availability.

This multi-faceted approach ensured a rich and nuanced understanding of Omu-Aran's cultural heritage, history, and traditions. By triangulating data from various sources, the researcher validated the findings and increased the reliability of the study.

History of Omu-Aran

Omu-Aran, an ancient town in Kwara State, Nigeria, West Africa, is the first settlement in all Igbomina-land of the Yoruba tribe. It originated over five hundred years ago as a result of the migration of people from Ile-Ife, Osun State, also in Nigeria, and it is currently the local government headquarters of Irepodun local government. The historical oral account of the origin of Omu-Aran states that the first person to settle in Omu-Aran was a “powerful Ife warrior called Olomu-Aperan who became the progenitor of the Igbomina town of Omu-Aran in Kwara State, Nigeria” (IPOB Ontario 2023). Another powerful and good hunter, also relevant to the history of Omu-Aran, was a man called Akii. He had his hunting adventure on a hill called Oke-Akii. The hill was named after him as it is a combination of his name, Akii, and ‘Oke’, which means ‘hill’ in the English language. Akii had three brothers namely; Igan, Ijawusi, and Areyin and there are places named after them in Omu-Aran. Akii and his three brothers established the first four settlements on the hill.

The native dialect, which is the mother tongue, of Omu-Aran indigenes is a variant of the Yoruba language known as “Igbona” (Wikipedia 2023) and it is spoken mostly only by the indigenes of the town. The general Yoruba language is spoken by non-indigenes amongst themselves as well as with the indigenes of the town for easy communication and interaction. The English language, introduced through colonisation, education and modernisation, is combined with the native dialect and is also spoken in the Omu-Aran community, particularly by educated indigenes and non-indigenes.

The name of the current king, whose traditional title is Olomu of Omu-Aran, is Oba Abdulraheem, Oladele, Adeoti, Akolade, Agboluaje¹ and he was enthroned on 22nd September 2018. He hails from the Idoku ruling house known as Olahelu Akolade Agboluaje Olomu Efon and he got his title from his mother’s lineage. The inhabitants of Omu-Aran live in smaller settlements known as compounds. The earlier settlers from Ile-Ife made a stopover at Ijaregbe before coming to the place called Odo-Omu which is close to the present settlement. By implication, the compound name of the town (Omu-Aran) indicates that there are two settlements in one, Omu and Aran. The first king’s title, Olomu Aperan, reflected this.

In another development, in 1931, there was a misunderstanding between Oba Eniyye Arawande, the ruling king from 1928-30, and the Olomu of Omu which led to the exit of Oba Eniyye Arawande (and his followers from a part of Aran), from Omu to settle in another

geographical location to form another settlement called Arandun. In essence, this means that Arandun and Aran Omu comprises of people from the same lineage, i.e. two brothers can have the same family and one of them can be an indigene of Aranomu, while the other brother an indigene of Arandun. That settlement in recent times is known as Aran Odundun.

The compounds in Omu-Oran have names that are the toponyms referred to in this research. The names are mostly derived from the names of the first settlers in each particular compound. The names of the first five prominent compounds at the early stage of their settlements are: Ikoja, also known as Ijawusi (this is the first compound) – he had a brother that settled in Aafin thereby making them two compounds, i.e. Ikoja and Aafin compounds. The second is Onigan, also called Igangu – there are seven additional settlements in this compound namely: Igangu Momolosh, Igangu Ayunomu Moye, Igangu Iwoye, Igangu Omilodogbo, Igangu Edamuletodo, Igangu Owolewa, and Igangu Iletuntun. The emergence of these other compounds translates to complexity in Igangu settlement. The third is Akii, called Okeki – this settlement also has other compounds namely: Okeki Ile-Arilewo, Okeki Ogun-Arojo, Okeki Gbelejaye, Okeki Moloke, Okeki Monisale, and Okeki Ile-Akanmoleyin. The fourth is called Areyin, also called Oke-esa – this is a single compound and there is no complexity in its settlement. The fifth is named Ijoko, also called Ifaja – this has two settlements namely; Ijoko Olasekale. Here also are other compounds which are: Ile-Oja, Seke, Ile-Oba, Odo-Oro, Ile-nla Aladodo, Ile-nla Abegunde, Ile-nla Oloye, and Odo'ju consisting of Ile-Oba, Ijero, Ile-Osi, Ile-Oro, Ile-Oju, and Oke Iroko. The other three settlements that emerged later on are: Ora Ayoka, Raba and Ilaro.

All the eight compounds and the compounds within them are categorised into two blocks which are Omu and Aran Blocks. The Omu Block is divided into two namely: Ihaye and Ifaja wards. The other compounds mentioned earlier, i.e. Akii, Areyin, Oni Igan, Ilaro, Raba, and Ora Ayoka, belong to the Aye ward in Omu Block. The Ifaja ward consists of Ijoko, Ile Alasekale, Seke, Ile Aladodo, Ile nla Abegunde, Ile nla Oloye, Ijero, Odo Oro, Ile oro, Ile Igbogbo (now called Ile Igbagbo) Gbagida Oke, Gbagida Isale, Ile Oja, Oja Eleru, Oja Esunsun, Edidi Omu all in Omu Block.

The Aran Block came into existence during the reign of Olumefon the First. Olomu of Omu-aran is Olumefon the second. Olumefon (1) was the one that brought Aran to Omu thereby having a combination of the two communities to create the town of Omu-Aran. The prominent compounds in Aran are Oke-Esan which consists of four compounds namely: Oke-Esan Ile Odun, Oke-Esan Ile Okankan, Oke-Esan Ileti, and Oke-Esan Odo Sare. Other compounds emerged after these four and they are Ile Ade, Edidi Aran, and Oke-Apa. In Oke-Apa are other compounds which are: Ile Awure, Ile Oloje, Ile Oniwo, Apakere, Oke Aja, Orolu, Ile Otan, Moji, Ile Amule, Mode, and Agan-Oru. Agan-Oru, a bustling marketplace, has its roots in a unique circumstance - a night market. The name "Agan-Oru" is derived from the bi-annual festival of "Agan" and the Yoruba word for night, "Oru". In its early days, women traders would converge on the market from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., selling food items harvested from farms during the day. This nocturnal market allowed farmers to dispose of perishable goods, ensuring they didn't go to waste.

The women traders would then return home, often waking their sleeping children to share a late dinner, as food preservation methods were scarce. Over time, the market expanded

beyond Agan-Oru, spilling onto the main Aperan road, where the central market is now located. This evolution transformed Agan-Oru into a vibrant commercial hub, showcasing the resourcefulness and resilience of the local community. Oja Ojomu, situated in the Omu Block, serves as the central market of the town. Unlike Agan-Oru, a night market located in Aran Block, Oja Ojomu originally operated as a day market. Notably, the central Mosque is also situated within Oja Ojomu. Interestingly, both markets, Agan-Oru and Oja Ojomu, have evolved to operate during both day and night in present times, catering to the needs of the community around the clock.

Background of Selected Toponyms in Omu-Aran

Okeki is the third out of the first five prominent settlements mentioned earlier and the first ward in this compound called Okeki Arilewo, used to be called Okeki Igbo. 'Igbo' means 'thick forest' and after civilisation/modernisation cum exposure, the indigenes no longer wanted to be identified with thick forest because it connotes primitiveness and non-civilisation. Oke-Esa (the fourth out of the first five prominent settlements) derived its name from Areyin, which means honey harvesting. There was a masquerade from that compound identified with honey bees from nowhere hovering above his head. This unresolved mystery led to the naming of that compound as Areyin, meaning 'the one who cuts honey' in earlier days but now the same compound has been re-named Oke-Esa.

Ile tuntun- means 'new house', it is named after the people that settled in the land and who started building new houses. Ile Ayunomu Moye means 'the one who goes to Omu to be conferred with a chieftaincy title'. The compound is named after those who do such. Ile Igbogbo means 'the house of cane', later became Ile Igbagbo, which means 'the house of Christians'. The reason for the change of name is that the settlers in the compound never accepted any cultural festival from the beginning. Such festivals include a masquerade, Sango, Oya and Obatala festivals. It is the only compound in Omu-Aran without any shrine for deities. Three-quarters of the inhabitants are of Cherubim/Seraphim or Anglican denomination. Ile Oro became Ile Ire because Ile Oro means 'house of agony' and the inhabitants do not want to be identified with such a negative name. Although the panegyric of that compound still presents 'oro' because they could not change the name in that particular phenomenon. Oke-Apa, which means 'the hill of a destructive person', is another compound that the settlers have attempted to change the name to Oke Imole/Oke Igbagbo because most of them are either Christians or Muslims, but they could not.

In response to a question by the researcher on the possibility of religious crisis, the king said that such can never happen in Omu-Aran because of the connections and relationships of the indigenes of the town. For instance, the king is a Muslim, his wife is also a Muslim while his wife's twin sister is a Christian and her children lived with the king and his wife. There are several other instances of such circumstances in Omu-Aran.

The Culture and Heritage of Omu-Aran

Before the advent of Christianity and Islam, Omu-Aran indigenes were purely pagans just like any other average Yoruba settlement at that period. The advent of these religions changed the situation of things. The religion that came first to Omu-Aran is Christianity with the emergence

of the Anglican Church in 1958. Thereafter came Sudan Interior Mission which became the Evangelical Church of West Africa and now Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA). The Church that was established after ECWA was the Seventh Day Adventist followed by the Pentecostal.

As pagans, it was the culture of Omu-Aran indigenes to believe and worship their traditional gods and goddesses namely; Sango (one of the Alaafins i.e. kings that reigned in Aafin Oyo (Oyo's palace), Ogun (god of iron), Oya (river goddess and wife of Sango), Egungun (masquerade), Obatala (not far from Ifa oracle), Elele (an unknown god), Osun (river goddess), Orisa oko (native god). A peculiar thing about the Orisa oko worshippers is that it is an abomination for them to eat new yams. No matter how hungry they are, they cannot eat the yams harvested in June, they have to wait until October to November when the yams harvested early would no longer be new and tender. Even though yam was the staple food at that time, it could be quite tempting for them particularly when they see others eating or pounding yam to eat pounded yam during yam season. They have to make do with other types of meals made from corn, millet, guinea corn etc. to satisfy their hunger³. To indicate the extent of hunger an Orisa oko worshipper may be subjected to, an allusion is often made by any hungry indigene in their local dialect that "ebi to npa mi nisin yi ju ti Olosa oko lo" meaning "The hunger pangs that I am feeling now is more than that of Olosa oko"!

The celebration of the masquerades' festival was a prominent culture in Omu-Aran. Each compound has its own peculiar masquerade. For instance, the Alata compound is identified with Eegun Olore (cane masquerade). However, the interest and involvement of many indigenes have reduced drastically due to civilisation and religion. In the early days, indigenes that lived in other villages/towns used to come around to Omu-Aran for the celebration of the festival of masquerades. One of the interviewees, Mrs Oluwaponmile Abigail Bankole (aged 90 years) spoke with excitement which indicates her nostalgic feelings for recollecting the pomp and pageantry associated with the celebration of the masquerade festivals in her days.

The people also practiced cultism with the existence of Ogboni and Imule fraternities. This was a culture inherited by the whole community and they promoted it. The person saddled with the responsibility of this traditional practice is called Ogbo. He is symbolised by the figure of a person carrying a cutlass. He is known as a pathfinder because it is believed that he found the path that led the indigenes to their settlement. The name Ogbomona means 'the one who knows the path' (pathfinder). The name Igbomina (refers to the indigenes of Omu-Aran) is derived from Ogbomona. Omu-Aran indigenes possess an object called 'Ogbo' and they celebrate it every year in May or June (before the new yam festival) during a festival called 'Orugbo'. They cannot do without celebrating this festival and it is upheld that no religion can terminate it because it is linked with the installation of a king.

The History of Ogbo

Ogbo has a priest called Onigemo and he is the custodian of Ogbo because of his marital connection. Anyone who'd be appointed as a priest of Ogbo must come from Ogun-Arojo. One of the residential enclaves of the Okeki compound is Okeki Ogun-Arojo (mentioned earlier among the compounds in Okeki). The celebration of Ogbo during the Orugbo festival lasts for

nine days. During this period, first thing in the morning before daybreak, the incumbent king will go to a place called Igangu Ile Tuntun to enquire what the Olugbo (oracle) will accept as a sacrifice for a particular year. This can range from a cock, she-goat, ram, etc. In the year 2023, the Olugbo oracle chose a she-goat as a sacrifice. This was given to the residents at Ile-Tuntun with tubers of yam to prepare pounded yam along with the sum of ten thousand naira to procure soap ingredients to cook the soup with which to eat the pounded yam. These items will be carried first thing in the morning of the festival, to the compound of the king's family house. The carriers of these items will be entertained with palm wine and akara (bean cake) fried with palm oil. The carriers of the festival items are the first people to start the celebration in the king's compound as they beat the Bata and Dundun (local) drums in the king's family house and proceed to the palace while still beating the drums.

The king sits on his royal throne while this is going on with an aged woman known as Edemo Omu, who by tradition assumes the role of the first wife of the Olomu (king). The second wife is called Ojomu Omu and being a junior wife, she sits by the king's leg because she is not allowed to sit on a royal chair beside the king like the first wife throughout the nine days of the festival. These two wives are just ceremonial wives while the festival lasts, they are not the original wives of the king. Interestingly, the first wife is much older than the king and most unlikely to be his wife in reality according to their culture.

The royal throne is called 'Ite-Oba' and the pillars around it are usually wrapped with clothes, women's wrappers in particular. During the festival, four or five sets of people will dance around the compound of the palace, and on a particular day, the king will also dance and that is the only day the king must dance. This festival is so important in Omu-Aran that it cannot be canceled despite the advent of civilisation. Presently, there is no religious discrimination among the indigenes. For instance, at the meeting of the Olomu-in-Council², a Christian usually prays before the commencement of the meeting in the first week of the month while a Muslim prays on the last week of the month. The people believe that they are one.

Traditional Food

There are certain types of food that are regarded as delicacies in Omu-Aran. Ewu-Iyan and Amala Idagbona (leftover pounded yam and yam flour meal respectively that are heated) fall into these categories. Freshly pounded yam can be eaten as dinner and the leftover as breakfast the following morning after heating it up in a special way such that it becomes hotter and more delicious than the freshly pounded yam! Others are Amala (made from yam flour), Ogi-Lile (Lagba), and Ogi-Eda (made from maize), commonly eaten for breakfast, and Ekuru (made from Beans) and eaten with a special sauce made from pepper and tomatoes. Rice rarely eaten in the early days has become a staple food.

The Impact of Colonisation and Civilisation on the Culture of Omu-Aran

The colonisation and civilisation of Omu-Aran have brought about a profound transformation in the town's culture and heritage. On one hand, Western education has been a positive outcome, enabling the town's inhabitants to access modern knowledge and skills. However, this has also led to the erosion of traditional values and practices, as the emphasis on individualism has replaced the communal living and harmony that once characterised Yoruba culture. The king's

account highlights the destructive effects of colonisation and civilisation on the culture, noting that the loss of traditional practices has led to a disconnection from the town's heritage. The once-strong communal bonds have been replaced by a focus on individual achievement, leading to a decline in social cohesion and community spirit.

Despite these negative effects, this research finds that civilisation has had more positive than adverse effects on Omu-Aran. The 'Omu-Aran Day' ceremony, held every four years, is a testament to the enduring importance of culture and heritage in the town. This event brings together indigenes from far and near, fostering a sense of community and shared identity. Successful and wealthy individuals make significant contributions to the town's development, demonstrating their commitment to the town's progress. Notable individuals, such as Gen. Bangboye, a former governor of Kwara State, and Mr. Kayode Bangbola, a wealthy and successful iron rod merchant, have played a significant role in promoting the town's development. Their efforts have led to improvements in infrastructure, such as the installation of pipe-borne water and electricity, and have provided opportunities for cultural exchange and advancement.

Overall, the impact of colonisation and civilisation on Omu-Aran's culture has been complex and multifaceted. While traditional practices and values have been eroded, the town's resilience and commitment to its heritage have ensured their continued relevance. The interplay between modernisation and tradition has resulted in a unique cultural landscape, reflecting both the challenges and opportunities of development.

The Impact of Omu-Aran on Neighbouring Communities

Omu-Aran, is a vibrant town that serves as the epicenter of socio-cultural, economic, and political influence, extending its reach to neighbouring communities in Ekiti, Osun, and Ilorin. Its strategic location and rich heritage have fostered a profound impact on the surrounding areas.

Socio-Cultural Impact

As the headquarters of the Iyangba Confederacy, Omu-Aran shares a deep-seated cultural bond with neighbouring towns, including Gogo, Ikosu, Ikun (Ekiti State), Oke-Ero, Oro-Ago, and Okanle (Kwara State). This confederacy celebrates a common heritage, with the heads of gods and goddesses in Omu-Aran observing the same festive days without conflict. This cultural affinity has promoted unity and cooperation among the member towns.

Economic Impact

Omu-Aran's geographical location makes it an accessible hub for surrounding communities, offering a range of goods and services unavailable in neighbouring towns. The town boasts a hierarchy of twenty goods and services, including hospital services (General Hospital, Landmark Medical Centre, etc.), education services, a university, and over twenty secondary schools, some with boarding facilities. This attracts residents from within a twenty-five to thirty-kilometer radius, stimulating economic activity and growth.

Political Impact

As the headquarters of Kwara South Senatorial District, Omu-Aran plays a pivotal role in the political landscape of the region. During elections, the town serves as the collation center for results, including those from Offa, a town not classified as Igbomina. This underscores Omu-Aran's significance in the political process, further solidifying its influence on neighbouring communities. In summary, Omu-Aran's impact on neighbouring communities is multifaceted, encompassing socio-cultural, economic, and political spheres. Its rich heritage, strategic location, and range of goods and services have established the town as a beacon of influence, fostering unity, cooperation, and growth in the region.

Unveiling the Hidden Gems of Omu-Aran

Omu-Aran, a town steeped in tradition and culture, boasts a plethora of notable features that set it apart from its contemporaries. From its unique building system to its warm hospitality, this enchanting town is a treasure trove of experiences waiting to be discovered.

Architecture and Royalty

The building system in Omu-Aran is characterised by a uniformity that is punctuated only by the grandeur of royal compounds. These majestic structures are distinguished by their ornate gates, which exude a sense of royalty and majesty. The attention to detail and the emphasis on aesthetics are a testament to the town's rich cultural heritage.

Cultural Integration and Harmony

Omu-Aran is a melting pot of cultures, where non-indigenes and indigenes coexist in harmony. The town's welcoming nature is evident in its willingness to accommodate visitors and strangers, with plans underway to relocate the Hausa community to a larger space, facilitating their integration into the existing community.

Fashion and Tradition

The people of Omu-Aran are renowned for their love of fashion, particularly with traditional outfits. The women adorn themselves in elegant 'iro and buba' (top and wrapper), while the men don 'buba' and 'sokoto' (top and trousers), often complemented by the majestic 'agbada' (ceremonial garment). These stunning outfits are crafted from local fabrics, showcasing the town's rich cultural tapestry.

Evolution of Professions

Farming, once the primary occupation, has given way to modern professions such as politics, trading, fashion designing, and more. This shift is a testament to the town's adaptability and willingness to embrace change.

Hospitality and Warmth

Visitors to Omu-Aran are greeted with warm smiles and open arms. The indigenes are known to be generous, often offering land to strangers who wish to reside in the town. This hospitality is a hallmark of Omu-Aran's culture, making it a haven for those seeking a sense of belonging.

Emerging Landmarks

New places are emerging in Omu-Aran, each named after its distinctive feature. From educational institutions like Landmark University to financial hubs like banks, hotels and event centers, the town is rapidly evolving while maintaining its cultural essence.

A Haven of Peace and Tranquility

Omu-Aran is a land of peace and tranquility, where growth and development are harmoniously balanced. Its positive impact on neighbouring towns is a testament to its role as a beacon of progress and cultural richness.

Recommendations

This study recommends the organisation of innovative traditional programs that showcase the town's art, music, and dance, blended with modern styles, on a rotational basis at least twice a year. This will not only attract younger generations but also encourage natives residing in other towns to participate, thereby providing an opportunity for them to contribute their wealth of knowledge and experience towards the positive changes and advancement of the town.

Furthermore, the creation of a comprehensive digital archive of oral traditions, cultures, and history of Omu-Aran is advocated. This archive can be utilised to translate and subtitle recordings of the Igbomina indigenous language using AI-powered tools, thereby making it accessible to a global audience. In addition, the development of immersive Virtual Reality (VR) experiences that simulate festivals, ceremonies, and historical events is proposed. This will allow users to explore and interact with the town's cultural heritage, providing an immersive experience that fosters a deeper understanding of Omu-Aran's rich history.

The appointment of Omu-Aran indigenous ambassadors to promote the cultural heritage globally through cultural exchange programs, workshops, and lectures is also recommended. This will not only showcase the town's cultural heritage but also provide a platform for cultural exchange and collaboration. Moreover, the development of AR-guided tours of the Toponyms in Omu-Aran is suggested. This will provide in-depth information and insights into their historical significance, thereby enhancing the understanding and appreciation of the town's cultural heritage.

It is also recommended that approval be given to certain compounds mentioned in the study who wish to change the name of their compounds for certain reasons. This will respect the cultural identity and autonomy of the community, acknowledging the evolving nature of cultural heritage and the need for adaptation. Lastly, this study advocates for scholars, researchers, critics, community, and national leaders to explore and imbibe the values in indigenous toponyms not just in Nigeria but also in other West African countries. This will promote the preservation of cultural heritage without compromising modernisation, ensuring that the cultural significance of Omu-Aran is preserved for future generations.

Conclusion

The naming of a place is a sacred tradition that holds immense significance, particularly in Omu-Aran, where compounds have been identified by traditional names since the early days. These names, often derived from the founders or circumstances of establishment, serve as a

vital link to the town's cultural heritage and values. The use of traditional names has enabled the indigenes to uphold their cultural identity and distinguish one compound from another, fostering unity and easy identification among the indigenes and non-indigenes.

The traditional names in Omu-Aran have played a crucial role in preserving the town's cultural essence, reflecting the rich history and customs of the community. For natives of the town residing in other towns or in the diaspora, these names provide a vital connection to their roots, enabling them to easily trace and locate their ancestral homes if the need arises. This connection to their heritage is invaluable, providing a sense of belonging and identity.

Furthermore, the traditional names in Omu-Aran depict 'Africaness,' synonymous with the town, making it more endearing to its people. The use of these names has become an integral part of the community's fabric, highlighting the town's unique cultural essence. The ease of identification and location that these names provide is also significant, facilitating navigation within the town for visitors and newcomers.

In addition, the traditional names have enabled the indigenes to maintain a strong sense of cultural identity, setting them apart from other communities. This sense of identity is vital, particularly in today's globalised world, where cultural heritage is often lost amidst modernisation. The people of Omu-Aran have managed to preserve their cultural essence, thanks to the traditional naming of compounds, ensuring that their heritage continues to thrive.

Overall, the traditional naming of compounds in Omu-Aran is a testament to the town's rich cultural heritage and values. It has fostered unity, easy identification, and a strong sense of cultural identity, making it an integral part of the community's fabric.

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