

**A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF ITSEKIRI CULTURAL
DELICACIES**

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DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

NOVEMBER, 2022

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
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NOVEMBER, 2022

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that this research was carried out by **EZE FAVOUR CHINONYEREM** with Matriculation Number: **ART1701287** in the Department of Linguistic Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under my supervision

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PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION

I, **EZE FAVOUR CHINONYEREM** with the Matriculation Number: **ART1701287** declare that this work title “**A SOCIO-SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF ITSEKIRI CULTURAL DELICACIES**” has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test (which is) and so does not violate any copy right regulations.

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty for the strength, will and infinite love towards me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely thankful to God for His blessings, wisdom and knowledge granted upon me in the course of my study in this great institution and enabling me to carry out my research successful.

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ABSTRACT

This project work focuses on socio-semiotic analysis of Itsekiri cultural delicacies. The aim of the study is to examine cultural delicacies in Itsekiri. Data for this study were elucidated from primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from five native speakers of Itsekiri and a traditional chief by personal communication, Secondary data comprises published materials on food and culture in the related languages, etc. In course of data analysis, the study adopted a descriptive research design for the description and analysis of the data. The study finds that natural languages like Itsekiri exhibit a high rate of culturally especially when it involves delicacies. The study also found out that sensitivity to food rules and customs is important in building and strengthening cross-cultural relationships.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This research focuses on the socio-semiotic analysis of Itsekiri Cultural delicacies. It is the investigation of delicacies peculiar to the Itsekiri people, almost every society or culture in the world have their peculiarities, part of which is the delicacy. These delicacies depict the culture of the people such that when a delicacy is called, our minds is channelled to a particular tribe. Example; as Ewedu soup is to the Yoruba, Ofe Onugbu is to the Igbo e.t.c A delicacy is usually a rare and expensive food item that is considered highly desirable, sophisticated or peculiarly distinctive, within a given culture. Irrespective of local preferences, such a label is typically pervasive throughout a region. Often this is because of unusual flavours or characteristics or because it is rare or expensive.

Delicacies can be symbolic or occasional, a particular delicacy can be served in a particular event such as weddings, burial ceremonies, naming ceremonies, birthday ceremonies etc. Just like the way dressing, proverbs, languages etc. depict a culture or tribe, Delicacy is a distinguishing factor that depicts the peculiarity of a culture or tribe. The Itsekiri people have numerous delicacies, which will be considered and analysed at the course of this research.

1.2 The Language and People of Itsekiri

The Itsekiri, is also called Jekri, Isekiri, or Ishekiri are one of the Yoruboid subgroup of Nigerian's Niger Delta area, Delta State. They speak a Yoruboid language of the Benue-Congo branch of Niger-Congo languages and share elements of culture with the Yoruba, Edo, Urhobo, and Ijo through a variety of contacts.

Itsekiri presently number 2.7 million people and live mainly in the Warri South, Warri North and Warri South West local government districts of Delta State on the Atlantic coast of Nigeria. Significant communities of Itsekiri can be found in parts of Edo and Ondo states and in various other Nigerian cities including Lagos, Sapele, Benin City, Port Harcourt and Abuja. Many people of Itsekiri descent also reside in United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. The Itsekiri are closely related to the Yoruba of South Western Nigeria and more widely to the Urhobo and Edo peoples. The Itsekiri traditionally refer to their land as the kingdom of Warri or 'Iwerre' as its proper name- which is geographically contiguous to the area covered by the three Warri local government districts. The area is a key centre of Nigeria's crude oil and natural gas production and petroleum refining and the main town Warri forms the industrial and commercial nucleus of the Delta State region.

The Itsekiri live on the coast in an area of extensive mangrove swamps and freshwater wetlands. They are primarily fishermen and have employed traps,

fences, and nets, as well as rod-and-line techniques. Women make mats and baskets from reeds and palm materials. Silversmithing has died out, and blacksmithing has declined.

In traditional Itsekiri religion, Oritse is the supreme deity and creator of the world. Among the other deities are Umale Okun, god of the sea, and Ogun, god of iron and war. Divination may be accomplished by men skilled in consulting the Ifa oracle, and ceremonies are performed to the ancestors on various occasions.

1.3 Statement of the Problems

The Itsekiri people speak a Yoruboid language of the Benue-Congo branch of Niger-Congo languages and share elements of culture with the Yoruba, Edo, Urhobo, and Ijo through a variety of contact. Since they share language elements with the mentioned tribes above, the Itsekir are believed not to have peculiar delicacies since they probably emated from any of the tribes mentioned. This study will however investigate through the natives of Itsekiri the various delicacies peculiar to the tribe.

Cultural delicacy study has not really been carried out in most languages of the world, which as a result has caused pausity of literature in this study, this is however a motivation for this work.

1.4 Research Questions

This study will answer the following questions:

1. What delicacies are peculiar to the Itsekiri people?
2. At what occasions are these delicacies served?
3. What ingredients are used in preparing these delicacies?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study is carried out on the Itsekiri tribe showing the various delicacies present in the tribe. This Linguistics study will however help to document and preserve the language for further research and to use as a guideline for teaching. Below are however the aim and objectives which this study seeks to determine.

1. To examine the delicacies peculiar to the Itsekiri tribe.
2. To investigate the occasions where these delicacies are served.
3. To critically examine the ingredients used in preparing these delicacies.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This project is limited to a study of the delicacies in Itsekiri culture. The data would be analysed using the theoretical framework which is the Socio Semiotic Theory.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research work is of great significance to linguists and also scholars as it brings into awareness the various cultural delicacies of the Itsekiri people. It deals with the cultural delicacies that are peculiar to only the Itsekiri people, this work will however aid to certify more of the linguistic theory adopted which is the Semiotic theory, this will make the theory more universally acceptable.

This work serves as a means of preserving the language through written documents for future referencing. It will serve as a base for further study as well as to language teachers serving as a tool for teaching and to the students a referencing material and guide towards the delicacies of the Itsekiri people. This study will serve as a development and a step further in the study and development of the Itsekiri people, the language will now have a work on the delicacies of the tribe, this will however serve as a base for further study.

1.8 Methodology

This section concentrates more on how data used in this study were gathered and analysed, sources of data collected, the research design, research instrument used in the data collection, the procedure and tools for data analysis and techniques that were employed in analyzing the data collected.

1.9 Method of Data Collection

In this research, data were collected through various means which include interaction with a traditional chief. The researcher also had a one on one interaction with five native speakers of the language. The researcher also sought responses on the subject matter from random members of the community visited. The data were collected with the use of audio recorder, only the primary data is adopted so as to have an effective and workable data for the research.

1.10 Method of Data Analysis

This study employed descriptive research method of qualitative research. Qualitative research design is said to be the study of symbolic discourse that consists of the study texts and conversations, interpretative principles that people use to make sense in their symbolic activities (Ting-Toomey, 1984). The qualitative research method was adopted to enable the researcher study the social and cultural phenomena since the study required descriptive interpretation of the socio-cultural values of Itsekiri delicacies.

1.11 Theoretical Framework

This study employed the Sociosemiotic theory because it appropriately supports and explains the Aims and Objectives of this study.

1.12 Socio-semiotic Theory

This theory was propounded by Michael Halliday, he was already arguably Britain's leading linguistic theorist when he coined the term 'language as social semiotic' in 1978. According to Michael Halliday's (1978) Social semiotics is concerned with meaning makers and meaning making. It studies the media of dissemination and the modes of communication that people use and develop to represent their understanding of the world and to shape power relations with others. It draws on qualitative, fine-grained analysis of records of meaning making, such as 'artifacts', 'texts', and 'transcripts', to examine the production and dissemination of discourse across the variety of social and cultural contexts within which meaning is made. Semiotics is an investigation into how meaning is created and how meaning is communicated. Its origins lie in the academic study of how signs and symbols (visual and linguistic) create meaning.

Social semiotics is the study of the social dimensions of meaning, and of the power of human processes of signification and interpretation (known as semiosis) in shaping individuals and societies. Social semiotics focuses on social meaning-making practices of all types, whether visual, verbal or aural in nature. These different systems for meaning-making, or possible "channels" (e.g. speech, writing, images) are known as semiotic modes (or semiotic registers). Semiotic modes can include visual, verbal, written, gestural and musical

resources for communication. They also include various "multimodal" ensembles of any of these modes.

Social semiotics can include the study of how people design and interpret meanings, the study of texts, and the study of how semiotic systems are shaped by social interests and ideologies, and how they are adapted as society changes (Hodge and Kress, 1988). Structuralist semiotics in the tradition of Ferdinand de Saussure focused primarily on theorising semiotic systems or structures (termed *langue* by de Saussure, which change diachronically, i.e. over longer periods of time). In contrast, social semiotics tries to account for the variability of semiotic practices termed *parole* by Saussure. This altered focus shows how individual creativity, changing historical circumstances, and new social identities and projects can all change patterns of usage and design (Hodge and Kress, 1988). From a social semiotic perspective, rather than being fixed into unchanging "codes", signs are considered to be resources which people use and adapt (or "design") to make meaning. In these respects, social semiotics was influenced by, and shares many of the preoccupations of pragmatics (Charles W. Morris) and sociolinguistics and has much in common with cultural studies and critical discourse analysis.

The main task of social semiotics is to develop analytical and theoretical frameworks which can explain meaning-making in a social context, which is why this theory was adopted to critically analyse the descriptive way of making

the different delicacies present in the Itsekiri tribe/culture. These delicacies however are symbolic and refer to the tribe of study. This theory is relevant to this research because Delicacies generally are seen as peculiarities known to be part of a tribe or culture, the people of Itsekiri only dine and feasts using their delicacies, therefore these delicacies are integral parts of this tribe and thereby symbolises something peculiar to the tribe.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

An expression of rare, expensive, deeply rooted, considered highly desirable, sophisticated, an identity or peculiarly distinctive within a given culture and occasion. Delicacies can be said to be all this and many more particularly because what we cook is an expression of where we are from and an indication of recipes passed on from generation to generations.

This chapter reviews relevant and essential literature that is related to this study. It examines relevant works of scholars in this field to discover the gap(s) yet to be filled. An attempt to effectively analyze Itsekiri cultural delicacies semiotically. It is also important for every researcher to be familiar with previous studies on the topic at hand or a related topic, as it plays a significant role in this chapter and to the work at large.

This section aims at reviewing literature on the researches and works done before on the stated challenging, but interesting subject; ‘Semiotic Analysis of Itsekiri cultural delicacies’ to justify the dimension under taken by the current study. The chapter focuses on the studies that have been done in Nigeria, and other parts of the world with respect to linguistic and semantic analysis, ethnography and etymologies of delicacies. The first part of this chapter focuses

on studies done in Nigeria, secondly, the chapter focuses on Africa herself and finally on studies that have been done outside Africa regarding semantics of foods in general and delicacies in particular.

The concern for the present study would be stated and key concepts would also be defined and explained.

2.1 Conceptual Review

In this aspect of the review of relevant literature, key concepts used in this study which form a base on which this study is founded would be defined.

2.1.1 Semiotics

Meaning is the field of the study discussed in semantic science. Semiotics encompasses all that meaning stands for in languages. In contrast, semiotics is an investigation into how meaning is created and how it is also communicated. Its origins lie in the academic study of how signs and symbols(visual and linguistic) create meaning. Our actions, thoughts, what we see, and cultures which we live in, has massive impact on us unconsciously and often govern by complex set of conventions and dependent on our ability to interpret them instinctively and instantly (decoding). Semiotics was therefore seen as key tool to ensure that intended meanings (for instance a piece of communication) are unambiguously understood by the person of the receiving end i.e ensuring clarity of meaning.

Semiotics is the study of sign systems. It explores how words or other signs make meaning and has its representation (symbolism).

According to Peirce (1839) semiosis is defined as an action or influence which is or involves a co-operation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object (symbol) and its interpretant (meaning).

Saussure (1974) defined semiotics as the formulation and encoding of messages by sources, the transmission of these messages by destination, and their signification. Saussure believed that semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign and he called it semiology.

2.1.2 Analysis

This is the process of studying or examining something in an organized way to learn more about it, or a particular study of something. It can also be seen as someone's opinion based on the knowledge of what it means.

2.1.3 Culture

Culture is what encompasses the social behavior and norms found in human societies as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of the individual in these groups. It embraces all aspects of human life and their way of communicating and interacting with other human beings.

According to Tylor (1871) stipulation, culture is that complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities

and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. Subsequent authors had warned that Tylor's definition packs in too much, lumping together psychological item (e.g belief) with external items (e.g art). For those who hope that culture could be characterized as a natural kind, this was a problem and it therefore brought about other definitions which either belonged to the external or internal options from Tylor's definition.

Herskovits (1948) tells us that culture is the man-made part of the environment that is it is conventional, and became a norm and part of the people overtime.

Meade (1953) says culture is the total shared, learned behavior of a society or subgroup. These dimensions are combined in Malinowski (1931) formulation which he said that culture is a well-organized unity divided into two fundamental aspects – a body of artifact and a system of customs.

According to Gertz (1973) culture is an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols.

According to D' Andrade (1995) culture is often said to consist of rules, rules that are said to be implicit because ordinary people can't tell you what they are.

Sperber (1996) describes culture in terms of widely distributed, lasting mental and public representations inhabiting a given social group.

Richerson and Boyd (2005) defined culture as “information capable of affecting individual’s behavior that they acquired from other members of their species through teaching, limitation and other forms of social transmission”.

2.1.4 Food

Food is any substance consumed either solid or liquid to provide nutritional support for an organism, which contains essential nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins or minerals. Food is an essential part of people’s live and is seen as more than just a means of survival. According to Barthes, food is considered to be multi-dimensional, as something that shapes us, our identities, our cultures and at the end our society. It becomes a central identity marker, defining personality, social class, life styles, and gender roles just as different clothes signify different things. An example would be the white coat of a doctor, or its symbolism in burial rites. Food also transmits meaning, but the meaning varies from culture to culture.

Food could not be viewed as a trope if it doesn’t signify a meaning of something to begin with, for example: tomatoes, basil and mozzarella cheese on a pizza signify a taste of Italy. In addition food is the construction of our personal identities. However can food operate as a sole factor in the identification of a group or an entire nation? Does food have its place within a broader set of values linked to age, religion, social status, of which some are

closely linked to diet, while others have no link to food? Is the position of food flexible or is it central (or trivial) in the formation of one's identity?

Food are family treasures in the ways recipes are passed on from one generation to another, thereby maintaining family connection both cultural and geographical as ancestral links. In the gathering of preparation of meals and its devouring people tend to exchange complexities of their realities through a bite, a sip and a listening ear. Food is also connected which adds meaning and significance to our lives. Some food beliefs are intertwined with religion for example after Ramadan first, there is a celebration with food either of gifting to friends and family or the sharing of a meal at the table which signifies oneness.

Food and eating of food is a universal experience. An element of common ground in terms of human existence. It is an experience that brings people so often, we see the sprightly atmosphere in a gathering with food as a center piece of it all. As earlier said food plays an important role in the lives of families in most cultures. However, the degree of importance varies from culture to culture based on activities and ceremonies which center on cooking. Examples are birthdays, weddings, festive holidays and funerals of which within this context, food often stands in for expressions of life, love, happiness or grief from family, to community, to ethnic groups or nationality and relationships, changing through time and place. It is a lens to analyse society order, historical changes, power and politics.

2.1.5 Delicacy

Delicacy are exceptionally prepared dish. Irrespective of local preferences such a label is typically pervasive throughout a region. Often, this is because of unusual flavours of characteristics or because it is rare or expensive compared to standard staple foods. Delicacies vary per different countries , customs and ages. For instance, sea food is popular among people who live by the sea or riverine areas. The delicacy being discussed refer extensively to Traditional meals which embodies identity and Ancestry. Every destination has a dish or cuisine associated with it, that is fixed on culture and identity. Flamingos tongue was a highly prized dish in ancient Rome, but is not commonly eaten in modern times. Lobsters were considered poverty food in North America until the Mid-19th century when they started being treated as a European delicacy. While some delicacies are confined to certain culture such as fugu in Japan, bird's nest soup (made out of swiftlet nests) in China and ant larvae in Mexico. One of may not know it, but that is why experiencing the local dishes/ food of a new place usually tops one's to do list in foreign terrain. Having a local dish is the communion with the people, one of the interactions and processes of connecting with the people.

Traditional meals as a means of culture are therefore preserved outside its original culture confines via its publicity and introduction to another geography which in turn aids political diplomacy by preserving and sharing cultural diversion through food exchange. The presentation of foods to guests/foreigners

becomes a monumental display of cultural pride and traditions. Perhaps, it is a means of communicating acceptance and unequivocally saying “welcome”.

Delicacy being preserved as been symbolic as it sometimes ignite familiar aroma and beautiful memories that adds stronger bonds of families and friendships, the mundane smell of food sometimes gives an insight of where a person is from or the knowledge the person has about a particular culture. For example, an Igbo person knows the smell of a native season called “okpei” which adds flavour and heightens the illusion of the taste of an Igbo soup. Where some foods are highly prized and set aside to special, religious holidays and others being rudimentary, some foods are usually used specially for either traditional rites or symbolic representations “food of the gods”. But one thing is certain and that is certain dishes holds memory for every individual acquiring the framework of building a pattern of life acceptable to a scenery and family

2.2 Previous Studies

As it has been clearly proven that culture and food are intricately connected. According to (Fischler 1988) Food is also used to assign meaning to oneself.

According to (Beoku – Betts 1995) there is a strong desire to preserve one’s culture through food practices especially when one’s culture is not the dominant culture in that society.

Scholliers (2001), the notion of identity was taken up to which food was directly and intimately linked in a way that looked at food's classification and consumption but also the preparation the organization, the taboos, the company, the location, the pleasure, the time, the language, the symbols, the representations, the form ,the meaning and the art of eating and drinking.

In the studies of food, understanding food practices which often takes place in a diverse multicultural society becomes vital and also the knowledge and role of food-related etiquette. People in western societies may refer to food related etiquette as table manners, a phrase that illustrates the cultural expectation of eating food or meals at a table. Some people eat with forks and spoons; more eat with fingers, diners, use of only the right hand to eat. Among other groups, use of both hands is acceptable.

According to Montanari, (2006) Like spoken language, the food system contains and conveys the culture of its practitioner, it is the repository of traditions and collective identity. It is therefore an extraordinary vehicle of self representation and of cultural exchange - a means of establishing identity to be sure, but also the first way of entering into contact with a different culture.

In some countries, licking the fingers is polite while in some other places is considered impolite (and done only when the person thinks no one else is watching). Rules regarding polite eating may increase in formal settings. At

some formal diners a person might be expected to use cutlery set (the right fork and knife) at a certain point in the meal.

The amount people eat and leave uneaten also varies from group to group. Some people from middle Eastern and Southeast Asian countries might leave a little bit of food on their plates in order to indicate that their hunger has been satisfied (Kittler 2001) cooks from other locations might be offended if food is left on the plate to them, this could indicate that the guest may have disliked the food. Similarly, a clean plate might signify either satisfaction with meal or desire for more food.

Even the role of conversation during mealtime varies from place to place. Many families believe that mealtime is to converse and to 'catch up' on the lives of family and friends. Among other families, conversation during a meal is unacceptable, while in some cases it is acceptable but the topics of conversation are limited. In some Southeast Asian countries it is considered polite to limit conversation during a meal (Kittler 2001). People who share similar cultural backgrounds and some of the same food habits, their eating patterns are not identical. However, in most parts of the world, food is associated with hospitality and expression of friendship. Therefore, sensitivity to food rules and customs is important in building and strengthening cross-cultural relationships.

2.3 Concern of the Present Study

Concerning the present study of the semiotic analysis analysis of Itsekiri cultural delicacies, this basically involves the importance of food and their symbolic representations of traditional food (delicacies). The present study is also concerned with how certain delicacies are perceived and the importance of certain ingredients. The dialect is said to have special meals served at certain occasions and how they are being served. This would also examine Itsekiri dialect using cultural delicacies which no work has been done on this before I.e pertaining to cultural delicacies it would therefore add to the linguistic part of knowledge and also aid any future research on this aspect.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

3.0 Introduction

In the course of this research, data were collected from the natives of Itsekiri. This chapter is however concerned with the presentation of data employed in this research.

3.1 Delicacy Presentations

1. Egusi Pepper Soup also known as 'Igbagba Ikpogiri

The Spices includes the following;

1. Iwo
2. Atariko
3. Ighereje
4. Egidije
5. Omilo
6. Igbafilo
7. Iyanghanyanghan
8. Orugbo
9. Ogolo-gbigbe
10. Ikpogiri
11. Beletientien
12. Uwangue

Ingredients for Egusi pepper soup includes;

1. Eja-gbigbe (dried/smoked fresh fish)
2. Ide-imefun (Cray fish)
3. Ikpa gbigbe wèrè mimi (dried/fresh shrimps)
4. Ide-saghorò gbigbe wèrè mimi (dried/fresh lobsters)
5. Eran (beef)
6. Egbele (Chicken)



2. Owo Soup

Ingredients

1. Tomatoes
2. Habanero pepper (rodo)
3. Crayfish
4. Salt
5. Palm oil

6. Grat meat
7. Dried ground pepper
8. Potash
9. Onions
10. Smoked fish
11. Seasoning cubes.



3. **Usin** also known as Starch

The Recipes includes the following;

1. 500g starch
2. 800-1000ml of water l
3. 2 tablespoon of palm oil.



4. Epuru

The spices for Epuru includes the following;

1. Erhe (2 seeds)
2. Slices of yam
3. 2 cooking spoons of palm oil
4. Scent leaves
5. 1 seed of gbafilo
6. ½ teaspoon native salt
7. 1 tablespoon Irugege
8. 2 Uda uwentia (negro pepper)
9. 2 table spoon of crayfish
10. 1kg goat meat with intestine.



5. Banga Soup

Ingredients;

1. Beef
2. Pepper
3. Onion
4. Sieved palm nut fruit
5. Catfish
6. Crayfish
7. Banga spice- mixture of ataiko and irugeje
8. Banga spice leave- beletete
9. Oburunbebe stick
10. Seasoning.



6. Igbagba Ofofo

Ingredients;

1. Chopped Okra
2. Goat meat
3. Washed shrimps
4. 2 pieces bay leaves
5. Scent leaves (efinrin)
6. 1 tabelspoon pepper soup spice
7. Ground crayfish
8. 2 handfuls of vegetable
9. Seasoning
10. Salt
11. Pepper



7. Obe Eyen Ikanbo

Ingredients;

1. 6-8 cups of palmtree extract
2. Chopped goat meat (boiled)
3. 2 tablespoons of crayfish
4. 6 pieces of ponmo
5. 2 dried fish
6. 4 dried Ikpa
7. 2 table spoons banga spices
8. 2 table spoon beletele leaves
9. 1 table spoon dried bitter leaf
10. 10 pieces of chopped okra
11. Fresh pepper
12. 1 cup of periwinkle
13. Pounded yellow pepper
14. Seasoning cubes
15. Salt to taste.



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8. Ogbolo ale

Ingredients;

1. Ground pepper (pepper of the ground)
2. Bonga fish (dried)
3. Salt to taste
4. Seasoning cubes
5. Pepper soup spices.



9. Egun Obobo

Ingredients:

Usin (Starch)

Ripe plantain



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a description of the procedures taken in this study and the classification of data. These data are analyzed according to the classes of delicacies noticed in the data. It would also focus on the grouping of the data (which includes the two types e.g. delicacies served in traditional events and delicacies served at new year celebrations)

4.1: Delicacies Served at Traditional Events (Weddings or Burial)

4.1.1 Banga Soup

Banga soup is one of the best nourishing soups you can make with palm nut. All it takes is spice flavorings, an assortment of meat and fish, and finishing it off with a touch of beletete to elevate this soup.

Banga Soup can be prepared using fresh catfish (fresh fish Banga soup) or dried/smoked fish. Either way, this soup is very delicious with or without fresh catfish. You can even go a little further by adding okra.

Ingredients:

Beef

Pepper

Onion

Sieved palm nut fruit

Catfish

Crayfish

Banga spice- mixture of ataiko and irugeje

Banga spice leaves- beletete

Oburunbebe stick

Seasoning for taste

How to prepare

Season your meat with some minced garlic, minced ginger, seasoning cubes, salt, onion, curry, and thyme. Allow cooking until soft and tender to chew.

Place your pot on medium heat, add the palm nuts soul and the Orunbebe stick (Banga stick) allow to boil for about 5 minutes Add the beef stock. If you're using fresh fish add them at this point so as to start cooking in the soup.

Add the blended onions, Cameroonian pepper and the Banga spice. Cover to simmer for about 3 minutes.

Add seasoning cubes, grounded crayfish, periwinkle, and salt. (taste before you add salt, don't over-salt the soup) Allow all to simmer for another 2 minutes. At this juncture, add all the meat you're using at the same time, and stir in the soup.

Cover and allow everything to be well incorporated in the soup.

Finally, add the scent leaves, allow to simmer for another 3 minutes, Banga soup is ready.

Banga soup must be served at traditional weddings, parties, and events that hold among the Itsekiris. It is mostly enjoyed with catfish or fresh fish.

Analysis of Banga Soup (Palm Nut Soup)

- Oburunbebe stick (Licorice stick): This is one of the core ingredients an Itsekiri person uses to make banga soup. This is because it has a very high medicinal value and it gives a very good aroma to the soup. Oburunbene stick is also an immune booster and it also aids digestion. It can be used as a whole to cook but it is better when it is grounded, so it enhances the taste of the soup.
- Banga spice:
This is made up of grounded obenetientien, beletete leaves, chilli pepper, onion and salt. An Itsekiri person who is into sea food and stays close to the riverine areas will prefer to make his/her banga soup with catfish. Catfish is also used when serving the head of the family because it is of high value.

4.1.2 Owo Soup

Owo is a sweet yellowish traditional delicacy enjoyed by the Itsekiri's it is usually a mix of blended tomatoes and pepper. The owo soup origin has not been clearly stated because there has always been a logger head between the Itsekiris and the Benins. However, there's a slight difference in the way the Itsekiris makes theirs from that of the Bini's.

In Itsekiri, the owo soup is very moderate and it can be eaten with yam, plantain, sweet potatoes, or boiled bananas.

Ingredients:

Tomatoes

Habanero pepper (rodo)

Crayfish

Salt

Palm oil

Goat meat

Dried grounded pepper

Potash

Onions

Smoked fish

Seasoning cubes

How to prepare

Wash the meat and crayfish separately. Wash the tomatoes, pepper and blend.

Put the washed meat in a pot, add chopped onions and seasoning cubes, boil for 15 minutes. After boiling the meat, pour the blended mix into the pot , add crayfish and smoked fish and boil for 15 minutes, add potash after boiling allow it cool for 5 minutes.

Pour the palm oil into the pot, stir while pouring , the oil should change the mix to a yellowish colour. Put the pot back on heat for about 2 minutes.

Serve with boiled yam or plantain.

Owo soup can be served at any occasion at all. It is also used to mixed the famous “ABACHA” to form African salad that can serve as a full meal.

4.1.3 Usin (Starch)

Usin (starch) is usually paired with banga soup or Owo soup when being served.

Starch is what the Itsekiris refer to as Usin. It is mostly eaten with owo soup or banga soup. The Itsekiris prefer the texture of their starch to be soft while the Urhobos like this hard.

Analysis of Owo Soup

- The special ingredient used in preparing owo soup in Itsekiri is potash (Akanwu). Potash is used to thicken the soup because the Itsekiris prefer and enjoy it that way. Potash has a lot of health benefits, which includes reducing blood pressure and protecting against stroke. No wonder they are so keen on adding it to owo soup.
- Habanero pepper is used in maing owo soup instead of the normal pepper because it adds a certain aroma to the soup. It also adds a mild fiery taste oto the soup, thereby making it not peppery.
- Tomatoes is also a very essential ingredient in owo soup. In the case when the **habero** pepper is too fiery, the work of the tomatoes is to calm the pepper.

Recipes

500g starch

800 -1000ml water

2 tablespoons of palm oil

How to prepare

Place the starch in a steel pot or non-sticky fry pan and add water to it

Dissolve the starch in the water till is well blended

Add the palm oil to the starch solution

Mix with a spatula to avoid lumps underneath

Place the pan over medium heat and stir in a direction

It starts foaming as it cooks, continue stirring if it gets hard, add a little water to get your desired texture.

Analysis of Igbagba Ikpogiri (Egusi pepper soup)

When an Itsekiri person uses lobsters, shrimps and crayfish to make Igbagba Ikpogiri, it means that they live close to the riverine area or they are into sea food farming. It can also mean that the family is rich enough to afford it.

Iwo is an African nutmeg that helps in relieving constipation and headaches.

Umilo is another type of nutmeg that helps in fat burning in the body.

Igbafilo is a Guinea plum that helps in controlling blood pressure and also helps with stomach disorder.

Beletientien means African bush apple leaves. The aroma it gives to the soup helps in relieving nausea. It also helps with indigestion and it helps with good eyesight.

4.1.4 Igbagba Ofofo Soup

Igbagba ofofo is a type of draw soup rich in vitamins enjoyed by the itsekiris, it is a sumptuous meal with a nice scent that a

Ingredients

Chopped okra

Goat meat

Smoked catfish

Washed shrimps

2 pieces bay leaves

Scent leaves (efinrin)

1 tbsp pepper soup spice

Ground crayfish

2 handfuls of vegetable

Seasoning

Salt

Pepper

How to prepare

Place a pan medium heat, add the washed beef, seasoning and salt. Add enough water to cook just as you would for pepper soup. After about 10 minutes of boiling, add the pepper soup spice, bay leaves, pepper and cook till beef is soft. Add the fish to the sauce at this point and leave to cook in the sauce for about 5-8 minutes. Take it out of the sauce and set aside. The reasons for doing are; Okra doesn't take long to cook and fish is delicate too. You don't want to be stirring it too much when you add the okra at the last stage of cooking and you want the fish to absorb the flavour from the pepper soup. Add the chopped okra to the pepper soup, cook for a minute stirring in between. Add the shrimp to the soup and stir to combine. Check for salt and seasoning. Add your vegetable. Stir in the soup to combine and cook for another 5 minutes, add the fish and cook for another 2 minutes.

Your soup is ready to serve

Igbagba ofofo is perfect for lunch with the family or any little gathering. It is said that it not quite suitable for events because of it's drawing nature, which might turn out to be messy if not eaten properly.

Analysis of Igbagba-Ofofo – Okra Pepper Soup

- This is basically the combination of pepper soup and okra without the use of oil. It is mainly taken during the rainy season or in a cold environment.

- Goat meat alms can be used to make Igbagba-Ofof but the Itsekiris prefer to add shrimps because they are known for their good fishing habits, especially those who live in the riverine area.
- Efinrin (scent leaves) gives the soup a very nice flavouring and aroma. Scent leaves in the soup also help with lowering blood pressure and blood circulation in the body.

4.1.5. Obe Eyen Ikanbo

This is another version of banga soup but okra is being added. It is usually eaten with Usin (starch). It can be prepared and served at any time or any event for any household.

Ingredients;

1. 6-8 cups of palmtree extract
2. Chopped goat meat (boiled)
3. 2 tablespoon of crayfish
4. 6 pieces of ponmo
5. 2 dried fish
6. 4 dried Ikpa
7. 2 table spoons banga spices
8. 2 table spoon beletele leaves
9. 1 table spoon dried bitter leaf
10. 10 pieces of chopped okra

11. Fresh pepper
12. 1 cup of periwinkle
13. Pounded yellow pepper
14. Seasoning cubes
15. Salt to taste.

How to prepare

Wash and cook palm nuts in enough water till it is very soft. Pound and squeeze out the oil with about 5 litres of hot water and put in a pot.

Cook on low heat and add the banga spices, beletele leaves and bitter leaf.

Add your goat meat, ikpa, ponmo, cray fish, seasoning cubes, pepper, salt and stir very well.

Leave to cook for about 30 minutes, and then stir again. After stirring, taste to know if the pepper and salt are enough. Add your periwinkles and chopped okra, then stir well and continue cooking.

You may want to allow the soup thicken a bit. You can dish it out to a clay pot and leave on the reduced heat. It helps it thicken faster. If you do not want it thick then you can go ahead to serve it with Usin (starch).

Analysis of Obe Eyan Ikanbo-Bango soup with Okra

- Ikpa (dried shrimps) is added to this soup so it can give it a nice aroma and also enrich it with vitamins. Shrimps in Itsekiri also indicates that a

family lives close to the lakes, rivers and seas. It makes them pronounced as a riverine tribe.

- Banga spices is made up of ground obenientien, chilli pepper, onion and salt.
- Yellow pepper is added in this soup to enhance the fiery taste and add more aroma to the soup

4.1.6. Ogolo Ale

This is similar to pepper soup, but in this case it is not cooked at all. It is just made of spices and water.

Ingredients

1. Ground pepper (pepper of the ground)
2. Bonga Fish (dried)
3. Salt to taste
4. Seasoning cubes
5. Pepper soup spices

How to prepare

1. Add your pepper soup spices to about 2-3 litres of water (depending on the quality you want)
2. Roast the bonga fish so it can be very dried and hot
3. Add the seasoning cubes and salt to the mixture
4. Add the roasted fish. This process keeps the soup hot.

5. The Meal is ready

Analysis of Ogbolo ale

There is a saying in Itsekiri that “an Itsekiri child cannot be dirty”. In the olden days and even in some households presently, it is a taboo to use a modern day blender. The Itsekiris believe that there is a difference in taste when the local grinding stone is used for the pepper, instead of blender.

The bonga fish is used especially because of the aroma it adds to the soup. The bonga fish is also roasted in Itsekiri so it can keep the soup warm, as it is not cooked.

4.1.7. Egun Obobo

This is another type of starch but with ripe plantain “Obobo” means ripe plantain.

How to prepare

1. Mix the ripe plantain with Usin (Starch
2. Beat them both together till is very smooth
3. Mix properly and serve with Bonga Soup or with pepper soup.

4.2 Delicacies Served at New Year Celebrations

4.2.1 Epuru

Epuru is a typical New Year’s Day fare for breakfast by the Itsekiris. It is a mix of meat and vegetables with its base as the Nigerian pepper soup but with yams as the vegetables.

Recipes

Erhe (2seeds)

Slices of yam

2 cooking spoons of palm oil

Scent leaves

1 seed of gbafilo

½ teaspoon of native salt

1 tablespoon irugege

2 Uda uwentia – negro pepper

2 table spoon of crayfish

1kg goat meat with intestines

Epuru is specifically cooked during marriage or burial ceremonies but in most cases can be used to celebrate New Year's Day.

Analysis of Epuru-Yam Pepper Soup

Epuru is very good to serve as breakfast, especially during the rainy season because of how spicy it is. In Itsekiri, Epuru is usually served to nursing mothers to help them boost their breast milk production. It also helps them to heal the wounds caused by childbirth.

A very essential ingredient which the Itsekiris add to Epuru is uda uwentia (negro pepper). This has a lot of health benefits, which includes relieving malaria and also relieving nausea. This is why the Itsekiri add it to Epuru.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, conclusion and recommendations which consists of solutions proffered by the researcher.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This work entails a comprehensive data of food as a whole but focuses more on the delicacies of the Itsekiri culture. The first chapter comprised of the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of study, research questions, scope of study, significance of the study, the research methodology applied in the research work and the theoretical framework of the study is the Socio semiotic Theory of which social dimension of meaning and power of human processes are signification and interpretation (Semiosis). This chapter also discussed the relevance of the selected theoretical framework.

Chapter two scrutinized the relevant literature to the topic of discussion. It reviewed the concept of semiotics, analysis, culture, food, and this concepts had various definitions by scholars such as Peirce (1839), Saussure (1974), Tylor (1871), Herskovits (1948), Meade (1953), Malinowski (1931) etc. This chapter also looked into the concept of delicacies and also presented the concerns of the present study.

Chapter three contained the presentation of the data collected for the work which are the various prestigious proverbs of Igbo people.

Chapter four which is the second to the last chapter consists of the data analysis. The analysis of the data aimed to answer the research questions prevalent in chapter one. Each delicacies was grouped according to their festive representations

Chapter five which is the last chapter of this study engulfs the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. Followed by the references, bio-data of the interviewees and appendix.

5.2 Conclusion

This study was designed to examine delicacies in itsekiri languages. This study adopted the descriptive research design and the population for the study is the secondary materials are interviews done with native itsekiri language speakers and secondary materials are textbooks.

Itsekiri language just as any other language has delicacies, and these delicacies are significant in the analysis of language.

Natural languages including the itsekiri language exhibit a high rate of culturality especially when it involved delicacies. Delicacies are described vastly as an exceptionally prepared dish. This dish vary per different countries, customs and ages, it also embodies identity and ancestry. Understanding food practices which often takes place in a diverse multicultural society becomes vital because of certain food related etiquette as well as their symbolic

representations. Due to this, sensitivity to food rules and customs is important in building and strengthening cross-cultural relationships.

5.3 Recommendations

Since delicacies are important parts of the culture of a people, and always have been and will be relevant, despite the development of the economy and technology, it is therefore proven to be an important aspect through culture which is the vital aspect in intercultural communication.

Since knowledge develops creativity, it will enrich student's vocabulary and ensure they are grounded in all aspects of their culture, help them learn the structure of the language and to develop memory and emotional expressiveness of speech, Materials should also be provided at every level of its study, exclusive documentation should be done in order to retain this unique part of Itsekiri language heritage.

I recommend that more study by various linguistics students and scholars should be carried out on the language, this is because I observed during my research there were very few linguistic research works done on the Itsekiri language as opposed to majority languages like Yoruba and Igbo.

Furthermore, this research work beseeches that more thorough and compendious research be carried out especially on the distinct aspects of Itsekiri delicacies yet to be worked on. All these points when considered aim at the posterity of delicacies and Itsekiri culture as a whole.

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