"Wise Words Are Where You Find Them": The Sapiential of the Ibani People (Bonny) of the Niger Delta in Dialogue with Ecclesiastes Chapter 3:1-8

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Abstract

There is the argument that 'wisdom is where you find it'. The study of the Sapiential tradition of the *Ibani* people on times and seasons was undertaken to identify and critique some wise sayings of the *Ibanis* (Bonny), which have resonances with the Book of Ecclesiastes Chapter 3. Utilizing the qualitative research method, data were derived from oral traditions of the people, extant literature, and interrogated within the framework of African cultural hermeneutics. Nineteen (19) time and seasons related sapiential sayings were analyzed and compared with Ecclesiastics 3:1-8 to determine their resonances the text. Investigations reveal that the Ibani people have their wisdom sayings relative to time and seasons and are comparable to what we find in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Thus, knowledge production and cultural flows are not exclusively the prerogative of Europe and America, but is global. Our observation reveals the Ibani (African) people are rich with Sapientials, which could be explored to decolonize and enliven the understanding of the Bible in Africa, especially now that Africa is Christianity's epicenter. It would therefore be significant if these wise sayings are documented for further scholarship.

Keywords: Sapiential, Ibani (Bonny), Ecclesiastes, Dialogue, African Cultural Hermeneutics

Introduction to Wisdom Literature

Wisdom literature refers to the genre of literature of sundry cultures before, during and after the Old Testament times. Essentially, it deals with the way the world works and how issues may be addressed with superior or common sense. The ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Babylon, Israel, Assyria and Greece had rich cultures and wisdom literatures which were expressed in their lore and thought forms. The following are different typologies of wisdom literature in the ancient world:

1. **Mesopotamia** – The *Samaria* texts from *Nippur*, the Babylon proverbial wisdom,
2. **Assyrian** wisdom tradition such as "The Teaching of Ahigar" (Advisor to Sennacherib (704-681 BCE)
3. **Egypt**-
   (a) The Teaching for Vizier Ptah-hotep written about 2450BCE.
   (b) The Teachings for King Meri-ka-re about 2200BC.
   (c) Then the Wisdom of Amen-em-opet written about 1200BC
4. **Phoenicia** – The Phoenician Ugarit discovered at RasShamra and the Phoenician wedding songs called 'wasps' written about 600BCE.
5. **Canaan** Wisdom literature especially the 'Ras Shamra text written about the 15th Century B.C.
6. **Biblical literature**
   The books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes are grouped together as the Hebrew Wisdom literature. Though wisdom themes are woven into nearly every narrative of most books of the Old Testament, they are said to have been written over a long period of time.

Understanding Ecclesiastes.

The biblical book of 'Ecclesiastes' would have been written around 200 BCE though some scholars dispute this. The book has received several thematic preoccupations. For instance, some scholars like F. J. Dake (1999) claim that theme is of 'reasoning under the Sun'. P. Koptak (1988) avers that it is preoccupied with an admonition of a "Life without God". Koptak emphasizes that "Ecclesiastes reveals the inner thinking of a person who has lost hope in the God of the Bible". He also explains that since life appears meaningless, "the only sensible conclusion is to stop looking for meaning 'under the sun' and to 'remember your Creator'' (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Exegetical Reading of Ecclesiastes Chapter 3: 1-8

In Chapter 1:1-11 the author appears to be the holding 'motif': "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (1:2). By this reasoning, any path of life under the Sun would appear to be futile

and perplexing. From Chapter 1: 12 – 6:12, the author describes his many quest for meaning and satisfaction as simply "increasing sorrow". Moving from wisdom to laughter and to pursuit of pleasure or sensual self-indulgence of all sorts (2:1-3), the writer turns to works, women and wealth (2:4-11) but again, all would lead to vanity.

In Chapter 2:12-17, the Preacher dovetails to the reality that contentment and joy make sense only in God. With this fact in mind, it became his twisted thoughts from his situations in life to what may appear as a philosophical quest.
From Three (1- 8), we have these motifs:

1. for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
2. a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
3. a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
4. a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
5. a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
6. a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
7. a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
8. a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. (RSV)

In another reading of the text, F. J. Dake (1999) contextualizes the section thus:

> Be born (v2), Die (v 2), Plant (v2), Pluck (2), Kill (3), Heal (v3), Break down (v 3), Build up (v 3), Weep (v 4), Laugh (v 4), Mourn (v 4), Dance (v 4), Cast away stone (v 5), Gather stones, Embrace, Refrain from embracing, Get, buy or acquire (v 6), Lose or take a loss, Keep things (v 6), Cast away things (v6), Rend or tear (v7), Sew or join together, Keep silence, Speak your mind, Love (v 8), Hate or make preference (v 8), Make war (v 8), Make peace (v

Bonny Demography and Social Index

The Ibani ethnic nationality is made up of the present-day Bonny and Opobo kingdoms. In monograph titled "The History of Bonny" (2011), the authors explain that the name refers to the Bonny and Opobo in the present day Rivers State of Nigeria. Fombo-Hart O. C. T. (2014) in the book Aspects of Bonny in Perspective posit that:

> *Legend has it that the Ijaws who founded Bonny came from East Central Niger Delta. They wandered through the northern strip of the Niger Delta land, on their journey, passing through the Ikwerre territories, Asa area of Ibo land, and then*

> *settled, for a time, along the Imo River stretch, before moving finally close to the sea, in the south, towards the Atlantic Ocean, and ultimately landed at Orupiri, in the territory where Bonny is situated at present.*

Today, the name is exclusively used to refer to the language spoken by the people of Bonny. The kingdom of Bonny is located in Rivers State of the Southern part of Nigeria. It is made up of about seventy five group of communities which lie six miles (i.e about 10km) upstream from the Bight of Biafra. The following communities make up the Ibani kingdom. Adamakiri, Agbala, Akpakpasu, Alaasiakiri, Amanadama, Angalabie, Asaramatoru, Atabakiri, Bartholomy, Beregade, Biemekiri, Bilemekiri, Binye, Birayekiri, Boloba, Bonny Town, Bony-Onwon, Charuama, Crutoru, Dokubotorughia, Eferewari, Fakpa, Febiri, Gbolokiri, Georgekiri, Green, Greenkiri, Ibiribiri, Ijanikwe, Inawanacha, Iwoama, Iwoama-Kuruama, Jackmay, Kalabiama, Kuruama, Kuruma, Ligakiri, Magbegbekiri, Mbikiri, Mbisu, Numabie, Nenekin, Nwachu, Obetene, Ogbomumo, Ogbuluama, Ogidigba, Ogumabie, Okolobie, Okoloma-Iwoma, Okolomabie, Okpomadapa, Oloma, Olomabia, Omubiokolo, Onwonwokiri, Opiriafan, Opo, Oporbakiri, Opukiri, Orutoru, Otokolomabie, Otukpo, Otutunbi, Owaopiri, Owuopili, Peterside, Pondomakiri, Samai, Samgama, Sampite, Sombiekiri, Tumbikulu, Wasakiri, Wastom,

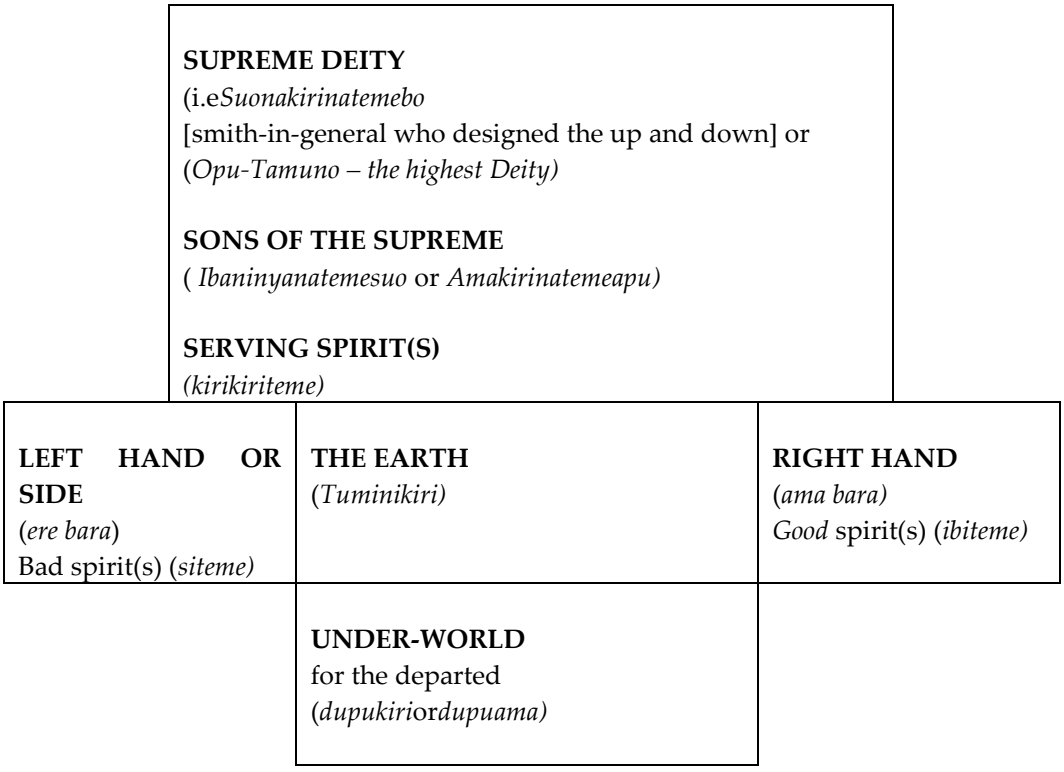
The City State of Opobo was founded in 1870. According to a publication by a group known as "Pennbreeds Club of Opobo" (2011) on the 'History of Opobo',

> Chief Jack Annie Pepple and other pioneer Chiefs left their home in Grand Bonny the heartland of the Ibani people, to establish a new kingdom called "Opobo" (English for Opubo-ama, or the Kingdom of Opobo). It was derived from the name of legendary King Opubo (1738 – 1830) a celebrated Ibani monarch.

Opobo Town is the headquarters of Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area of Rivers State created in 1996.The Kingdom is made up of smaller communities, namely: Kalaibiama, Queens Town, Minima, Illoma and Epellema, Ekereborikiri, Down-Below, Abazibie and Opukalama.

Ibani Worldviews and Cosmologies

The Ibani (Bonny) peoples' worldview isb predicated on traditional religion and human wisdom. The Ibani cosmology can be diagrammatically represented thus:



The Ibani believe that the universe is in three layers. According to J. J Abbey (Personal Interview, February 11, 2020), the first layer upwards is inhabited by the Creator Being and his principal baby spirits. The second layer consists of the Earth with two blocks to the right and the left. Underneath the Earth (i.e. the third layer) is the underworld of dead or ancestral spirits. For the Ibani people, "Smith-in-Chief" (*Suo na kirina temebo*) is the Ultimate who caused all things into being. He resides in the unknown heights from where He receives reports from the *Ibani nyanabo temesuo* who mediate between the earth and the heights. This belief system holds that all things function in line with the spiritual dictates from on high. The earth is bounded to the right by the good spirits and to the left by bad spirits, these dictate why humans turn to their right side or left when communicating with the spirits in the world.

Wisdom Sayings of Time and Seasons among the Ibani People.

In Africa, there is no one corpus in written form of its rich wisdom. However, these are encoded in proverbs, songs, and parables, riddles and other oral forms. For instance, Chinua Achebe in his *Things Fall Apart* (1958) says "among the Ibos of Nigeria, proverbs

are the palm oil with which words are eaten" The Ibani people cultivate similar sentiments. During an interview on conducted on February 20, 2020 (C. T. Oruene, personal communication, September 12, 2019) the people of Ibani strongly believe in wisdom when they say "Proverbs and riddles (***kabu***) are the indispensable food of life"

Perhaps this explains why Terrell Owens posits that the strange part about wisdom - or at least about wise words - is that "they are where you find them". Accordingly, the Ibani people cultivate many wise sayings, though in oral forms. Some pieces of this traditional wisdom are evident in their oral communication, witty sayings, idioms, folktales, songs, and interaction with their neighbors through trade, religion, war, marriage, songs and social orientation. This view was confirmed during an interview (F. Hart, personal communication, October 13, 2020) that wisdom concepts are laden in the thoughts and actions of his people. These oral wisdom statements saturate such areas as parent and child relationship, chastity, time and seasons, judgment and Justice, deities and human relationships, agriculture, leadership and feeding, and so on.

Sapiential Traditions (or wise sayings) of the Ibani People and Ecclesiastes 3: A Dialogic Approach

a. Nye-mamgbaamina-saanyanam, kiniyisaaimim, sapighiimim, kinitarida (tada) apufini-ngamubiesaa, jumaobukunmanganye-ma dubataringa-nyenengim(In English) There *is a time to be born, there is also a day when one goes into the land of the ancestors, but the latter is greater than the former*

The major term in this proverb is time. In Ibani language time is rendered as "Saa" Whereas time is said to be "the measured or measurable period during which an action, process or condition exist or continues," it is also an appointed, fixed or customary moment or hour for something to happen, begin or end."

As it is typical of some neighboring ethnic groups and language, 'saa' in Ibani is often used to refer to the brackets of a period.

a) *Ayasaa* – ancient time in the past
b) *Bolo saa* – long time ago
c) *Ibisaa* – early in good time
d) *Isi ogboo* – the other time
e) *Kala saa* – – little time
f) *Mmesagha* – two times or twice
g) *Saa*– time (a term often used to translate English 'when')

Accordingly, there is a birth and death time (*awuna-saanyanam, kiniyisaaimim*). In Ibani metaphysics, there is a time of birth which is not more honorable than the day of death of a person, but not for a thing or idea. A secondary idea which is conveyed here is the cultural sublime that accompanies the death of an Ibani person when announced. This item is expressed in eulogies' of songs, dancing, gifts items for interment, precisions, stories dedicated to the departed, etc. Most of these never accompany one on his/her date of birth. This probably accounts for why it is believed that death time is more marvelous than birth time.

b. A ngi baa mum, a piiduadipi mum, kuma, nyesughu satemebie-nume pa bobom
(In English) *I go a-fishing and I go a-farming, but harvest comes with the songs of the spirits.*

It is common that the people in our field of investigation both fish and farm as their cardinal occupation. The traditional methods are 'net-fishing', 'trap-fishing' and 'hook-fishing'. The people fish when the tide is up and retreats before it ebbs. They do more of subsistent agriculture to feed themselves and their families. Farming and fishing are on one side of the divide while harvesting is on the other side. One elder believes that when an Ibani man starts out for farming/fishing, he prepares himself/herself with songs in prayer or expectation from but at harvest times, the properties of the songs are a combination of both human (the farmer) and spirit (owners of the land and sea) – that is a duet (that is a composition/performance) by two who shares equality to the piece).Though, the voicing is that of the human only, the spirit inspires or possesses the human in the rendering. During the co-operate harvest celebrations, the people are believed to sing with the spirit or as have been authored by the spirits. The spirits in this context refers to the deities and the ancestral spirits.

c. Si-teme di-bie a kinibabam, kuma, ibi-temeene-ogboo pa duma piri-pirim
(In English) *Bad spirits kill at night but good spirits make alive in the day*

There are good spirits and there are bad spirits known or believed by the Ibanis. By this proverb, a major mark of a bad spirit is that they kill mainly at night. In contrast, good spirits who operate freely in the day build, heal and prospers the humans.

To this end, the night hours are not as much life-friendly as compared to the day. The Ibani term "*siíokumienye* (bad mission) are missions undertaken at night usually to do harm or appease the bad spirits.

d. ***Nye-nimiapunnasi-mgbolukaasara tuminipiripirim dede-sabiri, siene-ogbo-biri pa opuma anikubiri, kuma, obori-so-apunnasi-mgboluolosem aghabem siburutari-bufini burutari lasagha***
(In English) *The wise spreads its seeds to all in the early hours and reaps bountifully at noon time but the foolish holds back and starves in the time of hunger*

This proverb underscores the place of charity, magnanimity or kind-heartedness. It equally stresses the gains derivable in being large-hearted.

The giver in the morning (*ayadedebie*) will most assuredly not go without recompense that will keep him/her afloat when the cold-hearted go a-starving.
Early givers in Ibani land are like the biblical persons who cast their bread upon the waters for they shall find it after many days (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

e. ***Warigonyegonye, biebele-owuminginna-torusarasaimim, kumawarigonye-gonyepiinna, kpomabie-aku, owu-mingisaanyanam***
(In English) *There is time for tears of joy in all house and there is time for tears of sorrow in every house.*
In the wisdom of the people of focus, recognition by them exist concerning two sides of a divide namely time to laugh and time to sorrow.

My investigation of this saying pointed to the Hebrew poetry of parallelism. In this case it synchronizes with that branch of parallelism in the Old Testament of the Bible known as 'Antithetic ' parallelism'. In it, the second part introduces the thought that is the direct opposite of the first idea.

Furthermore, the times to laugh include birth, victory, harvest seasons, womanhood ceremonies (*Iria*/*Bibite*) naming ceremonies, foundation laying and building commissioning ceremonies, etc. On the other hand, sorrowing take place during death, sickness, inferno or any form of conflagration, losses, normal accident, failure, disappointment, etc. Times of laughter and sorrow exist in almost all cultures and places.

f. ***Wadonabiem, samalaasaa***
(In English) *We shall meet at full moon (when the time comes)*
Obviously, this must be a metaphorical statement. The major word here is 'full moon.' Then, what time is regarded as such? A simple idea of a full moon is when the moon (i.e. the natural satellite of the earth) displaces its entire disk.

In an interview conducted on September 13, 2020, Frank Hart stated that his people use the illumination which the full moon provides in the night for such activities as net mending, fun wrestling, storytelling especially to children, burial rites, consulting of the gods and ancestors through their oracles, masking of the masquerade, and ritual practices. Sequel to the afore-listed, the speaker would be inferring to any or similar activities as listed above. Full moon therefore provides the season for some creative things, good and bad exercises.

This point was stressed in an interview conducted on October, 12, 2019, Samuel Allison informed that full moon appears about every twenty two days and lasts for a period of about four to five days. This point on full moon was confirmed during an interview (I. Apiafi, personal interview, December 11, 2019) that this is hallowed among the Ibani people of Bonny and Opobo. Therefore, any reference to the full moon is a reference to the sacred or revered matter.

However, there are other words used for moon. One particular word is 'akalu'. When used for moon refers to the circle of time in science called 'month'.

g. ***Akalu-ma pa ipirii, a balolo-mamghaa pa ipiribem, iruakorosaghaa***
(In English) *Give me the moon and I shall give you all the stars at sun set.*

Two words stand out in this sapiential saying, they are 'moon' and 'star'. The moon (translated *Akalu*) has been sufficiently dealt within unit 3.6 above. The other word is '*balolo*' translated as evening star. When used with the prefix '*dede*' as in "*dedebalolo*" it means 'morning star'

Could it be that there is a twin idea of the star among the Ibani people? To resolve this seeming conflict of thought a traditional Ibani sage (P. Samuel-Hart, personal communication, April 17, 2019) answered that, 'they are the same and one natural phenomena, except that in the night (6pm – 2am) these stars were usually brighter in the skies while at about (3am – 6am) the stars weaken in illumination.

The people's traditional science hold that when the stars appear in increased number, it means that the tide or water level would have arisen.

The saying "give me the moon and I shall give you all the stars sun set" has multiple meaning. Elder Samuel Allison provides us with some insight:

a) Give me – provide me with a favor, grant me a request
b) The moon – enabling atmosphere

c) I shall give you – I will pay back, I will compensate you
d) All the stars – higher reward or portion
e) At sun set – this refers to end of day

A curiosity arises by this saying. Could it philosophically be that the moon is inferior in the wisdom tradition of the people to stars or Vis-Visa? Else, why would the stars be given in return for the moon? Is a sacrifice inferior or superior to a return gift?

An Ibani elder statesman in his words (E. Jackmay, personal communication, April 18, 2019), provided an answer to the above seeming puzzle. He says the moon and the stars share equal grandeur with the other. For him, the moon represents essentialities while the stars are representatives or figuratives. He added that the Ibani people do not worship neither the moon nor the stars. They however, see these natural phenomena as manifestations of the Ultimate or its messengers to guide humanity. This understanding appears to corroborate Genesis 1:16.

> *And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the star also*

Accordingly, T. Nelson (1990) refers to the sun as the greater light, while the lesser light is the moon. It may not be out of place to reason in line with the aforesaid that the moon and the stars jointly rule the night after the sun for the day.

h. ***Fonguogbo-kuipine, anii duma ipine-maa***
(In English) *The glory of the fongu (mid raining season) is the glory of life*

The word '*fongu'* refers to the mid raining season especially the heart of the season between July and August. The other key word in this wisdom is 'glory' known in Ibani as '*ipine*'. When used, an elder statesman (T. Pepple, personal communication, April 30 2019) goes to mean splendor, nobility, brilliance, majesty, etc.

Traditionally speaking, the mid raining season of the year is glorious. During this brackets of time, trees blossom and the soil is adequately watered or moisturized for botanic thriving.

To this end, the environment or vegetation becomes richly greenish to the admiration of the human eyes. It is this glory that is used to interpret the glory of rich agricultural or aquatic produce which enriches human life or activities.

Comparatively, one finds among the Ibo nationality, Cross Riverians, Idoma land and Akwa Ibom state a type of this wisdom. During their new yam (*iwoburu* in Ibani) festival and such others, the people celebrate life in colours, they roll out their drums, raise their voices in incisive songs and poems and adorn themselves with such dignifying fabrics to show the glory of the season which most times fall within the rainy season.

Whether the Ibani people cross-culturally developed the wisdom from their neighbours or note, one thing appears stable, they share what others hold.

i. Sonoma enengereaniiipa Sonoma torumasaba-bienyee

(In English) *Only in seven days shall you cross the seven seas*

The Ibani people have lived with the idea of seven number as a complete number for times, places, people, ideas etc. According to Green E & Fombo A (2000), the people talk of;

a) **Fofoba** – which refers to seven days forward
b) **Ngu** – being clay pitcher or a set of seven water pots beaten on the mouth with a fan (ajala) of dried plantain leaves to serve as instruments.
c) **Sonoma iri-awo** - referring to the seven female spirits
d) **Sonoma iriabo** – meaning seven young ladies performing their womanhood tradition
e) **Sonoma ene** – seventh day

A seasonal fisherman, (A. Esau, personal Communication, October 20, 1999) in his oral lecture to his community children below the age of ten, explained that the tide changes every seventh day. Counting to forecast tidal progression, this will enable the people to fix their programmes and movements.

Akin to the above, but on philosophical note, seven which represents completeness is used here to symbolize seven dedicated efforts and due time.

j. ***Ikiringasabirianiimpafiafia-apunimisabiri***

(In English) The beauties are proven at the harmattan season

It is very natural for all to brandish themselves as beauties. The black, the fair and even the whites. This is prevalent within the Ibani Kingdoms. However, the wise saying comes to mediate between the beauties and the non-beauties.

The real beauties especially the fair people are seen and known during the dry and dusty season of Harmattan. This is possible as harsh and dehydrating wind takes its toll on the human flesh, turning some to a near shadow of their real selves. The negative effects of

this seasonal haze lead to serious dry skin, cracked lips and soles of the feet. Some people even come on with some sort of skin rashes, itching, etc. It is a humor among the male youths that "the intending husbands should wait till the harmattan season before choosing who to marry. It is equally, held by the traditional elites that it is best at '*Ikiringa*' for the beauty contests.

This sapiential tradition is known among the Ibo's, sections of the *Ikwerre* and *Ogba* people, *Andoni* and *Kalabari* ethnic nationalities. This raises the question as to the originality of this proverb in Ibani. The question is could it have been cross- culturally diffused into the Ibani traditional library from outside or could it have originated from them to others? A further investigation is needed here.

k. ***Nye ibiipiri-apunnasibiteretere mam inina-enebu***
(In English) *The favoured bow their heads on the eight day*

The Ibani people number their week days as follows:-

Saturday	-	*Oruene* (i.e the day of the god or deities.)
Monday	-	*Orueneobuu* (the day of war by the gods)
Tuesday	-	*Kala feniibiene* (little good trading day)
Wednesday	-	*Ogunu Feniibi* (crown or royal good trade)
Thursday	-	*Feniobu* (back or after trade)
Friday	-	*Feniibiene* (good trading day)
Saturday	-	*Kala oruene* (small gods' day)

There is no fixed day of rest (known as *inyobaene*) among his people. (F. Abbey, personal communication, May 11, 2019) Rather, the dynamics of the tide dictates a day when agricultural activities pause. That moveable day of the week is known as '*inina-ene*.

Results of my investigation of this sapience, reveal that those who have been favored during the active days of the week by people, environment or the gods rest their heads and observe some kind of a day rest which could be any of the days of the week. On the contrary, the disfavored continues to toil all through the week as to make ends meet.

l. Dibie, pa nye-fiboburutari-bufini-biemenesa-biri
(In English) *To eat at late night is to be hungry at day time*

This is a metaphorical statement which explains that:

i) It is abnormal to feed at late night after about 8pm

ii) What anyone would have eaten in the morning, when consumed at late night, would lead to the one not having something to eat the day following.

An elderly mother, (E. Pepple, personal communication, August 13, 2019) reflecting on the cause of the death of a relation explained that the Stomach of people are opened in the morning and in the evening for food. She further stated that a normal person as known in land eats food (*finye*) twice every day. First, before leaving the house for the morning activity and later in the day, whatever was prepared for food the following morning, if eaten in the night (after the evening meal) would result to nothing for food the next morning. This wisdom according to Madam Pepple is a statement to discourage the life of gluttony.

m. ***Owi-apungereaniikuro pa egere-omusabiri***
(In English) Only men speak with strength in war times

History reveals that a better part of the times of the Ibani people were war times. There were times of internal and external wars. The *Omu-aru* (war canoe) evolved due to wars against neighboring communities, this is the view of elders. (S. Allison, personal communication, April 11, 2019). As one of those whose fathers once went to an intercommunity war, he reiterated the saying that "only men speak with strength in war times"

On the contrast, the coward holds their peace during discussions leading to war. To this end, only the bold, experienced and those who are positively under the influence of the spirits of war speak at such times.

n. ***A nimigha nye emingikopusaghaa, a pighii aninimibiegha amingikululululu sagha***
(In English) *What I do not know when the tide is up, I shall not know when it ebbs*

There are two tidal times which divides the twenty four hours that make each day. The first flow comes up the shores and ebbs within twelve hours as the second flow takes the last twelve hours of the day.

Environmentalists say that 'Tides are the rise and fall of sea levels caused by the combined effects of the gravitational forces exerted by the Moon and the Sun, and the rotation of the Earth' they further add that "In response to the Moon's gravitational pull, Earth's water bulges on the side facing the Moon.

A traditionalist says that some classical masquerades are rolled out mostly during the 1st high tide in the morning and retreats before the ebbing of the waters. (E. *Igoni,* personal

communication, May 11, 2019). Guided by this traditional timing and the rites which are performed and the secret instructions during the high tide, whatever is not known by observation or transmission would not be known at ebb time.

The statement could mean that whatever is not known by anyone at the first or early moment of the day is to be unknown at the close of the day. (I. Fila-Hart, personal communication, June 7, 1994)
A third wisdom in this saying according to an Ibani sage is that whatever one is not involved in at the beginning, will have no adverse effect on him/her at the end of matter. (A. Jumbo, personal communication, May 11, 2000).

o. ***Awomapuopumanyedawo dim, akalutiibu***
(In English) *Learning for Children (between the ages of four and fifteen) kids are best at moon-light*

During an interview conducted on May 20, 2021, I. Manilla Pepple narrated that in his days of infancy, there were traditional schools where the younger ones were properly educated in fields like canoe regatta pulling, net-casting and mending, drumming, herbal medicine, histories of the land and neighborhoods. Similarly, male children between the ages of five and fourteen were organized and trained under trees, shades, rivers, shrines, etc. For this class of children, the early night hours when the Moon is at full time, the sages of their time and heads of compounds assembled their student and teach them wisdom and knowledge of the ancient and current times.

It is probable that learning is considered best at moon-light as a result of the following:-

a) The illumination which the full Moon provides.
b) The timing was considered best as these children would have been done with their primary/domestic duties
c) Their teachers equally should have ended their core engagements of the day.

p. ***Obio bi opapagha atemem anamunogha sagha***
(In English) *The cock does not crow when the spirits are awake*

The Ibani people know that roosters vocalize or crow all day (from brake of day to dawn) and scarcely at night. The origins of roosters abound from place to place. These animals are believed to have been in the land before the arrival of the Ibani people. To them, the native birds are original with the land. Cocks or roosters are mainly for protein in meals and sometimes left to mate the hen (female fowl) for reproduction in Ibani land. It equally provides some guide to timing for the people. For instance, the first Cock Crow takes place about 3am.This leads to the idea among the people that the spirits of the departed and

deities are active between the hours of 11:00pm and 3:00am.During these scared moments, the cock does not open its mouth and vocalize.

The aforesaid view is corroborated by a community elder in an interview. (T.Hart, personal communication, May 12, 2019). He holds that it was a taboo for any Cock to crow at such times (between 11:00pm and 3:00am). If any does, it was hunted out and eaten before day brakes.

q. Akimaenee ma, mpaduaigbenadupuigbee ma gbe
(In English) *The appointed day to seal the casket and cover the grave (dupugbe* being the fourth night after burial)

The Ibani Calendar provides circles or periods of time for different events like it is known in some other cultures.

For instance, the duration of time for seasonal masquerade display is seven days. Fourteen days for local Creek harvesting, four to seven days for an *Iria* (Womanhood celebrant) to be confided in the fatting room.

Similarly, the cycle of time appointed before the sealing of the casket after burial alongside the covering of the grave of the Ibani man or woman are appointed as follows:

i) A minor (i.e a child below the age of twelve/adolescent) - two days
ii) An adult above the age of twenty, - four days
iii) A Chief and Head of a house system – seven days
iv) The King of the kingdom – fourteen days.

The name of the ceremony is '*dupu-igbee'* which means 'lucking of the box'. This compound word may be broken down as follows:

a) *Dupu* – meaning grave
b) *Igbee* – meaning box or key

The ceremony which is usually performed in the heart of the night (i.e about 12 mid nights) is preceded with storytelling particularly around the life and times of the deceased. Light refreshment accompanies the gathering and often chaired by compound or community heads.

r. ***Nye sughusama la-saa, aniitememamingifinye ma sara-pamagha-arisagha (sa)***
(In English) *The spirits do release sea foods at fongu (i.e. harvesting season)*

The Ibani-English Dictionary of 2005 defines spirits with the following words:

a) ***Teme*** – often used for the high clan spirit being or the Ultimate
b) ***Ijikele*** - referring to alcoholic drinks
c) ***Orufini*** - sea or water spirits which often posses people
d) ***Owu*** - masquerades of mermaid from the river
e) ***Dua*** - dead body's spirit or ghost.

The cited wise saying here is pointing at the activity of the high or governing spirit known as '*teme*'. This term is common among the *ijo* speaking people of the states of *Ondo*, Delta, *Bayelsa*, Rivers and *Akwa Ibom*.

It is a common term among the *ijo* ethnic group for the supreme God (aka *OpuTeme)* who controls the activities of the universe. It equally refers to the chief spirits (*Toru Teme*) that inhabits and generally controls the life and state of the major rivers. According to an interview conducted on May 11, 2019, F. Jumbo asserted that the '*toru-teme*' spirits are responsible for the seasonal sea shell food that is rolled out into the rivers during the high tide. The sea foods include but not limited to the legendary large shark fish (**ofurua**) , whale fish (**saji**), giant shrimp (**Oporo**), seashell animals like snails(**osi**) and periwinkle (**esem akpakpa**).

In the wisdom of the Ibani man, these foods which appear during '*fongu'* (i.e the part of the year between July and August) are the works of blessings or provisions by the '*Toru-teme'* spirits.

3.19 Dedesabiri, belem, ene-baghaa, fiafiam, kumabupirighiipinenyanam

(In English) *Morning is sweet, afternoon is beautiful but evening is glorious*

There is the understanding or tradition of the three main divisions of the day, namely, Morning, Afternoon and Evening. The terms used for the three units of the day are

- *Dede* – morning
- *Enebaa* – mid day of afternoon
- *Bupirighi* – evening.

What is uncertain in these rendering is whether they evolved in time to translate the Western scientific words or have naturally and independently come down with the people.

However, an *Ibani* octogenarian (E. Banigo, personal communication, July 11, 1999), it is believed among his people that these sapiential sayings have come to divide the movement of the Sun when

a) It rises
b) It stands at ninety degrees

c) It sets at end of day.

However, the morning dew and the graceful shadows of the rising Sun cast on the horizon with the re-invigorated body after rest are described as sweet.

Secondly and at mid-day, the beauties of the green vegetation, the clarity cast by the Sun and the sparkling water heights if the tide is in combination are termed beautiful. Then, glorious is what the *Ibani* people used to qualify the evening hours when all substances and appearances begin to fade gracefully. (S. Wilcox, personal communication, May 12, 2019). However, this wise saying does not refer only to the physical phenomena, it also refers to the three main stages of the human being or circle. The *Ibani* people have divided the span of life as the sweet morning (referring to the early days of life when everything is very pleasing, inducing, appealing, delightful and gratifying). The beautiful afternoon, (when life reaches its peak of appearances), and the glorious evening,(when age slows everyone down into some sort of romantic thoughts). During the evening, sweet stories are told and heard; delicacies are served from the courts of the big mothers, wives and young daughters. Then husbands retire into the inner chambers or closets with their love-ready spouses.

Concluding Remarks

Scholars agree that wise sayings and literature are expressed in the forms of oral pronouncements or stories. Wisdom has helped humanity to carefully answer transcendent questions of life. The Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Israelites and indeed the African have made contributions to the wisdom literature and literacy. In the Bible, we find many themes that elicit wisdom. Some are found within the narratives, writings, books of the Prophets, as well as the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament. However, scholars ascribe Wisdom Literature to the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and part of the Book of Psalms. Our essay shows Africa's contributions to wisdom literature. This finds salience in Terrell Owens (2008) sentinel note", that wisdom is where you find it". It is the exclusive production of the West. Africa provides such a place where wisdom could be mined. The study resonates with our theory on African cultural Hermeneutics, which makes a case that texts and source documents can be interpreted using African lenses to illuminate and contextualize the gospel in Africa. It is against this backdrop that the indigenous worldviews of Ibani people of the Niger Delta were explored. This investigation has shown that some sapiential (wise) traditions of the people resonate with Ecclesiastes Chapter 3: 1-8, which principally focuses on times and seasons. The Ibani people, and indeed Africans, treasure and cherish wisdom because it is the essence of their being. From antiquity, it could be seen that Sapiential encompasses

traditions of time, space, seasons, jurisprudence, agriculture, sociology, and worldviews, and the Ibani world is suffused with Sapiential which embeds their seeing, doing and being.

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