



## **Influence of Igala Culture on Spatial Relationships and Space Distributions within Households in Anyigba Kogi state**

Atumeyi, I. E.<sup>1a</sup>, Muhammad, I. B.<sup>1b</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Architecture, Federal University of Technology Minna, Nigeria.

<sup>a</sup>[atumeyimusa@gmail.com](mailto:atumeyimusa@gmail.com); <sup>b</sup>[mib@futminna.edu.ng](mailto:mib@futminna.edu.ng)

Corresponding author email: [atumeyimusa@gmail.com](mailto:atumeyimusa@gmail.com)

### **Abstract:**

*Cultural influences over spatial relationships for a long time has been an aspect of architecture well researched, unfortunately there exist limited studies on the architecture of the Igala people. This study assessed the cultural factors within the Igala kingdom which affects spatial relationships and organisations within some selected households in Anyigba. Four main settlements exist in Anyigba namely; Iji, Aji-Tachi, Obeya and Egume-Ankpa Road. Qualitative approach to data gathering was used in the form of observation and participant interviews, floor plans of the households adopted for this study were sketched and a comparative analysis on the various spaces was made, pictures were also taken, the data collated were presented in tabular form, the data sourced was analysed using narrative and content analysis. It was deduced that security, privacy and Atakpa: (the hut where most activities take place) are the main cultural factors that determine spatial relationships and organisations within the Igala household. It is hereby recommended that for a sustainable actualisation of incorporating Igala culture into its architecture these established cultural factors should be made as a policy and enforced on professionals by the authorising agencies when a new household is being conceived.*

Keywords: Spatial Relationships, Cultural Factors, Sustainable, Igala, Architecture.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The influence of culture on the relationship between useable spaces is not in doubt even before the advent of regularised study of architecture, dwelling spaces conformed to the way of life of the people creating and using these space, (Dejbakhsh et.al, 2012). Existing studies have established that culture plays a great role in determining the spatial relationships within households (Fathy, 1978: Kent, 1990: Adler, 1992: Torabi and Brahman, 2013). The household being a major portrayal of culture and depiction of spatial relationships symbolizes the best approach towards determining how both can be clearly understood when studying any particular culture (Eriksson *et al.*, 2017).

This study is particular about the Igala people and the influence of their culture on the relationships that exist between spaces most often used by them. In many parts of Igala land, design and structure of households have in recent time undergone considerable modifications due to technological advancements, urban migration and influence of other cultures (Emusa, and Nduka 2018). Irrespective of these influences on the Igala culture, when designing and developing a household the Igala cultural context still plays a critical role in determining the spatial relationships. In fact researches into Igala culture by (Yunusa, 2012, Ukwede, 2014, and Emusa and Nduka, 2018) describes the Igala man as a highly conscious individual responsive to his culture irrespective of his religion, social status and educational background. Despite the assertions by these studies a gap still exists on what influence culture plays in determining the spatial relationships within households in Igala land.

This study is therefore aimed at assessing the influence of Igala culture in determining the spatial relationships and organizations within households in Igala land.

## Study Area

Igala is an ethnic group located in Kogi State, North Central of Nigeria. The geography of Igala land can be located on latitude 6°30 and 8°40 north and longitude 6°30 and 7°40 east and covers an area of about 13,665 square kilometres (Emusa and Nduka, 2018). Boston (1967) believes that the people of Igala origin are of proto-kwa origin same as the present Igbo and Yoruba persons as well as most ethnic sets of North Central Nigeria. Akinkugbe (1978) on the other hand address the Igala origin from the perspective that exist core similarities between the Igala and Yoruba evidently observed in high lexicostatistic similarities as well as sound shifts and etymological innovations, including observed similarities of cultural traits and attributes in the form of kingship and marriage. This is an indication that Igala people probably separated from the group before the fragmentation of Yoruba into the current day Yoruba dialects which might lead one to believe that probably the Yoruba and Igala have a common ancestry and perhaps culture, tradition and architecture.

Anyigba is a major town in Igala land located in Dekina Local Government Area. Its average altitude is about 420 meters above sea level, falling between the tropical wet and dry climatic region and the guinea savanna, having mean annual temperature of 25°C and rainfall 1600mm (Ifatimehin and Musa, 2011). Relative Humidity generally rises to over 80% and falls between 50%-70% in the afternoons during the wet season. Rainy season occurs between April through October and the peak is September the rains are mainly of the conventional type (Awosusi and Oriye, 2015). Anyigba is mainly an agrarian society which is currently evolving towards commercial due to the presence of the University.



Fig 1: Map of Igala Land.

Source: (Emusa and Nduka, 2018.)

## Igala architecture and spatial relationships

The traditional Igala household comprised of various spaces for different activities or functions, the major activities include sleeping, food preparation, food storage, animal husbandry, social interaction and religious activities (Ukwede, 2014). These activities take place in different spaces with a need for effective spatial planning and distribution. These spaces which can be seen in Plate I includes; the head of the compound's hut (*Unyi Enębani*), Wives' huts (*Unyi abobule*), Adult Males' Huts (*Unyi Abokęle*), Kitchen/Cooking Space (*Obuka*), Animals' Pen (*Unyi-ęnu-ęre*), Reception Hut (*Atakpa*), Courtyard (*Okolo*), Bathrooms (*Unyi ugw'ęla*), Food Barns (*Aka*), Shrine hut (*Achekwu*) and Perimeter Fence (*Ogba*) while the surrounding bushes served as toilet. The spatial organization and relationships of these spaces are normally determined by the activities performed in each space in relation to the persons performing these activities.

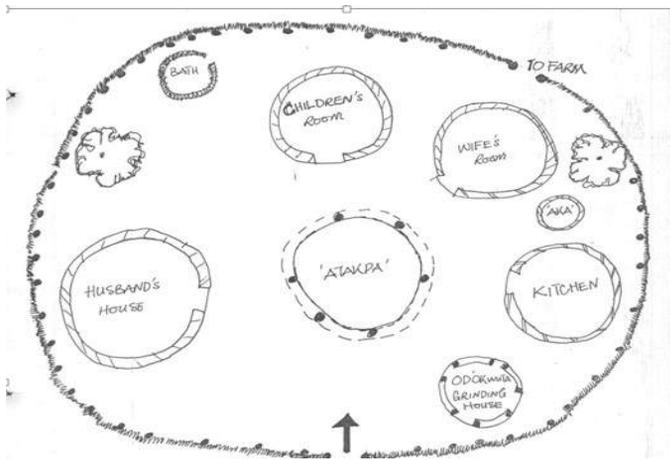


Plate I: Layout of Traditional Igala Household.  
Source: Edegbo, (2000)

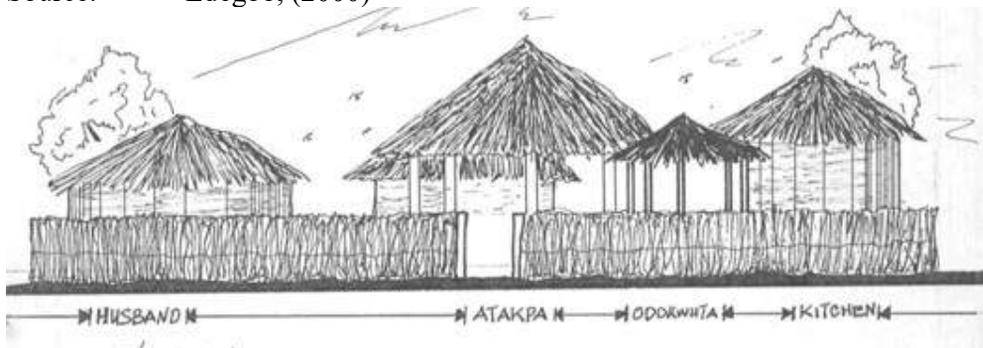


Plate II: Elevations of Traditional Igala Household.  
Source: Edegbo, (2000)

Igala cultural influences necessitated that the circular form was the predominant building form adopted by the people in construction of their houses (Emusa and Nduka, 2018). These individual huts were arranged in such a way that necessitated having a courtyard housing a hut which served as a reception for visitors. Ukwede (2014) explained that this hut found in the courtyard commonly referred to as *Atakpa* plays significant roles in the social life of the Igala people, while Edegbo, (2000): Emusa, (2010) further elaborated by describing this hut as a structure enclosed by open walls and with a high pitched thatch roof.

Security and privacy are important considerations in Igala culture as the majority of the Igala houses are characterized by perimeter fence called *ogba* made from a local shrub called *ogilichi* which allows an entrance close to the head of the household *Enegbani* (husband) that provides the head of the household with view in order to screen visitors and trespassers (Edegbo, 2000, Emusa and Nduka, 2018).

Emusa (2010) states that the traditional Igala household setting comprises of individual compounds, although in contemporary times it might be so but the spaces and relationships within the contemporary setting is still same as the traditional setting. The number of houses in a given compound depends on the number of wives and male children the head of the household has (Edegbo, 2000). Ukwede (2014) further explains that female children are expected to stay in their mother's huts until they are married while the male children irrespective of their mothers stay in the same room until they build their individual huts or create a compound of their own.

Window and door openings are quite small in traditional Igala houses, the predominant window sizes are 400mm by 400mm while doors are 800mm by 1800mm (Edebo, 2000, Emusa, 2010). Ukwede, (2014) explains that small window and door openings are characteristic features of an Igala traditional house because of the available building materials and climatic conditions. (Edebo, 2000; Emusa, 2010) agrees with this assertion and also added that security is another major determinant in the sizes of these windows and doors as it is believed that the small sizes of these windows and doors will discourage criminals from trying to access the individual houses in the household.

The traditional Igala household do not incorporate toilets into the main compound rather surrounding bushes are used (Edebo, 2000; Emusa, 2010). Ukwede (2014) explains that in Igala culture, toilets are considered unclean hence not located in the dwelling areas while human waste when generated is dumped in the surrounding bushes, this the Igala people believe will eventually serve as manure for the small farms close to the household.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Influence of Culture on Spatial Relationships and Organizations in Households.**

Askarizad (2017) postulates that architecture is a body with various faces hence its functionality transcends all of humanity, culture, devout belief, family and environmental conditions. This statement has shown that architecture can properly be referred to as cultural, because its procedure and body is influenced by the characteristic principles applicable to culture. This relationship between architecture is further elaborated in the spatial planning, relationships and organizations of spaces within a given community (Hilier et .al. 1987). Torabi and Brahman, (2013) are convinced that for given households most spaces considered useable or rather functional are tied to culture, citing examples of Iranian households designed to cater for three generations by exploiting the open spaces to accommodate new members of the family. The Iranian experience as described by Askarizad (2017) on their side believes the open courtyard and large walkways in most traditional Iranian houses enable families grow with time and not necessarily restricted to three generations. There are core similarities between the perception of the igala household and that of the Iranians described above, the Igala household according to Edebo (2000) extends outwards from the *atakpa* with available space to accommodate new members of the family either through marriage or adoption and can grow until space restraint forces family member to seek land elsewhere.

Spatial relationships within households emphasizes the design and blueprint of spaces in order to accomplish a particular goal that limits the frequency and type of communiqué between architectural and cultural elements in a household (Torabi and Brahman, 2013). Hilier et al. (1987) postulates that spatial relationships dwells more on organization of spaces in order to achieve functional organized settings, hence the social relations which have been determined by cultural factors influence the creation of space and spatial organizations within that household. This might not be far from why Mahdavi and Yarmud (2013) believes that using spatial concepts like passage, vacuum and courtyards, cultural influences on spatial relationships can be evaluated. From the aspect of the architecture of the igala people, *Okolo* (courtyard) is generally the only concept that falls within the postulations of Hilier et al. (1987) Toabi and Brahman (2013) and Mahdavi and Yarmuda (2013), as evidenced by Ukwede (2014) the Igala people do not have passages or walkways defined in households rather the position or location of an accommodation from where the *atakpa* is located determines how the person will move to that accommodation.

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach to data sourcing in the form of observation, participant interviews, and field survey were employed as the instruments for collating data. A total of forty houses were visited for observation purposes, these houses were selected randomly from the four major settlement areas in Anyigba namely: *Iji*, *Aji-Tachi*, *Obeya* and *Egume –Ankpa* road.

From the forty houses observed, floor plans and pictures for ten each from the four settlements were studied to develop an observation schedule, moreover eight persons were interviewed but

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only five were quoted in this study. A similar study by Ekhaese, (2011) and Adeokun, (2015), employed similar procedure in sourcing data.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

Data was presented in the form of tables and visual descriptive tools such as pictures and architectural sketches. The data was analyzed using narrative and content analysis. Table 1 illustrates the available spaces within households in Anyigba while Table 2 depicts cultural factors influencing these households.

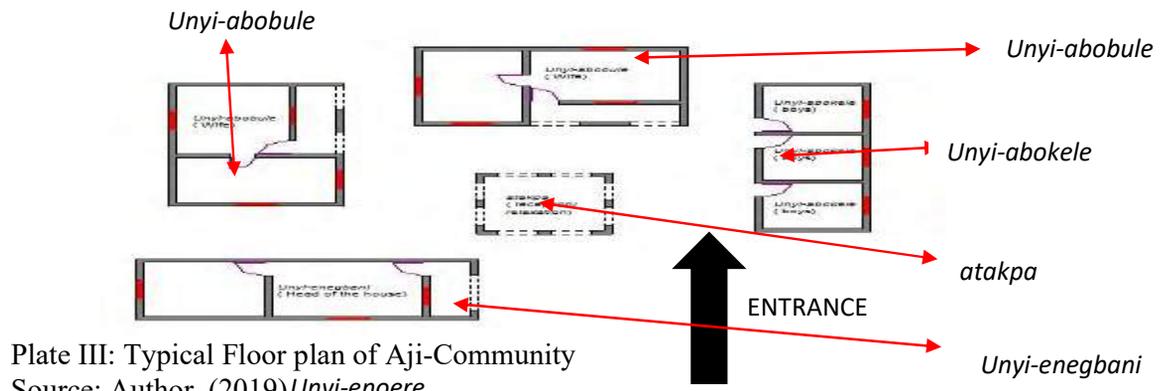


Plate III: Typical Floor plan of Aji-Community  
Source: Author, (2019)

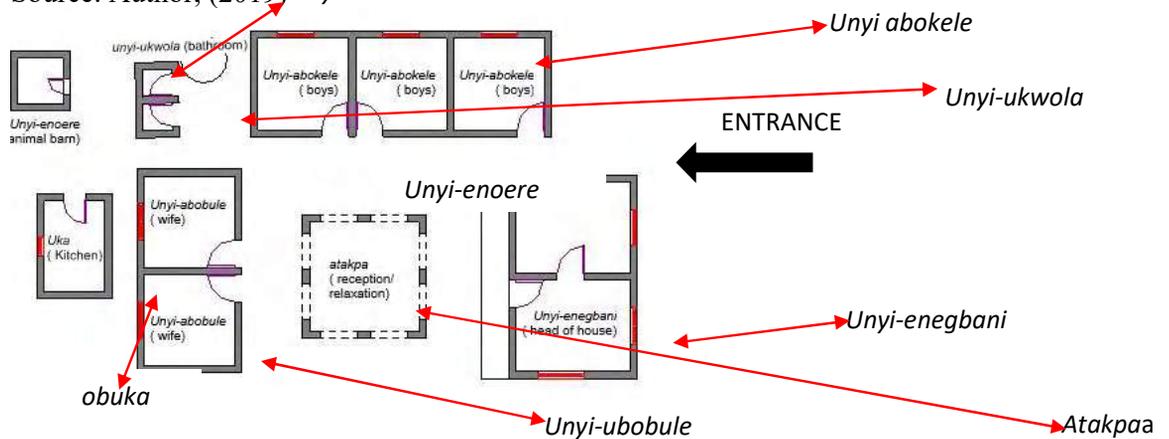


Plate IV: Typical Floor plan of Aji-Tachi and Obeya Community  
Source: Author, (2019)



Plate V: Picture of a household at Obeya  
Source: Author, (2019)

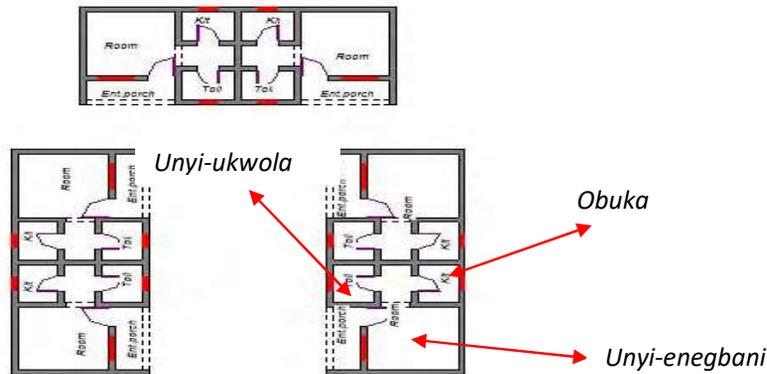


Plate VI: Typical household Plan at Egume-Ankpa road  
Source: Author, (2019)

Table 1: Available Spaces within households in Anyigba  
Source: Author, (2019)

| SPACE DESCRIPTION    | <i>IJI</i> COMMUNITY | <i>AJI-TACHI</i> COMMUNITY | <i>OBEYA</i> COMMUNITY | <i>EGUME-ANKPA ROAD</i> COMMUNITY |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>UNYI-ENEGBANI</i> | Available            | Available                  | Available              | Available                         |
| <i>UNYI-UBOBULE</i>  | Available            | Available                  | Available              | Not Available                     |
| <i>UNYI-ABOKELE</i>  | Available            | Available                  | Available              | Not Available                     |
| <i>ATAKPA</i>        | Available            | Available                  | Available              | Not Available                     |
| <i>OBUKA</i>         | Not Available        | Available                  | Available              | Available                         |
| <i>UNYI-UKWOLA</i>   | Not Available        | Available                  | Available              | Available                         |
| <i>ACHEKWU</i>       | Not Available        | Not Available              | Not Available          | Not Available                     |
| <i>UNYI-ENOERE</i>   | Not Available        | Available                  | Available              | Not Available                     |

Table 1, above shows the spaces normally found in an Igala household it is evident that the most common space found in all of the settlements is *Unyi-Enegbani*, this suggests that the Igala people believe that every household must have a head. The *Atakpa*, *Unyi- Abokele* and *Unyi- Ubobule* were discovered to be present in three settlements apart from the *Egume-Ankpa* road settlement, this is result of the fact that most of the houses in this settlement were rehabilitated or built in the last twenty years to cater for the student population hence built for commercial purposes with no need for these facilities. *Obuka* and *Unyi- Ukwola* were discovered to be present in all but *Iji* community see findings for comprehensive discussion. *Achekwu* has disappeared, discussion for this can also be found below in the discussion sub head. The constant unexplained disappearance of domestic animals was reason deducted for the absence of *unyi- enoere* in some settlements. Respondent R1, says “we don’t keep animals as before, they end up dying or being stolen”.

Table 2: Observation Schedule of Cultural factors as they affect spaces within households in Anyigba

Source: Author, (2019)

| SPACE DESCRIPTION       | <i>IJI COMMUNITY</i>      | <i>AJI-TACHI COMMUNITY</i> | <i>OBEYA COMMUNITY</i>    | <i>EGUME-ANKPA ROAD COMMUNITY</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>ATAKPA</b>           | Available                 | Available                  | Available                 | Not Available                     |
| <b>SECURITY</b>         | Good Security             | Good Security              | Good Security             | Good Security                     |
| <b>ACHEKWU (Shrine)</b> | Not Available             | Not Available              | Not Available             | Not Available                     |
| <b>WINDOW OPENINGS</b>  | Large window openings     | Large window openings      | Large window openings     | Large window openings             |
| <b>PRIVACY</b>          | Yes                       | Yes                        | Yes                       | Yes                               |
| <b>TOILET</b>           | Not within the households | Not within the households  | Not within the households | Within the households             |

Table 3: Percentage Influence of Cultural Factors as they affect Households in Anyigba

Source: Author, (2019)

| S/NO | COMMUNITIES                | CULTURAL FACTORS |            |                  |               |            |                                 |
|------|----------------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|---------------|------------|---------------------------------|
|      |                            | Atakpa           | Security   | Achekwu (Shrine) | Large Windows | Privacy    | Toilet located within Household |
| 01   | Iji Community              | 8                | 10         | 0                | 8             | 10         | 2                               |
| 02   | Aje-Tachi Community        | 9                | 10         | 0                | 7             | 10         | 2                               |
| 03   | Obeya Community            | 7                | 10         | 0                | 3             | 10         | 1                               |
| 04   | Ankpa-Egume Road Community | 2                | 10         | 0                | 8             | 10         | 9                               |
|      | <b>Total</b>               | <b>26</b>        | <b>40</b>  | <b>0</b>         | <b>26</b>     | <b>40</b>  | <b>14</b>                       |
|      | <b>Percentage</b>          | <b>18%</b>       | <b>27%</b> | <b>0%</b>        | <b>18%</b>    | <b>27%</b> | <b>10%</b>                      |

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The *Atakpa* the hut located in the courtyard was seen in most of the households studied except for households in *Egume-Ankpa* community. The households in *Egume-Ankpa* road community were built for commercial purposes so as to take advantage of the student population. *Atakpa* was seen in 18% of the total house studied, despite this low percentage it was discovered that for households where they are found it served the purpose of entertainment and receiving of guests into the compound it was also discovered that that it also served as a link and distribution space within the household, all the individual units within the compounds studied are all linked via this hut.

The location and position within the compound of the *Enegbani* (head of House) and that of the *Unyi-Ubobule* (Wives Huts) see plates III & IV and table 3, suggests that security for the household and privacy for the women determined both locations, the women folk are located far from the entrance into the compound while the head of the household is located just beside the entrance into the compound. Respondent R5 buttress this point when he says “before anything or anyone can get to my wives in my compound, they will have to go through me” Table 3 clearly emphasizes this with the high percentile, while Table 2 shows that all settlements have incorporated privacy and security in their layouts

Kitchen were found to be located just by the side of the women huts: respondent R2, explains “*we keep our food stuff and ingredients in our room, our kitchens need to be close to that room*”. *Aka* food barn has virtually disappeared, the foods are currently stored in the second room of the wives apartment as it was discovered that the wives have more than one sleeping room, the second room is expected to serve as a food barn or store for these women.

Apart from the households in *Egume-Ankpa* road, few of the households in the other three settlements have toilets within the main sleeping and domestic spaces Table 3 shows that 10% of the households studied have toilets but the percentage came mostly from one community, this is due to the fact that most of these houses were designed and built specifically for the student population as majority of the tenants are neither Igala nor people with a sense of the Igala culture. Respondents R3 says “*since the establishment of the university the use of bushes as toilets has greatly diminished, we no longer have land it has become scarce and expensive*”. Rather what is prevalent is to have structures located some distance away from the core activities where a pit latrine is constructed with a roof above it to serve the purpose of a toilet and bathroom.

Most of the households visited in the course of this study used the large window and door openings associated. A breakdown shows that it accouns for 18% of the total percentile tying it wih atakpa, hence this study shows that a gradual decline of the use of small window and door sizes, this phenomenon is caused by influence of other cultures and modernity as enthused by, Respondent R3 who says “*our children build their houses like how houses are built in Abuja and Lagos*” are factors responsible for this.

Of all households studied only one still has the traditional *ogba* (perimeter fence) along its boundary, see plate V which shows the *ogba*, the field work was undertaken during the dry season hence the *oglich*i shrubs are without leaves, the other households were without this *ogba* fence, hence it could not be properly ascertained whether this plays any role in spatial relationships and distributions within the households. The *achekwu* (shrine) was not seen in any of the households studied, please see table 3 which captures the total number of all the houses studied in an observation schedule further more respondent R4 says “*Achekwu is no longer fashionable due to religion, people practice it in private*” hence it can be inferred that families who still practice this traditional values house the idols in their bedrooms.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to assess the cultural factors which influence spatial relationships and organizations within households in Igala kingdom, using Anyigba as a case for study, the research has identified that spatial relationships and distributions within the Igala settlements are influenced by the need for privacy and security for the women while the *Atakpa* serves as the central point from which all useable spaces radiate, on the hand windows and doors which have been known to be small in sizes are no longer small as the influence of modernization on the Igala people have made them to adopt the use of large windows on their buildings. While *achekwu* the local shrine has virtually disappeared due to the influence of religion.

It is hereby recommended that for Igala traditional architecture to be sustainable and transcend beyond coming generations cultural factors such as the *atakpa* which is diminishing as seen in its absence in the new settlement of *Ankpa-Egume* road should be made a part of the design approach in the creation and establishment of new households by professionals and authorities saddled with development in Igala land, by developing policy framework which makes it imperative for new households to incorporate it.

Table 4 Profile of Respondents Quoted in this Study.

| S/NO | RESPONDENT | PROFILE  |
|------|------------|--|
| 01   | R1         | A 75-year-old farmer. He is the head of his household with primary education two wives and fourteen children. He was interviewed at Aje-Tachi.   |
| 02   | R2         | A 68-year-old trader. She is the first and senior wife of the household a grandmother with no formal education, she has eight children and six grandchildren. She was interviewed at Obeya.    |
| 03   | R3         | A 65-year-old Trader and retired civil servant. He is the head of his household with University education he has one wife and five children. He was interviewed at Egume-Ankpa road community. |
| 04   | R4         | A 69-year-old community leader. He is the head of his household with secondary education he has three wives and ten children. He was interviewed at Iji community.                             |
| 05   | R5         | A 50-year driver. He is the head of his household with secondary education he has four wives and twelve children. He was interviewed at obeya community.                                       |
| 06   | R6         | A 48-year-old trader. She is the second wife of the household a mother with secondary education, she has two children. She was interviewed at Aje-Tachi.                                       |
| 07   | R7         | A 38-year-old Motorcycle rider. He is the head of his household with Secondary education he has one wife and three children. He was interviewed at Egume-Ankpa road.                           |
| 08   | R8         | A 35-year-old civil servant. He is the head of his household with university education he has one wife and two children. He was interviewed at Iji community.                                  |

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