

African Philosophy

Contemporary Issues and Perspectives

Editors

Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD
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AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

*Proceedings of the International Conference of the Association for the
Promotion of African Studies on African Ideologies and Innovative
Trends and Advances: Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future,
25th May, 2021*

Edited by

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Dedication

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To all the members of the Association for the Promotion of African
Studies

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2021 marks the beginning of a promising decade for Africa. In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic, the continent continues to be home to seven of the world's 10 fastest-growing economies. Ours is a continent that has continued to give birth to beautiful and inspirational stories, in spite of difficult circumstances. It is on this basis that the Association for the Promotion of African Studies on 25th May, 2021 had her Annual International Conference on the theme: *African Ideologies and Innovative Trends and Advances: Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future*.

The 2021 International Conference did not only highlight the triumphs of past years but focused on strategies for tackling forthcoming challenges in the African continent. The collective action of the members of the association as scholars in discussing innovative trends and advances within Africa is representative of the shared energy and excitement around Africa's academic potential.

This conference was inspired by a retinue of questions that have bothered the inquisitive minds of the members of APAS and beyond. This book is, therefore, the proceedings of the effort by the members of APAS who took up the challenge to respond to these questions through research.

The date for the conference, 25th May, which was AFRICA DAY, established by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU) in a bid to enhance change and freedom in Africa, is very significant for the association and the conference. As the association marked this day in a great style, the present work is a part of the ideas generated for greater change and freedom in Africa.

The present piece, titled: *African Philosophy: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives: Proceedings of the International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies on African*

Introduction

Ideologies and Innovative Trends and Advances: Honoring the Past and Shaping the Future, 25th May, 2021, is part of the outcome of the conference.

AFRICAN IDEOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE TRENDS AND ADVANCES: HONOURING THE PAST AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

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Preamble

It is almost inevitable to talk about African ideologies without referring to the West which seems to have created and transferred the concept to the African operational system. Western ideologies, like materialism, formalism, idealism, rationalism, empiricism, communism, socialism, individualism and collectivism, tend to dominate and even dictate most of Western thinking and action. As for African ideologies, they are guided and propelled by cosmic vital forces that navigate within the space-time dynamics. One would like to explain the concept of ideology in terms of ideas and presuppositions behind the activities, processes, procedures and outcomes underlying decisions and policies on various issues. To put things in clear perspective, let it be noted that the Western ideologies are based on dualism, while those of Africa are based on dualitism. Both dualism and dualitism represent the idea of twoness in reality. Dualism's twoness involves a contrast, while dualitism's is one of complement. In Western thinking ideologies found their way into the various isms for every given field of research and activity. Africa's thinking is oriented to and suffused with cosmology.

WESTERN DUALISM VS. AFRICAN DUALITISM

For the purpose of this presentation, the term "cosmology" is to be taken in the broadest sense of presuppositions about the unchanging nature of things, about God and the universe, and about humans and their place in the universe. This cosmological thinking covers issues of origins and operations of the human being - the visible and the

invisible world, the concrete and the abstract, the symbolic and the substantial, the mysterious and the mystical, and the *spirit-soul* and *life force*. While the Western ideologies are based on **DUALISM**, African ideologies are based on **DUALITISM**. The two concepts refer to twoness in the nature of reality. *Dualism* is operational in Plato's theory where he denies reality to physical phenomenal things in this world, which he called shadows, while retaining reality for the world beyond. Descartes' *dualism* sharply subjugated material things (*res extensa*) to thought things (*res cogitans*). Hegel's *dualism* creates a sharp contrast between *matter* and *spirit*. Early African ideologies, like Senghor's *Négritude*, Nkrumah's *Consciencism*, and Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, were Hegelian and Western-inspired. Azikiwe's *Zikism* was dubbed communalistic, while Awolowo's *Awoism* was dubbed welfaristic. Closer home, Archbishop Anthony Obinna dubbed his own ideas *Covivalism*, which in base is an admixture of welfarism and communalism. Finally, pharmacist Celestine Chima talks of *Africanism*, which is also communalistic and welfarist. Both communalism and welfarism are in base socialistic by a non-abrasive, non-cataclysmic route. They are anchored on the dualitistic mantra of **I AM BECAUSE WE ARE**.

A further development in Western dualism unfolded in the views of empiricists, pragmatists, utilitarians, positivists and neo positivists, as well as with the analytic movement, with their emphasis on verifiable things. In other words, what runs through in the Western ideology of conflict of opposites can be seen to be quite incoherent at the end. Dualism thrives on cleavage, conflict, disparity, separatism, uniqueness, superiority, conquest, overcoming, overtaking, etc. The primary thrust of intentionality is to achieve a breakthrough, make a difference, invent, conquer, dominate, and to establish superiority in matters. A dualistic society is premised on a disjunctive and exclusivistic impetus of **EITHER/OR**. It logically and necessarily engenders the natural consequence whereby to choose or prefer one option is to reject the other. It thrives on a climate of exclusivism, superiority feeling, elitism and bigotry, as the case may be.

Discrimination in society is only a natural mechanism for discerning the superior from the inferior, or the better from the worse, or the higher value from the lower in any situation. Racism, apartheid and all forms of classism are shouting examples of fallouts of a society that is founded on a dualistic ideology. Ironically, those who operate or presuppose Western ideologies relish them as values or even super values. They consider that every advancement, breakthrough, or invention they make entitles them to show indifference or undisguised disdain for the African ideologies.

AFRICAN DUALITISM EXPLAINED

In the prevailing age of artificial intelligence, they would glibly dismiss African ideologies as miserably flawed and pedestrian at best, and at worst, incoherent, meaningless and retrogressive. The African would handle the things of nature with care bordering on reverence, and would try never to degrade or devalue them. Unlike those who, driven first by curiosity and then by greed, deal with things in nature with cold and calculated detachment, the African handles them with care in the firm belief that there is a life-force propelling them and vibrating within them. Aimé Césaire is angered by the culture that rejects his own historic humanity, and he rejects the cultural arrogance that the Western ideologies brandish. He proposes values alternate to the vaunted discoveries, conquests, inventions and breakthroughs in empirical science and technology. He associates with royalty the dark African skin, which Western ideology has learnt to disdain in racism and classism. It is not base or despicable but royal! He refers to its coffee colour as “royal mahogany.” The mahogany is the quintessential tree for its strength and resilience. It is matchlessly beautiful when polished, unassailably strong in its texture, virtually incorruptible under harsh climatic conditions, and beyond the power of worms to devour.

Eia (Hurrah) for the royal mahogany!

Eia (Hurrah) for those who have never invented anything!

For those who have never discovered

*For those who have never conquered
But abandon themselves to the essence of all things
Ignorant of surfaces, but seized by the very movement of things
Not caring to conquer, but playing the game of the world
Truly the elder sons of the world, porous to all the breaths of the
world.¹*

Africa possesses an essence of which science and technology are mere aspects. This essence includes closeness to the earth, a fascination for the *very movement of things*. Césaire was not gloating over, rather than regret Africa's diminished presence in what appears to be the main arena of Western ideology. He was not hailing as a virtue the situation of failure or inability to have invented or conquered or discovered anything. Nor was he pretending that inaction, sloth, and lack of drive were noble and desirable over prompt, dynamic and effective action. In a later event, Césaire himself clarified the vision of Africa that he and those who thought like him wished to convey.

We thought that it was an immense injustice to say that Africa had done nothing; that Africa did not count in the evolution of the world, that Africa hadn't invented anything of value. And at the same time it was an enormous mistake to think that nothing of value could come out of Africa. But let me add that our loyalty to Africa did not lead to a sort of philosophy of the ghetto.²

Césaire asserted and brandished the dynamic of *Négritude* in African ideologies. One could cautiously interpret *Négritude* in the issue at hand as 'the African way'. It is no mere label but an active becoming

¹Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1962), 72.

²V.Y. Mundimbe, ed., *The Surreptitious Speech (Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness)* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 24.

and a vital force that is dynamically, but patiently and stubbornly, active in the earth and the sky and the elements.³

Upon scrutiny, one discovers that the whole idea of conflict of opposites embedded in Western ideologies creates a paradox of inertia. Nevertheless, the paradox of inertia in talking about opposites lies in the fact that in the etymological and actual meaning of the words, things that oppose each other actually lean on each other. If you placed a ladder against a wall, the ladder leans on the wall. In the Igbo language, there is no precise word for opposite, oppose, opponent, opposition. The closest equivalents include *mmágidé*, *mgbàgidé*, *nnògidé*, *ndàgidé* and *mkpàgidé*. The *-gidé* suffix demonstrates the activity or property of gripping, attaching and leaning. The dictionary meaning of *to oppose* is to stand *against* and *to stand against only means to lean on, or towards* (which is obviously for support)! *Collins Thesaurus* (p. 467, on synonyms for opposite suggests the words, **corresponding, facing and fronting**. Things that are opposite or are opposed to each other go in contrary directions and have the goal of cancelling each other out.

Ede's *ifé kwúrú ifé ákwúdèbé yä* has been clearly manifested. It is quite heart-warming, both for children and for adults, to learn about and associate with their Guardian Angels, even though they cannot explain outright the mode and mechanism of the guardianship. They are confident and assured that the angel is there. Current African ideologies have inherited and acquiesced to the faulty Western educational parameters that successive educational authorities and policy makers have allowed to define their modes and operations. In **DUALITISM**, unlike in **DUALISM**, twoness does not necessarily imply contrariness, but is open to complementarity, supplementarity and

³Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*, 72. Cf. Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 75.

synergy. The following table is a collection of what I call duplets that illustrate the **DUALITISTIC** pattern in Igbo epistemological thinking that *ifé kwúrú ifé ákwúdèbé yá*. One could consider the **DUALITISTIC** principle as backbone to African ideologies. The *ifé nkwódèbé* is a complementarity principle, an enabling permanent possibility for completion. It is there for being, for doing and for becoming. It implies neither quantity nor quality; neither parity nor disparity, neither necessity nor value differential.

| DUPLETS | DUPLETS | DUPLETS |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| ákánri na ákáèkpè RIGHT/LEFT | íwé na ònùmà SORROW/GRIEF | ókéòkpà na nnékwú ROOSTER/HEN |
| áká na ìgòdò KEY/LOCK | mmá na njó GOOD/EVIL | ókú na mmírì FIRE/WATER |
| àkó na úchè MIND/THOUGHT | imí na ányá EYES/NOSE | ókwú na òmùmé WORD/ACTION |
| àkú na ùtá BOW/ARROW | Ísì na ódù HEAD/TAIL | ókwú na úkà DISPUTE/QUARREL |
| chí na ékè DESTINY/CREATOR | ìgùgbè na mmà-ághà File/sword | óké na nné MALE/FEMALE |
| dí na nwányì HUSBAND/WIFE | ìhú na àzú FRONT/BACK | ónwá na kpákpandò MOON/SUN |
| égbé na ùgò EAGLE/KITE | mgbágó na ndidà uphill/downhill | óká na úhèrè LENGTH/BREADTH |
| égbè na mmà GUN/SWORD | mmúo na mmádù SPIRIT/HUMAN | ójí na ósè KOLA/ALLIGATOR PEPPER |
| ógù na mmà HOE/MACHETE | ÍSÍALÀ ÍKPÈRÈALÀ SUPPLICATION AND WORSHIP | ónwú na ndù DEATH/LIFE |
| égwú na óchì FUN/LAUGHTER | nkwú na ngwò OIL PALM/RAFFIA PALM | ònwúnwé na nchópùtā OWNERSHIP/DISCOVER Y |
| élú na àlà UP/DOWN | nnà na nwá (úmù) FATHER/SON | ónyeúkwú na ónyentā GREAT AND SMALL |
| ényì na ógò | nné na nwá (úmù) | ósó na íjè |

African Ideologies And Innovative Trends And Advances: Honouring The Past And Shaping The Future

| FRIEND/IN-LAW | MOTHER/CHILD | HASTE/SLOWNESS |
|---|--|--|
| ényi na ényì FRIEND/FRIEND | nnú na mmánú SALT/OIL | ÒSÁ NA ÚZÈ squirrel/úzè |
| ényí na nwánzà ELEPHANT/THORN BIRD | nnú na ósè SALT/PEPPER | ùbá na ùbiam WEALTH/POVERTY |
| éwú na òkúkò GOAT/CHICKEN | nrá na àgbùgbà INCITEMENT/INSTIGATION | ùbé na ókà ÙBÉ/MAIZE |
| ézi na úlò HOME/ABROAD | ntú na ághùghò LIES/SLANDER | ùdèlè nà àkwú VULTURE/NEST |
| ìhè na òchíchiri LIGHT/DARKNESS | nwókè na nwanyi MALE/FEMALE | úgwú na ndidà TOP/BOTTOM |
| ìhú na àzú BACK/FORTH, FRONT/BACK | òchíè na òhúru ANCIENT/MODERN | úkwú na áká HANDS/ FEET |
| ímí na ányá NOSE/EYES | ÒFÓ NA ÓGÙ ÒFÓ NA ÓGÙ | úkwú na ntà GREAT/SMALL |
| íkwú na íbè KITH/KIN | òhía na úzò BUSH/ROAD | ùtó na ílú SWEET/BITTER |
| íkè nà èbùbè POWER/MIGHT | ògàrànyà na ógbènyè RICH/POOR | úwé na ákwà DRESSING/CLOTH |
| íkéókwù na íkèògù TALK POWER/WAR POWER | ògù na mmà HOE/MACHETE | úrù na ókpúkú FLESH/BONE |
| jí na édè YAM/COCOYAM | ògù na mgbá FIGHT/WRESTLING | úrù na òghóm ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE |
| ígwé na àlà SKY/SOIL | òké na ngwèrè RAT/LIZARD | ùwà na chi FATE/FORTUNE |

AFRICAN DUALITISM OVERCOMES WESTERN MONOLITHISM

In dualitism, concord is favoured over cleavage, co-operation over conflict, and pluralism over monolithism. Parity is favoured over disparity, harmony over prevalence, and congress over competition. African dualitism overcomes Western monolithism, for its twoness conveys the sense of balance and stability, of supportiveness over supplantation, complementarity over contradiction, and synergy over seism. Any reality that has support stands firm, while those without support are in perpetual risk of toppling over. G. Ernest Wright explains this dualitistic dynamic in the operations of nature:

Nature is alive, and its powers are distinguished as personal because (humans have) directly experienced them. There is no such thing as the inanimate. (Humans live) in the realm of a throbbing, personal nature, the kingdom of the holy gods. (They are) caught in the interplay of gigantic forces to which (they) must integrate (their lives). (These forces) are known to (humans) because (they have) experienced them, not as objects but as personalities so much greater in power than (their) own that of necessity they worship and serve them.⁴

Dualitism is based on the interconnectedness of everything to everything else, regardless of category. The physical is connected to the physical, as well as to the nonphysical and abstract, and as well as to the simple, the sublime, and the esoteric. Similarly, the visible is connected to the visible and the invisible, to the spiritual and the psychic, and to the magical and the mystical. All are interconnected. The fact of interconnectedness is the important thing, while the mode or manner of interconnection is of secondary importance. There is thus no strict distinction or discontinuity between the sacred and the secular, between the natural and the supernatural, for nature, humans and the unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community. Humans have found two ways of interpreting this sense of presence, which confronts them in the world. One is that of

⁴ G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1950), 17.

reckoning with things as they naturally function, and another is by attributing life or an inner dynamic to everything. Gravity makes a stone thrown up to fall down, but what really makes gravity do what it does? In other words, what is the inner dynamic behind gravity?

In the fields of religion, politics, and even science itself, African ideologies navigate between tradition and modernity, between custom and convention, between the mythical and the mystical. The *dibìà áfá* functions seamlessly with the *dibìà ógwù*. There is a spiritual element for life and death, for prosperity and penury, and for power and control. The *babalawo* exists along with the medical practitioner, the preacher and the prophet. In African operations, magic and miracle blend, and the concrete and the spiritual mutually support each other. All of these are premised on the simple supposition that *ifé kwírú ifé akwùdèbè yá*. That supplies the crucial cosmological impetus which the Western ideology tragically dismisses or glibly glosses over either as superstition or as idiocy. In African ideologies, human relationships are intersubjective, governance is communal, and the family is extended. Marriage is multi-wife, knowledge and skill blend (*nkà nà úzú*), and monolithic rulership *ézè* is supplemented by (*òhà na ézè*). In African ideologies, education is practical and apprenticed, belief is without compulsion, decision making is by consensus, and religious quest is facultative to the individual and not through proselytism. In the absence of uniform liturgy and holy book, theology is expressed in clear and simple terms.

Emmanuel Edeh describes it as *ifé kwírú ifé akwùdèbè yá*. This idea is germane and seems to play out as an expatiation of the classical epistemological law of association. This law stipulates that things evoke each other when they are similar, or dissimilar, or proximate, or contrasting. *Ifé kwírú ifé akwùdèbè yá* has a cosmological core to it. If the first *ifé* is physical or material, the second *ifé* is likely to be invisible or spiritual. This cosmological core seems lost to the Western mind as he seeks to deny it as superstition, or dismiss it as

animism, or ridicule it as syncretism. What current conventional language regards as inert or lifeless, elemental or material, is alive in the African cultural assumptions. Everything is alive not in the bio cellular sense but in the sense of an inner dynamic that propels it to be what it is and do what it does in the precise way only possible with it.

CHÍ AND ÍFÉ KWÚRÚ ÍFÉ AKWÙDÈBÉ YĀ

In Igbo cosmology, *ifé kwúrú ifé akwùdèbé yā* receives its best illustration in the concept of *chí*, which refers variously to **FATE, FORTUNE, LUCK** or **DESTINY**. It is supposed to be the instrument through which every existent is able to function in the various planes. Everything, including humans and objects, has its own *chí*. *Chí* is not a religious concept at all. It is neither God *simpliciter*, as some might think, nor anti-God as such. It is only a **SPARK OF THE DIVINE**, and as such could be associated with the spiritual. The physical human frame is the most material and furthest removed from the spiritual. People would usually not identify themselves with it or with the ethereal body. The personality of an individual is contained in the soul and spirit. The real Ego, however, exists essentially in the Over-Soul. The Over-Soul itself, with the Spirit, is more in touch with God than with the body. It is not deeply influenced by events affecting its various emanations comprised in the physical, ethereal and mental forms and the shadow. Powerful as the spirits of the dead are believed to be, they are themselves subordinate to a higher (divine) power and, in almost all sub-Saharan cultures, to a Supreme Being.

Since superior or higher forces directly influence lower ones, this Supreme Being is held to be the original source of order in the world, which he generally administers through the intervention of various natural objects, such as mountains, groves, trees, rivers and lakes, where they can be summoned through the right invocations. The standard of good behaviour depends on acknowledging, maintaining, respecting and invoking such forces. A more accurate interpretation would render *chí* and *ékè* respectively in terms analogous to the Aristotelian-Thomistic terms of *essence* and *existence* of the same

reality. The former is the constitutive aspect, while the latter is the operative or functional aspect of the individual. When Thomas the Apostle encountered the risen Christ and touched the wounds on his resurrected body, he had declared: “My Lord and my God!” He was referring not to two realities but to one.

Igbo language is replete with similar conjunctionalised duplets expressing the same reality. For example, *ùwàm na chím, chím na ékèm, íkwúm na íbèm, úkwúm na ákám ihúm na àzúm*, are not itemising objects but are emphatically referring to the same immanental reality. Similarly, the expression, *ùwàm na chím* (my world and my *chí*), would refer to my existential self, my-immanent-self-and-my-destiny, every-value-I-crave-for-or-cherish, my-lot-and-my-destiny-in-life. If, on the other hand, *na* is an auxiliary verb to *ékè*—bringing-into-being, then one sole reality is involved and that reality is qualified with the act of bringing-into-being could cautiously interpret *Négritude* in the issue at hand as ‘the African way’. It is no mere label but an active becoming and a vital force that is dynamically, but patiently and stubbornly, active in the earth and the sky and the elements. It is not cold and dumb, like a rock, nor dead like a stagnant pool, nor inanimate, stiff and immobile like a tower or a cathedral. It is vibrantly alive:

My *Négritude* is *not a rock*, its deafness
hurled against the clamour of the day
My *Négritude* is *not a film of dead water*
on the dead eye of the earth
My *Négritude* is *neither a tower nor a cathedral*
It plunges into the red flesh of the earth
It plunges into the burning flesh of the sky
It pierces the opaque prostration by its upright patience.⁵

⁵Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*, 72. Cf. Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 75.

It is quite interesting to watch Nollywood movies and note the ever-recurring theme of royalty that pervades the landscape. Even huts are referred to as palaces and villages are referred to as kingdoms. Rulers and their spouses, sometimes walking barefoot, are referred to as Kings and Queens, and their offspring are referred to as princes and princesses. What stands out clearly is that the ideas of palace, kingdom, monarch, and regime are deconstructed. It is the roles assigned them, rather than the material opulence involved, that counts. The Buckingham Palace in England and the Elysée Palace in France have their material value, but the hut palace, at say Umunya Kingdom, is a palace all the same, and the king inhabits it as a king all the same. There is a free admixture of myth and modernity at various levels and in various issues about governance and the determination of policies.

Many communities and peoples of Africa think of certain snakes and some other totem animals appearing in their houses or plantations as embodiments of particular ancestors. They treat them as guests but do not worship them as such. They may venerate a stream as the ‘child’ or embodiment of a woman that died at its source – the stream is not a goddess. Trees, mountains, rocks are revered, but only as the abode of spirits that were human. Nature is not worshipped in Africa but revered, because natural objects are imbued with non-human spirits. Nature is personal because she is the medium in which human personality and will continually operate.⁶ Although an African feels himself or herself a vital force in actual, intimate and permanent *rapport with* other forces, he or she recognizes uniqueness in the force that is human.

Human means not only living men and women, but the dead also and the great ancestors and hero-spirits. The uniqueness of the human force lies in its possession of creative intelligence and will, which can directly strengthen or weaken another human in his or her life-force, can influence the force of non-human things and can control the force

⁶ John V. Taylor, 78.

of a thing to influence the life force of another person. This creative intelligence releasing the force in things is the principle underlying the use of herbal medicines, and the discovery of healing powers in non-organic substances like stones and metals.

CHÍ AS VITAL FORCE

The Aristotelian Unmoved Mover is a principle rather than a thing; or better still, as a thing-principle. Placide Tempels points out that in African conception, the world is controlled by a vital force (**FORCE VITALE**). This mode of conception does not, as some critics of Africa tend to suggest, translate into wholesale Spiritism and animism. It means that every reality possesses within its inner makeup a dynamic or impulse that propels it to be what it is, do what it does, and in precisely the way it alone can be or do. It can be compared to the Igbo concept of *chí*, which incorporates in its meaning the idea that vital force and soul coexist in the same individual. Interactions between humans and each other, between humans and nature, and between humans and God, are those between vital forces, souls and powers. Many African groups believe that the human being is innately divine, bearing either a spark of the divine fire (Akan) or holding within himself or herself the divine breath (Yoruba, Mende).

The African is acutely aware of his or her bond with nature and would shape his or her attitude to nature accordingly. He or she would at every point in time try to be in harmony both with the universe and with the things in nature. Hence, one may hear Africans saying that there are spirits in the trees, mountains and rivers. This mode of thought has been scoffed at in Western circles as superstitious, nonsensical and incoherent, since there is the mind-set that nature is inert. In saying that material things are alive, the African is consistent with his or her basic assumption about nature's dynamism. He or she understands by all this that life-force permeates the whole universe and that matter and spirit are an inseparable reality. Trees, mountains, rocks and rivers are revered and feared, but only as the abode of

spirits that were human. Nature is personal because it is the medium in which human personality and will continually operate.

Thus, behind the natural things, and intimately co-existing with them, is the non-material power - a force or vibratory energy that is dynamic and active. This life-force is impersonal and non-conscious, yet it constitutes the individuality of every living-force or individual. Every individual has his or her own life-force, and this can vary quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Humans, animals and plants share from this life-force. Spirits and divinities or mythical beings possess it, and it can be communicated to things. In the African mode of thought, life-force is under the direction or guidance of the soul. Though a force as well, the soul is a principle and does not vary either quantitatively or qualitatively. The African has no raw definition for such forces, but only describes them in terms of their function. Thus, the concept of soul would be something like the individual's will, his or her thought, conscience and judgment. The Igbo expression is "*Obi m gwaram na...*" (My mind, my conscience, my opinion is that...). The African does not even say that the soul is a kind of entity or a determinate thing that goes to heaven or hell after death. Vital force and soul coexist in the same individual. Interactions between humans and each other, between humans and nature, and between humans and God, are those between vital forces, souls and powers. Many African groups believe that the human being is innately divine, bearing either a spark of the divine fire (Akan) or holding within himself or herself the divine breath (Yoruba, Mende).

Chi-names have filled up the name-giving of children born in the 1970s and 1980s because of the confusion in the minds of the young parents of the time in thinking that all *Chi*-names refer to God. They had just been informed that they could use indigenous names to christen their children. Thus, in the names *Chiómá*, *Chidinmà*, *Chikèrè*, *Chibúzò*, *Chikàtá*, *Chínwè*, *Tóchì*, *ákáchi*, *Chètáchi*, and countless others so prefixed, the intent might well be to *Chínékè*, but the actual reference is to *chi*, which refers variously to Fate, Fortune

or Luck. The confusion did not exist in the mind of the forebears when they used such names. *Chí* did not refer to God, and they prefixed names with *Chúkwú* when they meant God! When they used *chí*, it was as much an option as when they prefixed names with *ùwà*, *ibè*, *úmunnà* or *òhà*. In other words, *Chíkwé* had counterparts in *Úwàkwé*, *Íbèkwé*, *Úmunnàkwé* or *Òhàkwé*. The fact is that only those names that clearly spell out *Chúkwú* directly escape the confusion. Examples include, among others: *Chúkwúma*, *Chúkwúka*, *Chúkwùéméká*, *Chúkwúdi*, *Òdìrichúkwú*, *Úgòchúkwú* and *Ónúchùkwù*. Such *Chúkwú* names have obvious reference to God, while their *Chi*-naming refers to non-God.

Before the explosion of *Chi*-names in christening children, it was clear in the mind of the individual that named his child *Chíómá* that the reference was not to God but to his circumstances of “good fortune” or “good luck” or with “fate being favourable” in having that child. The stark contrast between *chí ómá* and *chí ójóò*, in current usage, makes it abundantly clear that *chí ómá* and *chí ójóò* clearly refer not to God, but to life’s circumstances of fate, luck, fortune or destiny. Now it is all lost in a maze of confusion, and a thoroughgoing catechesis would be necessary to get things right again. To this effect, Gregory Adibe counsels that those born blind or disabled are not necessarily *ndi chí ójóò* as such, but were born for a purpose, within the prevailing circumstance. He warns that *chi* emanating from God should not be called evil in any form.⁷

THE SKEWING OF TIME

Discussion on African ideologies will not be complete without discussing the issue of time. It must be admitted that the African has lagged behind in the industrial world because of a skewed idea of time. It has to do with the so-called African time—a misconception that seems to make culpable tardiness routine and almost a lifestyle.

⁷ Gregory Ejiolor Adibe, *Igbo Issues*, 73.

Unfortunately, some Africans have become complacent about, and complicit in, perpetuating the ugly trend of culpable tardiness by having recourse to the mantra of African time as a convenient alibi for their failure in time management. This is unacceptable, as Africans do not operate a galactic firmament different from any other people in the world. There are three types of time—chronological time of clocks of moments in succession, cyclic time of seasons and kirotic time of events.

There is no confusing one type with another. All three types are overarched by the 24-hour chronological time. While seasonal time is a successive series of 24-hours, kirotic time functions across the series. The failure of the so-called African time is the mistake of using chronological time as if it kirotic time. Industry operates strictly on chronological or 24-hour clock-based schedule into which activities must fit for things to work. If the bus leaves at 7 o'clock, passengers who neglect to be there for the departure miss it! On the other hand, if the bus fails to be there, the bus will miss the passengers who will seek alternative routes. Tardiness in whatever guise attempts to foist elements of cyclic time and kirotic time into chronological time, creating a mess. Even the cyclic season abhors tardiness. Planting or harvesting when the season is over spells disaster. Similarly, tardiness with kirotic time leads to procrastination.

All said and done, the blame for the travesty of **AFRICAN TIME** must go majorly to the Western interventionists in African lifestyle and history. Prior to that, Africans did not operate in a time vacuum, for every African had his household, his place of worship, his little consumer market, the playground, the meeting place conveniently located and accessible for effective time management. The location of the river or water source, which was a gift of nature, was not within anyone's power to locate or relocate. People went to draw water at the time that was convenient for them. Those who went late suffered the individual penalty of water shortage and it might negatively affect their mealtimes or ability to clean things up. As for markets, those

who were into merchandizing would gather their wares and find their way to such markets in far-flung places requiring long journeys. Meanwhile, consumables like vegetables and food condiments were readily available around any corner or even from vendors calling out in the neighbourhood. Whenever the need arose, meetings were summoned and punctuality and attendance were assured.

Overall, everything functioned in synergy and there was no question of absenteeism, or habitual tardiness, or the conflict of activities. Traditional Africa, as well as conventional Africa, has always placed a high premium on punctuality as well as precision in the performance of activities. Before the arrival of the mechanical clock, the African scheduled things with the cockcrow, high noon, and sundown. The West came in and zapped whatever was the *status quo*. They should have considered beginning with teaching the African the making and working of the mechanical clock if they so valued their compliance to chronological time. Prior to the Western intervention, every African had his household, his place of worship, his little consumer market, the playground, the meeting place conveniently located and accessible. The river or water source, which was a gift of nature, was not within their power to locate or relocate. As for markets for merchandise, those who were into merchandizing could find their way to such markets in far-flung places requiring long journeys.

Overall, everything functioned in synergy, and there was no question of absenteeism, or habitual tardiness, or the conflict of activities. Here is the scenario: The West came in and zapped whatever was the *status quo* in terms of time management. Ostensibly for the sake of development and ultimately for their own convenience, they set up centres in the midst of nowhere where they merged the operations of various communities in school and church. Those two items totally altered the mode of operations of the community. To attain to these, one must skip house chores, activities like farm or trade, or skill. One must reckon with the distance, the rough terrain, and the fact that all

was on foot. One must take off early and in spite of best efforts arrive late, and risk being whacked, as was in vogue at the time. Activities were scheduled to start at 6, or 8, or 9 o'clock when no one had one or knew how to read the time.

Of little help was the large slit wooden drum used to remind scholars to start coming to school or Church: ***Kom! Kom! Kom-kom-kom! GBÁHÀRÁ JÍ GBÁHÀRÁ ÉDÈ BIÀWÁ ÁKWÚKWÓ!*** Those who heeded the call and managed to arrive early enough would, unfortunately, have to wait for several minutes, and at times up to an hour, for others to arrive. As people arrived, they received their whacking and joined in the waiting for others to form a quorum. Uniformly, no one knew when what struck was 7, or 8, or 9 o'clock, because no one had a clock and no one knew how clocks worked. Somehow, the impression grew that Africans could simply not keep to time. That impression grew along with others into a prejudice so persistent that that it seems to have been allowed to stick. The true logic of "African time", and which should be highlighted and promoted, is that human activities must be accorded quality time for them to be worth any effort. Africa must take its share of the blame in its complacency and complicity.

In its true sense, therefore, "African time" is a positive concept and pertains to **THE KAIROTIC CATEGORY OF QUALITY TIME TAKEN AND DEDICATED** to midwife a becoming, or accomplish some activity or task. Because of the importance attached to the activity or task, African time turns it into an event to mark or remember. African time is a universal heritage, not exclusive to Africa. Just as chronological African time can be the travestied by culpable tardiness, kairoitic African time, when travestied, results in mental confusion and indecision. This implies that except in an emergency, one is not supposed to embark on a new activity while another activity is on course until the latter has been completed. This attitude to time might, in its abuse, give the impression that the African has no value for time and has no respect for schedules. Nothing could be further from the truth. The careful scheduling of activities is an indispensable element

in time management. The African who fails to respect schedules makes a statement, not about Africa, but about his or her own inadequacies in time management. For the future, Africa has the opportunity to delve into the terrain of the paranormal, the mysterious, and the mystical and use it to provide the missing cosmological link in the thinking and acting process as it affects African ideologies, and synergise with Western ideologies. The study in the oriental world of those aspects of reality gave rise to the vibrant study and practice of parapsychology. Africa can thus contribute its own unique quota to knowledge.

IGBO PHILOSOPHY: A MISCELLANY OF IGBO PROVERBS AND CULTURAL PEDAGOGIES

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Abstract

The call for a harmonious integration of people's belief, ideas and culture is evidently encapsulated in their "philosophy" which comprises the traditional and religious practice and cultural beliefs of the people. However, the way and manner in which these philosophies are understood and transmitted to various generations amongst a given society is no doubt at the mercies of all who live in the society. Igbo people are known for their proverbs which delve into their everyday life and take a high premium on their linguistic culture. It seems that these proverbs can no longer stand the test of time because of poor transmission and changes affecting the world. Hence, it becomes imperative that the meaning, nature, values and the philosophy behind the Igbo proverbs be exposed in order to retain their essence among generations. This paper examines the competence level in the use of proverbs between the old and younger generations of Igbo speakers as richly found in Igbo philosophy. It is, therefore, recommended that Igbo proverbs should be cultivated as an art and cherished as an index of good oratory and acquaintance with traditional knowledge and ancestral wisdom, because the Igbo would say; e jiri mara ndi diiri ha.

Introduction

To understand a culture, particularly one in which the spoken word is still the predominant form of recording history and phenomena, one requires some acquaintance with its oral forms. The Igbo have a surplus of these. However, of all the oral legacies, it is probably the Igbo proverb which has continued to enjoy a high frequency of usage, notwithstanding the Western literacy and modernism. Indeed, the practice and transmission of Igbo philosophy decreased drastically in the 20th century with the influx of the Christian missionaries under the patronage of British colonial government where in most cases indigenous rites and cultural heritages were demolished by Christian missionaries. However, the post-colonial and Biafra war experiences sparked off in them (the Igbo people) the quest for historical identity that aimed at language and cultural restoration. Proverbs as part of this language and culture are valued well in Igbo traditional setting, for they play a variety of roles in Igbo life; one which might not necessarily be suspected is that it enables people to talk to strangers in a way the strangers will not understand.¹

Although not everyone in Igbo society is a repository of wise sayings, certain people are respected for their knowledge of such things which, of course, add integrity to their speech. Igbo proverbs which occupy a central place in Igbo discourses originated from Igbo people and as such could be called the voice of the Igbo people-*vox Igbo populi*.² Thus, because it is very necessary for effective communication, reciting proverbs is as ineffective as not using them. Beyond visual recitation, it is important to always know the appropriate event and time to use Igbo proverbs in order to communicate the appropriate message and achieve the desired result, because Igbo would say; *o bu ihe onye nwere ka o ji aba mba*.

The Meaning and Nature of Igbo Proverbs

Proverbs, from the general point of view, are simple concrete traditional sayings that express a perceived truth based on common sense or experience. Proverbs are often metaphorical in that they do

not always express denotative meaning but connotative meaning. One may hastily conclude that it is within this implied understanding that Igbo society pictures proverbs as *mmanu ndi Igbo ji eri okwu* - the oil with which words are eaten. Proverbs are the wisdom of a people through which complex stories and situations are concentrated in a few words and phrases that capture and retain the essential meaning of the experiences from which they derive.³

Consequently, Igbo proverbs are taken directly from Igbo life world. Proverbs, from their ontological perspective, were written by people not intentionally, but they naturally arose from and caused by everyday life experiences. A good awareness of Igbo proverbs and their meaning would undoubtedly lead to a deep understanding of the Igbo, their philosophy which encompasses their traditions, cultures and way of life. Igbo proverbs are used in conversations by adults more than children, probably because adults have learned more proverbs than children. Because many Igbo people are both poetic and traditional, proverbs are often passed down in a fixed form. The grammar of proverbs is not always the typical grammar of the spoken word, hence “many proverbs refer to old measurements, obscure professions, out-dated weapons, unknown plants, animals, names and various other traditional matters”.⁴

Igbo language has several dialects as a result of which many Igbo people may not immediately understand the meaning of proverbs, owing to the strong dialect of words therein contained. As we become more acquainted with these dialects, we begin to appreciate our total inheritance as Igbo language speakers. Igbo proverbs are the integral part of Igbo culture and a pillar in Igbo traditional system. As Kanu says:

The centrality of proverbs in Igbo oral tradition is manifest in the frequency of its use by the Igbos in their conversations, speech, instructions, judgements, drama, arguments, storytelling, in film making and name them; and this is based

on the fact that the Igbo regards proverbs as an essential vehicle through which a message can be adequately transmitted.⁵

Proverbs in Igbo philosophy of language are a well-cherished mechanism for wise sayings and mature discussions. While we as Ndi Igbo should find proverbs as a worthy apparatus for rebuilding Igbo language, it would not however be out of context for elders and masters of Igbo philosophy to find a good transmission means to always use proverbs for our Igbo cultural teachings, because the Igbo would say; *okuko hapu kwom, o ji gini zuo umu ya?*

Igbo Proverbs and Cultural Pedagogies

One of the logical roles of proverbs in Igbo language and thoughts is the fact that it provides itself as available vehicle for the expression of abstract and logical truths. In other words, proverbs are generally used to communicate truths that may be abstract and difficult to grasp. In many African tribal languages, including Igbo, proverbs are drawn from and refer to all activities of society, natural objectives and phenomena. Proverbs act as a catalyst of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and morals which provoke further reflection and call for a deeper thinking and consideration of issues.⁶ In Igbo traditional setting, proverbs serve as a mechanism through which ideas, philosophies and cultural values are transmitted from one generation to another. In fact, before the invention of reading and writing, even till now, the Igbo see and use proverbs as a resourceful channel of communication.

In teaching the younger generations the cultural heritage of their people, older people use Igbo proverbs as a convenient medium through which “secret” information can be disseminated amid strangers in such instances like marriage ceremonies when bride price would be paid. Proverbs are deeply rooted in Igbo culture, and almost everybody who understands his/her indigenous language is a living carrier of proverbs. Proverbs have embedded logical principles that guide the use of words as well as reveal the basic structure of language in thought and discourse (speech). With reference to the use

and application of proverbs among the Igbo-speaking people of West African region, it is evidently shown that proverbs play logical roles in African language and thought. Even in African setting in general, an African man who is skilful in the use of proverbs in speech and thought (reasoning), is a master of the logic of his/her language and hence better equipped to understand and interpret the ontological nature of his world.

Cultural education is both a philosophy and a process that is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The primary purpose of cultural education, as it relates to Igbo people, is to expose the learners to alternative means of communication and teaching of cultural values. However, a cursory look at literatures in the field of cultural education reveals that it is a growing field of more interest to indigenous scholars. In Igbo cultural pedagogies, proverbs help in proclaiming rules of morality, decorating the language, carrying the bases of native folk philosophy and of course ascribing meaning to human wisdom.

Proverbs in Igbo understanding are also very helpful in human weakness formation. It existentially helps the human person to realise his existential capacity to battle with difficult situations. For example, the proverb, the monkey said that his body is full of beauty, portrays the monkey's vanity in considering himself beautiful when in fact he is not. The monkey deliberately employs this as a self-protective defence. Although he is naturally ugly, he is not ashamed to admit it nor does he hate himself because of it. He projects his own weakness as a positive factor. Hence, this proverb can fit into a situation where one does not allow his limitations to overwhelm him.⁷

Because it is part and parcel of human nature but needs a constant cultural integration, Igbo proverbs, for pedagogical purposes, need a proper and continuous re-examination of its pedagogical values in socializing the youth to the norms and values of the society.

Igbo Proverbs as a Medium For Education

Education in Igbo traditional setting and beyond is a continuous process of learning to be useful to oneself and to the society. It is a process that, if you like, begins from the day one is born till the day we finally leave the planet earth. In making sure that this learning gets its core root to the life of the people, language is very paramount. Language as the major tool for learning is as broad as the piece of knowledge to be acquired. The Igbo language, which is necessary in this contest, has in the name of civilization been thrown away for “foreign language,” so to speak.

Consequently, a close observation of the recent trend in the passing down of the language from the previous generation to subsequent generations has a lot of worrisome indicators of language endangerment. However, in September, 2011, as indicated by Maria L. Obaodan, *The Nigerian Vanguard* published an article titled “Save Igbo Language from Extinction.” It observed the downward trend in the use of Igbo Language. Till date, it is a common practice to slam school children with all manner of punishment for speaking Igbo in school. With this development, the speaking and writing of Igbo language started a slow but steady decline.⁸ Even in our individual homes, parents no longer allow their children to speak Igbo Language, let alone entertaining and educating them with idioms and proverbs. Set outside prejudice and sentiments, indigenous languages like Igbo language, with regard to proverbs, remain an admirable means of easy understanding of subject matters. No child forgets the rudiments of his or her indigenous language.

Igbo proverb as a medium for education is understood here as an agent through which Igbo cultural values gain their social context and significance. It does not merely represent a culture but is a contributor to the development of cultural education. Proverbs, with regard to language, are our unique relation to the creator, our attitudinal beliefs, values and fundamental motions of what is truth.⁹ Thus, one would say that the loss of a people’s language is a loss of the thorough

understanding of their value systems, beliefs, organisational methodologies and a debilitation of their fundamental truth which are basically their education.

Situating it within both traditional and modern settings, proverbs are used in academic milieu, especially in ancient literatures, to tell ancient stories. Like during *Igba egwu onwa* - the moonlight dance - a lot of ancient stories are told using proverbs. Recall that some authors use proverbs in historical fictions, because proverbs are so much a part of the language and culture of the people. From ancient times, too, people around the world have recorded proverbs in visual forms. This has been done in written form often in a decorative manner such as on pottery, cross-stitch, murals and in visually depicted variety of media, including paintings, etchings and sculpture.¹⁰

It is common knowledge among people of Igbo descent that indigenous Igbo proverbs play vital roles in speech, communication and exchange of knowledge and ideas among them. However, what may be uncommon knowledge is the fact that philosophy is the basic ingredient that provides Igbo proverbs with the taste for fertilizing ideas across cultural divides. With philosophy inherent in them, indigenous Igbo proverbs readily present themselves as cross-cultural media for educating people of African and non-African descents on the events, achievements, myths and realities of especially the people of Igbo ancestry.

Some Igbo Proverbs and Interpretations

The beauty of Igbo philosophy does not only lie in its nature as a resource material for pedagogical purposes but also in its richness as an embodiment of knowledge. Proverbs as part of this Igbo philosophy produce exceptional value, especially when elders use them for moral instructions among the younger ones. By nature, Igbo proverbs can be said to be naturally instructive. Here are some Igbo proverbs and their literal meanings.

| S N | Igbo Proverbs | Direct English Translation | Literal Meaning |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| 1 | Onweghi ihe anya huru gbaa obara. | There is nothing the eyes see that will make them bleed. | There is nothing about which one can say that nothing like it has been seen in the world. |
| 2 | Nwanyi luu di abuo o mara nke ka ya mma. | If a woman marries two husbands, she would know which one is the better husband. | If a person does two different kinds of work, he is able to find out which is more profitable to him. |
| 3 | Gidi gidi bu ugwu eze. | A crowd is the honour of a king. | Unity is strength. |
| 4 | Ihere anaghi eme onye ara, ka ma o bu umunneya. | A mad person is not ashamed of his behaviour, but his relations are. | Relations are concerned most with a person's behaviour. |
| 5 | Ura ga-eju onye nwuru-anwu afo. | A dead person shall have all the sleep necessary. | There is always abundance in life. |
| 6 | Onye buru chi ya uzo, o gbagbue onwe ya n'oso. | He who walks before his godly guardian does the race of his life. | Life has stages that should be taken one after the other. |
| 7 | Onye mutara nwa guo ya Akemefule, o | One who bore a child and named him "let not my own wealth | As you value things belonging to you, so does others value |

| | | | |
|----|---|--|--|
| | sikwanu nke onye fuo? | get lost” whose then does he want to get lost? | theirs |
| 8 | Ma ihe emeghi mmadu, o naghi ama ihe. | Until something has happened to a person that person does not learn a lesson. | Experience is the best teacher. |
| 9 | Okoko kowa mmadu o gakwu mmadu ibeya, ma o kowa anuohia, ya aga n’kwu osisi | When a human being feels an irritation where he cannot scratch himself, he will approach another fellow human being, but when an animal feels an irritation, it goes to the base of a tree to rub itself. | Men are there to help one another in times of need. |
| 10 | A naghi eti nwata ihe n’ihu nne ya. | One does not hit a child in the presence of his mother. | Give due respect to all, including the weak. |
| 11 | Kama nga e riju afo dachie uzo ka m buru onu. | I would prefer to go without food rather than fill my stomach with food and then lie dead across the road. | It is better to do without a thing than gain it dishonestly and then pay dearly for it. |
| 12 | Uka anaghi ano n’afonjo. | A word is not bad while it is still in the stomach. | One cannot judge another’s word until he has spoken them. |

| | | | |
|----|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| 13 | Agba mbu o tuo n'ogwe a gbaa abuo o tuon'ogwe o bu ogwe ka a piara aku? | When the first arrow was shot, it hits the <i>ogwe</i> tree and when the second arrow was shot, it too hit the <i>ogwe</i> tree. Was it for the <i>ogwe</i> tree that the arrows were made? | Constant failure to achieve an objective one has in mind leads to questioning as to the reasons for it. |
| 14 | O ji mbe n'ala ji onwe ya. | He who holds the tortoise down the ground, holds himself down as well. | He who holds or delays the progress of others ties his own progress because no one is an island. |
| 15 | A tuoro omara o mara; a tuoro ofeke ofenye isi n'ohia. | If you tell a wise one, he understands. Tell a dunce, he runs into the bush. | A ready to progress person toes the good path. |
| 16 | Egbe bere ugo bere; nke si ibe ya ebena nku kwaa ya | Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch; one that hinders the other from perching may lose its wings. | Communal living guarantees peaceful co-existence. |
| 17 | Aturu muru ebuna gba aka nwa. | The sheep that has a ram for a child has no child at all. | A foolish child is no child to its parents. |
| 18 | Awo anaghi agba oso ehie | The toad does not run for nothing at mid- | A person has a reason for acting in an |

| | na nkiti. | day. | unusual manner. |
|----|--|---|--|
| 19 | Ewu anaghi amu nwa n'ogburi (nji). | A goat cannot have kids when it is under restraint. | A person cannot act when his liberty is restricted. |
| 20 | Dimkpa anaghi ano n'ulo ewu amuo n'ogbu. | A grown up person should not let a goat deliver its kid while still tethered and while he is at home. | A responsible person must not neglect the duties of his positions. |

Igbo Proverbs as Integral Part of Language

One serious negative effect of colonization on language is the waning of the indigenous language. It exposes the present generation to the risk of acculturating easily to various ways of existence that appeal to them. This creates a communication gap presumed to be responsible for the decline suffered by indigenous languages. Nwankwo observes that “Communication being the art of transferring information from one source to another source through language can be distorted when there are appropriate disseminations.”¹¹ As a corrective measure, proverbs serve as a tool through which individuals, especially the younger one, become culturally integrated in the philosophy of their society.

Igbo proverbs are tied to Igbo language; therefore, they are part and parcel of Igbo philosophy and culture. A child who learns through this means has more advantage over those who merely recite the Igbo alphabets. Proverbs structure and compel Igbo society to pay attention to her cultural heritage. The values of what can be termed “the philosophical” that is contained in Igbo proverbs cannot be underestimated. Hence, the position that “there is philosophy in Igbo proverbs”, to our mind, is incontestable. It is incontestable not because it cannot be criticized by those who think differently, but because any attempt at condemning or denying the existence of philosophy in Igbo proverb amounts to a further affirmation of the same position. Even a

critical exploration of any kind into the realm of Igbo proverbs cannot rule out the existence of meaning, order, beauty, knowledge, wisdom, power and, above all, metaphysics and ethics as basic ingredients of Igbo proverbs. Igbo people use their proverbs to reconstruct deviants and straying beings. It is on this note that it is very much important that a child is exposed to the ethical standards of his environment through proverbs. Whether a proverb is metaphysical, social, ethical or even epistemological in nature, it has a purpose to fulfill and often carries vital messages that are pertinent for educating and developing the mind of people for many generations. Igbo proverbs are indeed a vital heritage to its society. Nwankwo maintains that:

Proverbs should therefore be nurtured as that veritable tool available for inculcating values in the minds of human being in a conversational manner during early developmental stages in such manner that emotions are stabilized, positive goals oriented attitudes to life are inculcated.¹²

The proverb in Igbo social matrix remains a documentation of the lives of the people at a particular time. Like some other oral forms, the Igbo proverb records the history, experience, trauma and tension of a society at every stage in its evolution.

Conclusion

Despite the potentialities of Igbo philosophy to the achievement of reviving the Igbo language, Igbo proverbs have been neglected in both our social gatherings and schools. There is no doubt that Igbo proverbs, when understood beyond their literal and contextual meaning, serve as an integral part of Igbo philosophy. “Onye na-amaghi ihe onwere, o gaghi ama uru o bara” – he who does not know what he has, does not know its value or worth. Igbo as a society is richly blessed with whole lots of cultural heritage that are encapsulated in proverbs and then clearly made known through her language.

Okuko hapu kwom, o ji gini zuo umuya? Igbo language is our language. We cannot substitute it with another, for it is in the wisdom

of our forefathers that this language is sustained and transferred to younger generations; ihe anyi na-cho n'uko elu no n'uko ala. The Igbo philosophy is an embodiment of knowledge. It is now our duty to nurture, harness and keep it alive as our own. Thus, *o buru na mmadu ekwughi ebe ono, onweghi onye ga-ama na ono* - if one does not say he is nobody would say he is. Ndi-Igbo, to save our dignity is to save our philosophy. To save our philosophy is first through recognizing the Igbo language by popularizing it with the culture that formed it.¹³

With Igbo proverbs, a lot can be taught about life. Igbo proverbs have a contextual meaning that spells out man's situation and fate in life. For example, in terms of encouragement and determination; aka aja aja na- ebute onu mmanu mmanu – success is the fruit of persistence and hard work; in terms of co-operation, oko kowa mmadu, ibe ya akoo ya - be your brother's keeper; in terms of justice, egbe bere ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebena nku kwaa ya - live and let live. This paper concludes that Igbo philosophy is rich in indigenous Igbo proverbs and serves as a sure way of educating people of other descents about the realities of the Igbo people. They are better ways of countering fallacies and rumours emanating from foreign historians and foreign media about Igbo land in particular and Africa in general. Hence, they are veritable cross-cultural media with inexhaustible resources which need to be further explored.

Therefore, if Igbo language dies, then its ingredients would die as well. A proper recognition of Igbo philosophy as a compendium of Igbo proverbs and cultural pedagogies demands sustaining the Igbo language by making it a compulsory subject in primary, secondary and university levels across the Igbo territory, because the Igbo would say that *anya nnekwu na-echebe akwa ya* (The eyes of the hen protect its eggs). By this, those who studied the language as a course should be encouraged by offering them jobs in our various institutions of labour.

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AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND INNOVATIVE TRENDS AND ADVANCES: A CRITICAL INQUIRY

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Abstract

African philosophy has now joined in the innovative trends and advances in global philosophical thought. But there has been question on whether African philosophical trends and advances are in consonance with general philosophical principles. This paper, using the method of critical analysis, examines African philosophy, its innovative trends and advances in order to determine their congruence with the form and structure of philosophy. The study acknowledges some positive innovative trends and advances in African philosophy. But the study exposes the ambiguity and irrationality surrounding some African philosophical innovative trends and advances. Consequently, this paper determines how these innovative trends and advances in African philosophy can remain consistent with and fit into global philosophical principles. Along this lane, it analytically contends that African philosophical innovative trends and advances still lack originality and essential philosophical qualities. This is as there are abstractions largely borrowed from Western philosophical current and elsewhere that are brought to bear in these trends and advances. This is, too, as African philosophy is not objectively a fierce critique and protector of the African world. The paper, therefore, concludes that African philosophy will be truly African and philosophical when its nature, structure, form,

meaning and methods are genuinely African and objectively critical.

Keywords: Advances, Africa, innovative trends, inquiry, philosophy

Introduction

The evolution of African philosophy has been visible in its innovative trends and advances. As such, the best way to understand what African philosophy means today “is to examine what ideas, doctrines, methods, properties and attitudes which philosophies of various schools regard as philosophical” (Nwala, 2010: 28). Setting the pace for the innovative trends and advances is, however, the question of the existence of African philosophy which propelled a great debate in the past decades. This debate underscored the present innovative trends and advances in which thinkers universally and rationally reflect on one African problem or the other, evolving and reclining on existent methods. Hence, characterising Africa philosophy are innovative advances and trends peculiar to the African world as well as philosophical trajectories characterising philosophical currents in other environments. As such, African philosophy is a reflection of African culture and spirit. Yet, it is marked by a move away from traditional often illogical scholastic or religious idea of thinking, which is idealist in nature, to a more scientific thought in which knowledge or truth is obtained by abstraction and experiment (Nwala, 2010).

As paradoxically characterising every philosophy, there remains continuity in African rational thought. This is glaring in its often display of dialectical relation between traditional categories of thought and scientific categories. In fact, there is a natural radical interpenetration of science and mysticism in every thought. As such, “there is science in African traditional philosophy just as there is mysticism in modern scientific culture” (<http://uzodimmanwala.com/igbo-philosophy>. retrieved 30/5/2021). Sequel to this,

African philosophy has become an interpretation of an African interpenetrating culture, religion and spirit in scientific context. This rational exercise is towards unraveling African philosophical nuances and African philosophical place in solving present African predicament.

However, the transformation of African philosophy from traditional-religious category to scientific materialist category has some inevitable permanent character. Adding to this are great advances from cosmological perspective of thought to anthropological perspective in seemingly Socratic mode. Hence, the reality of present African philosophical trends is in consonance with Socratic transformation of Greek philosophical thought from cosmological hermeneutics of the universe to anthropological base or interpretation of the universe (Obijekwu, 2018; Stumpf, 1994). In all these, the present African philosophy possesses outstanding reflective thought which is still more deficient in the empirical or scientific reflection and knowledge of natural, social and human dimensions of realities.

African Philosophy

African philosophy is generally a multifaceted human rational endeavour consisting in plausible inquiry into issues and problems contextual in Africa. In this inquiry, unorganized and uncritical mass of realities, beliefs and unfounded views about nature and human experience in the African world are subjected to rational scrutiny. This is in order to determine the rational, systematic, coherent, and consistent grounds for maintaining them. As such, Mbaegbu (2008: 76) maintains that African philosophy is “a critical thinking on the African and his experience of reality...a path to a systematic, coherent, articulate, organized scientific discovery and disclosure of the African as a being-in-the-African-world.”

African philosophy is, therefore, an examination of challenges and problems emanating from Africa or elsewhere but confronts the African persons. As such, it consists in rational reflections and answers to African predicaments. These predicaments include the

marvels and problems that confront one in the African world which African philosophy attempts to produce systematic explanations and sustained responses to. In this sense, African philosophy as a critical thought anchors on African realities, conditions and questions. Thus, according to Oguejiofor (2010:7), African philosophy harbours plausible reflections and rational thoughts that have wide embrace of all that are “remotely and proximately linked with Africa and Africans both within the continent and in Diaspora, extending from the beginning of African history to contemporary times”. This means that, African philosophy articulates and critically reflects on the total experience of the African, on the way or ways, for example, how he perceives reality. African philosophy thus places special emphasis on the African, his world, history, values, etc.; and on the significance these have for him. In general, it explores the particular way or ways the African experiences, conceives and interprets nature, society, religion, man, God, human conduct, and so on. In short, it deals with the African in his radical subjectivity, that is to say, precisely as an African. (Mbaegbu, 2008: 76)

In all these, it stands that African philosophy is also “the result of the series of philosophical discussions that has been taking place in the continent starting from the last century” (Oguejiofor, 2001: 91). It is a collective scholarly effort to defend the use and function of philosophy in Africa. As such, Hountondji (1974: 23) describes it as “the kind of literature produced by Africans and dealing with philosophical problems”. In the same vein, African philosophy is a quest for wisdom and examination of fundamental questions on life, beings, vast geo-political and socio-cultural entities perceivable and visible in the African continent. It is a rational reflection into the African world and existence. It is a search for truth in the African universe, an interpretation and analysis of African realities and man’s place in the world. This critical reflection covers African experiences and all areas of the African world: logic, metaphysics, ethics,

aesthetics, politics, law, economy, medicine, ecology, religion, epistemology, history, and their significance to the Africans.

In continuation, in defining African philosophy, Ruch (1981:15) outlines the three characteristics of African philosophy, thus: “it is written or propounded or created by a person born of African stock...it is written or propounded or created on African continent; it deals [with] what one might call ‘African problems or themes’ or with some aspects or other of African culture”. For any philosophy to be called African philosophy, that philosophy has to possess at least two of these characteristics. For instance, it is not enough for a philosophy to be done by an African for it to be called African philosophy. There are many Africans today trained as philosophers but they do not for that reason alone become African philosophers. On the same note, there are many philosophers who are not from Africa but are referred to as African philosophers because they are interested in African problems or culture. Placid Tempels is not from Africa, but is today regarded as the father of African philosophy. Hence, Momoh (1989: x) argues that any work can be appropriately regarded as African philosophy if such work is “in African Philosophy... is not African Philosophy if it is actually not in harmony and congruence with the spirit of African Philosophy”. So, if an a philosopher from Africa writes on an aspect of philosophy of science relating to quantum mechanics, it will be stretching things too far to regard such a work as African philosophy. Also, if a philosopher examines African ethics in such a way that individualism is extolled at the expense of communalism, then such a work is not African philosophy because the work is neither in harmony with the letter nor the spirit of African philosophy.

Consequently, innovative trends and advances in African philosophy cuts through the entire spectrum of African culture which the Africans and the circumstances they face created. Thus, African philosophy examines “the material and institutional foundations of this culture, study their oral literature (fables, parables, proverbs, idioms, rituals, various forms of myth), and analyze their behaviors, ritual activities

and attitude to life” (Nwala, 2010: 41). These trends and advances extend to the critical study of African religion, art, music, dance, folklore, proverbs and the whole realm of African language.

Innovative Trends in African Philosophy

Innovative trends in African philosophy highly points to its popular stages of development over the years. In other words, it points to the several directions or pattern taken by African philosophy. These trends, according to Mbaegbu (2008), portray the diverse African inquiries. The responses to the debate over the nature and status of African philosophy, ignited by the celebrated work of Placid Tempels’s Bantu Philosophy (French Edition: 1945), gave rise to the various trends in African philosophy. Basically, these trends include: Ethno-Philosophy, Professional Philosophy, Sage Philosophy or Philosophical Sagacity, National or Ideological Philosophy, Hermeneutical Philosophy, Historical Philosophy and Literary or Artistic Philosophy. Okafor (1993:94) maintains that “any contribution to the subject of African Philosophy is either an apologetic defending the orientation of ethno-philosophy, or a devastating criticism rejecting that orientation *in toto*, or, finally, a constructive criticism seeking to modify this orientation”. The point is that these trends are different ways of doing African philosophy. They are varied ways African philosophers respond to the question: is there African philosophy? or, if there is, what is it?

In continuation, African philosophy has been characterized by questions and discourses on its existence as well as its contents. With the affirmation of its existence, concentration of thinkers has been placed on the search for the identity and justification of such philosophy. This concentration has been a critical search towards sifting out the myths from realities and proffering justifications for these realities. As such, African philosophical pattern at this period towed the apologetical direction. The point is made clearer by Makumba (2007: 21) when he says, *Apologists* for African philosophy are on the decrease while research into contents and types

is on the increase. At the same time, this critical approach ensures that African philosophy remains relevant and in time with the general development of human thought.

The most outstanding innovative trend in African philosophy is the professional stage revolving around present academic reflections towards a coherent and systematic account of the multi-faceted universe of beings and knowledge in African context. An important aspect of this trend is that African philosophy is more descriptive and phenomenological than critically hermeneutical. These largely make African philosophical inquiries and reflections a narration of existent realities within African culture and values. Thus, African philosophy is descriptive in the portraying of the meaning of words and concepts. It is normative in its fulfillment of certain rational conditions revolving around African realities, situations, conditions, predicaments or questions. With the spread of literacy in the continent through colonial education and global the denigration of Africans as inferior beings, African philosophical trends became more rational, speculative and critical towards unraveling answers to critical African issues. The innovative trends in African philosophy extend to unravel different ways of viewing realities and creating better and rational insight into the meaning of realities, especially from the perspective of the African. In contemporary period, therefore, the direction of African philosophy has become more faithful to normative, analytic, dialogic and hermeneutic methods of thought.

Glaringly, therefore, African philosophy now involves a critical approach towards unveiling more transcendental objects of the ideal world as well as the philosophical and scientific principles in the African world. It seeks also to retell and rewrite history as distorted by “colonisation in order to create a new history, which is the history of humanity”(Isife, 2020: 121). Thus, African philosophy now progresses step by step from mere subjective perception and phenomenological description to synthetic objective thought, pragmatic and realistic knowledge that positively transforms governance and fosters sustainable development, especially in Africa.

Innovative Advances in African Philosophy

An outstanding innovative advance in African philosophy is its character of departmental branches like its Western counterpart. Thus, philosophical enquiries within African philosophy unfold in the contexts of logic, metaphysics, ethics, social and political philosophy, aesthetics and epistemology. Mbaegbu (2008) adds that these departmental branches also extend to philosophy of African language, religion, history, education and culture that houses diverse African philosophical inquiries. Reiterating this development, Momoh, in Bodunrin (1989: 23-24), asserts that “African philosophy is the one done by African philosophers whether in the area of logic, metaphysics, ethics or history of philosophy... set in some African context”. The progress of African philosophy has even triggered increase in the number of courses within the departments of philosophy in African universities. It as well propels the present upsurge in African philosophical activities, associations, books and journals through which realities in the African world are analyzed and interpreted.

However, African philosophy is a rational enterprise focusing on African liberation from diverse challenges. As such, it has advanced into solving problems bugging contemporary African society. Sequel to this, Oguejiofor (2010) argues that the advances of African philosophy lie more in its ability to tackle the problems of the moment in the African world. These are problems revolving around political, economic, social and other areas of African existence. In solving these problems, African philosophy proposes indigenous theories such as Igwebuiké (Kanu, 2018), Ibuanidanada (Asouzo, 2011), Ubuntu (Samkange & Samkange, 1980), and indigenized theories like Theistic Humanism (Dukor, 2010), Integrative Personhood (Odimegwu, 2008), Dialectics of Freedom (Isife, 2020), which are central in ameliorating African contemporary predicament and stabilizing African societies. As such, African philosophy is significantly viewed as a response to

the multifarious problems of the Africans and challenges from their environment.

Referring to this, Oguejiofor (2010: 14) reveals that African philosophical reflection “is always contextual and intended to solve one or the other of numerous problems bedeviling the continent”. This trend is, however, in consonance with the idea of the American pragmatic philosopher, John Dewey, who holds that philosophy starts from some deep and wide way of responding to the difficulties that life presents. The reality of this direction is truly a manifestation of the vision of the foremost Ghanaian nationalist, Kwame Nkrumah, who, in Chinweuba (2019: 96), urges that “African philosophers be of immense help to the rediscovery and sustainable governance of Africa”.

The Congruence of African Philosophy with Form and Structure of Global Philosophy

Global philosophy is characterized by rigorous, systematic, rational and critical investigation of matters that are important in human existence. Philosophy generally has essential attributes of “criticality, consistency, logicity, comprehensiveness, profundity and coherence” which manifest in every inquiry (Agbanusi, 2011: 85). These characters are everywhere in the form and structure of philosophy. In line with these features, African philosophical trends and advances cut through the entire spectrum of African culture, norms and values. It examines the “intellectual basis, assumptions and social praxis” of culture to arrive at more rational synthesis” (Nwala, 2010: 41).

As such, African philosophical inquiry explores and examines in an unlimited and unhindered manner the sacrosanct, unorganized and uncritical mass of realities, beliefs and unfounded views about nature and human experiences in the African world. These realities are largely pondered on and subjected to rational scrutiny to determine the rational, systematic, coherent and consistent grounds for their being and for maintaining them. In this sense, critical analysis has become a

means to an end as African philosophy tends towards synthesizing and preserving that which is best in African culture, experience and world. This act is typical of Plato in his criticism of Homeric religion towards its rational synthesis and not its devastation. For, Plato exposed philosophy wherever it is practised as a second order activity, while traditional culture remained the first order activity. Thus, Plato attacked traditional Greek culture in an attempt to preserve the best in it. In congruence with Plato's goal, therefore, African philosophical trends and innovative advances have largely become a practice of the "skills of interior reconstruction, comparative criticism and synthesis" of African thought and culture (Hunnings, 1975:13). In other words, African philosophy has become a synthetic, synthetical and substantive philosophy (Momoh, 2010).

The further implication of these is that like global philosophy, African philosophy has a tendency or a tradition that makes it quite directional. This is a direction replete with holistic approach to African person, experiences and realities. Thus, as British philosophy is predominantly empirical, the American is pragmatic, the French is rational and dualistic, the German is idealist, the Russian is materialist, the Indian is spiritualistic, the Chinese is humanist, and African philosophy mainly communalistic, with a moralistic, metaphysical, spiritualistic, intuitive and mystical features. Buttressing this, Nwigwe (2005: 45) avers that, reason ...in its western sense is discursive and analytic. The African mind, on the contrary looks at reality holistically. It does not impoverish or sap or rob or press issues into cold schemata. Unlike the European intellect, which is mainly after the utility of things, the African reason is participatory and intuitive. In African thought, mysticism prevails – there is a great interest to forge unity and harmony among the various aspects of reality: the environment, man, animal, the ecology, etc. for the European, man lives in a world which is tangible and realistic: man himself is part of nature, which consists and functions according to certain principles and laws. In African

thought, the world is an organism, it is more properly understood, when taken as a whole. This means that the physical and spiritual realms of reality are inseparably bound together .

In congruence with philosophical orientation and dwelling on the true mode of philosophy, African rational inquiry virtually delves into all areas of African reality and life. It examines all subjects in African context within human perception and experience. Along this line, “the different levels of articulation and the various attempts to systematize traditional thought are becoming clearer” (Nwala, 2004 :7). This is more so as African philosophy now operates on analytic trend that makes fundamental concepts clearer, as evidenced in the scholastic direction that critically analyzes the religious thoughts of Africans, the liberation pattern that vies for societal and human positive change, and the logical positivism or rationalist school that is bent on depicting scientific rationality, logicity, epistemology, as well as the clarification of meanings, in African context.

Outstanding in African philosophy is, however, its alignment with the most basic essence of universal philosophy. This nature is glaring in the inability of philosophy to arrive at any generally acceptable agreement (Oguejiofor, 2010). While African philosophy exhibits this global philosophical trait of having no generally acceptable definition, thinkers in this rational enterprise “go on in practice as if the nature of philosophy has been determined” (Bodunrin, 1991: 75-76). Added to this character is the arrival of African philosophy at the universal core philosophical phase which is hermeneutics. For “philosophy wherever it exists or is practiced is hermeneutics of the entire world of the subject” (Oguejiofor, 2010 : 9).

Thus, the hermeneutical character makes African philosophy a patrimony of contemporary global philosophy. Within this hermeneutical trend, the concern with the actual context has become a special mark of contemporary African philosophy. Like universal philosophy, this African philosophical trend has also proven that there

can be philosophy of anything and everything, with the rational mind as the tool of critical reflection. As such, African philosophical trend has largely remained a re-enactment of pristine practices in continental and universal philosophy. Along this line, it also unfolds from human leisure which is the trajectory of pristine philosophizing. For, “initial philosophizing was based on leisure from which earlier philosophers with their extra-time reflect on the incommensurables of the universe” (Aristotle in Carruthers, 1984: 981). African philosophy can, therefore, remain consistent with and fit into global philosophical trends and advances when it continuously operates along the aforementioned universal philosophical trajectories.

Problems in African Philosophy and Innovative Trends and Advances

The major problem in African philosophy and innovative trends and advances is glaring in its contextual intent to solve the problems plaguing the continent. For owing to the irresponsible and predatory politics within the continent where liberal democracy exists in principle, contemporary African philosophy has become more of a liberation/redemption philosophy (James, 1992). This is in the sense that it greatly centers on the chaotic political situations of the continent. Thus, most critical reflections border on philosophy and governance, philosophy and development, and by extension philosophy and culture, given the turbulence experienced in African cultural world. In the same vein, African philosophy has not been holistic in its trends. As concentration builds on socio-political and economic problems, there is gross negligence of the educational sector, technological underdevelopment, poverty, ethnicism, eroding African languages and values.

Indeed, African philosophy’s overconcentration on the social, political and economic matters in the present African world leads to gross neglect of the general historical character of philosophy as a discipline stemming from its pristine ancient Egypt movement. This is a character in which philosophizing tends to emanate largely from leisure (Stumpf, 2004). Lending credence to this reality, Aristotle, in

Carruthers (1984), reveals that African philosophy was not initially spurred by human basic needs but by leisure. Speaking about Aristotle, Carruthers (1984: 981) contends, “This is why men began to philosophize after their basic needs has been satisfied. This is also why for him philosophy began first in ancient Egypt because Egyptian priests had leisure and could spent their extra-time in reflecting on the incommensurables of the universe.” Away from this noble original trajectory, therefore, African philosophy is fast becoming a utility philosophy. In other words, it is fast becoming an art in order to live than an academic inquiry propelled by love for wisdom. This, according to Oguejiofor (2010), drags philosophy in African context into the problem of its existence.

However, this shift in trajectory is not entirely odd from the philosophical practices of other regions of the world. The social contract theories of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacque Rousseau, for instance, grew out of concern for the well-being of their societies. Hence, their theories were pure philosophical reflections on the basis of human peaceful community existence. It is, therefore, much in keeping with this tradition and the recurrence of such trends in the continent that African philosophy deeply focuses on African predicament.

Meanwhile, African philosophy still lacks comprehensiveness in its knowledge horizon. It as well lacks firm grip in its hermeneutical engagement. Hence, a lot of philosophizing on African experience is an assumption replete with sentiments and lack of objectivity. For instance, African philosophy still portrays Africans as communalistic and the West as individualistic (Oguejiofor, 2010). More still, African philosophical schools of thought still treat “African people as a collective unified one-willed organism leaving no room for individualism of any sort” (Nwala, 2004:1). In all these, African philosophy is not largely and objectively a fierce critique and protector of the African world.

A more pathetic problem in African philosophy is the continued dominance of Western philosophy in its curriculum, thought and language of study. Hence, “with colonial languages standing as lingual franca in many African states, coupled with western styled education curriculum” (Isife, 2020:127), African philosophy will continue to serve the interest of the West rather than being an instrument for decolonisation of the African. Also, the worst part of the problem is about the performance of African philosophy in the Philosophy programmes of African universities. A research carried out by Agbanusi (2016) on August 31st 2015 shows that the academic programmes of selected African universities have few or no courses in African philosophy. According to Agbanusi (2016: 184),

The findings as reflected above show that only a comparatively few universities in the world study African Philosophy. also and more worrisome, not enough number of African universities study African Philosophy and that even in many Philosophy departments of African universities where it is studied, only few courses are offered in African Philosophy at the undergraduate level... only few African universities have provision for African Philosophy to be studied as a major area of specialization in their postgraduate studies....

And the ratio of pure African philosophy courses to other philosophy courses in the academic programmes where African philosophy is studied is very low. Against this condition, Makumba (2007: 31) postulates that “an African who has been exposed to classical western philosophy as the basis of his philosophical training will always be influenced by the thought categories and patterns of that way of thinking, consciously or otherwise; which happens to be the case with the majority of African scholars”. In reality, therefore, the curriculum largely used in African philosophical education system deprives potential African thinkers of academic tools necessary for the task of hermeneutical engagements with the African world. Worse still, African philosophy has foreign languages as its vehicles. Thus, almost

all the philosophizing in African context is done in English and/or French. In fact, proficiency in these languages is allegedly viewed as expertise in African philosophy (Fanon, 2008). Yet, these languages do not totally represent and unveil all the realities, nuances and meanings lurking in African culture and thought. As such, they have not driven a complete and balanced African philosophy.

Besides, African philosophy in its innovative trends and advances is less ambitious. This is as it is not all-embracing as is the character of global philosophy. For the character of global philosophy is glaring in its examination and study of universal realities, while African philosophy reflects on Africans, the African world, its role, and the prospects it has for Africans.

Conclusion

In post-great debate on the possibility of its existence, African philosophy has become a professional enterprise dominating intellectual spaces in Africa and the Diaspora (Nwala, 2004). African philosophy is indeed at the forefront of the struggle to restore the humanity of the Africans. This is after the doubts surrounding this humanity consequent upon the continent's unprecedented history and predicaments. This is a history laden with unfolding events that made the rest of the world rethink the humanity, rational character of the Africans as well as the capability of the Africans rising above their predicaments (Oguejiofor, 2009). In view of this, thinkers like Hegel, Levy-Bruhl, Diedrich maintain that Africa has no history and philosophy, but only with mentality quite different from the rest of humanity (Odhiambo, 1995). Thus, the prejudices of western philosophers like Hume, Kant, Hegel, etc resulted in the relegation of the African, especially the Black, to the level of an irrational being...Hume, for instance, argued that the black man lacks mental capacity, invention, civilisation, ingenuity, and therefore inferior to the white race...Hegel excluded Africans from the movement of history, projecting that the continent has no human consciousness.... (Isife, 2020: 118 -119).

For these Western thinkers therefore, It is...evident that there are differences between the mental activity of the Negro and that of the European...A significant difference is that the Negro is more dominated by the unconscious or half-conscious impulses than we are, for him emotional thinking outweighs logical thinking, and when emotion is the guide, ideas and actions may result which are not in conformity with logic (Odhiambo,1995: 7).

These bias and assumptions were the rationale behind Hountondji's (1983: 11- 12) postulation that "Hegel provided a powerful philosophical base to the chorus of denigration of the non-white races which accompanied and buoyed up the European colonial white adventure all through the nineteenth and as well as into the twentieth century". These irrational postulations of Western thinkers, however, became the fertile ground for African philosophical innovative trends and advances. Thus, the fact that Africans are really humans and share in basic human character of rationality, despite her checkered history and contemporary burden, has therefore been proven in African philosophical innovative trends and advances.

Adding to this, the innovative trends and advances in African philosophy have driven quality governance that underscored sustainable development in many African states. Oguejiofor (2010: 19), for instance, holds that based on African philosophical trends and advances, the state of "Botswana has the highest per capita income in the whole of Africa. Its society is so ordered and well organised that it has become a station of choice for diplomats of other countries of the world". Despite this, African philosophical innovative trends and advances largely lack originality. This is as there are abstractions and methods borrowed from Western philosophical current and elsewhere. African philosophy will, therefore, be true to itself when its methods, nature, structure, form and meaning are genuinely African and objectively critical.

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ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN AFRICAN COSMOLOGY

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Abstract

Within the context of African cosmology, God is a fundamental determining force. In fact, over the whole of Africa, it is believed that God does not just create; he creates, sustains and maintains the world that he has created by providing the needs of his creatures. It is in this regard that the Ewe refer to him as He who does not withdraw his gifts, and the Banyarwanda speak of him as the underlying force that sustains the universe, and that if he should be no more, the world would collapse. The Igbo refer to him as Osebuluwa - that is, the sustainer of the universe or he that carries the universe in his hands. This piece discovers that the African believes that God provides and sustains the universe he has made through the laws that he has put among his people; through the activities of his deans; through magic, herbs, divination and charms, and his provisions, including the natural elements that he has made and the protection that he offers his creation. The phenomenological approach would be employed in the collection and analysis of data on the African

understanding of providence and sustenance. As against the absence of the belief in the divine sustenance of creation by God in Western thoughts, this work argues that within the African parameter of belief, the world is provided for and sustained by God.

Keywords: African, providence, sustenance, cosmology, phenomenology

Introduction

Providence is the act by which God orders all he has made and events within the system of real beings, be they animate or inanimate, spiritual or physical, towards the supreme end for which they have all been created. Thus, providence involves the active disposition and arrangement of things by the divine, with a view to a definite end. The nature of providence was a fundamental theme in the philosophical and theological speculations of scholastic thinkers. Boethius defines providence as:

...the Divine Intelligence itself as it exists in the supreme principle of all things and disposes all things; or, again, it is the evolution of things temporal as conceived and brought to unity in the Divine Intelligence (IV, vi sq. LXIII, 813 sq.)

In the contention of Boethius, providence is expressed in the created order of things through what he called Fate, which does not operate outside of the divine intelligence. Therefore, providence becomes the means through which God achieves his divine plan for his creatures.

St. Thomas further understands providence as the cause of all things. Thus, providence pertains primarily to the intelligence of God, though it implies also the divine will (Summa I, G. xxii, a. 1). Aquinas connects providence with God's omnipresence, and avers that "it points to the nature of God who is able to behold all things together in one comprehensive act" (I, Q. xxii, a. 3, ad 3^{um}). It is by this same

act of comprehension that he conserves and concurs in all things (I, Q. civ a. 1, ad 4 urn). He writes that:

Providence is based upon the consideration of the universe as a whole. God wills that His nature should be manifested in the highest possible way, and hence has created things like to Himself not only in that they are good in se , but also in that they are the cause of good in others. (I, Q. ciii, a. 4, 6)

From the foregoing, Saint Thomas avers that God has created a universe, and not a number of isolated realities. Thus, it follows that natural operations tend to what is better for the entirety of reality, and not necessarily what is better for each part, except in relation to the whole (I, Q. xxii, a. 2, ad 2 um; Q. lviii, a. 2, ad 3 um; Contra Gent., III, xciv). It is within this context that John Damascene understands providence as "the will of God by which all things are ruled according to right reason " (XCIV, 963, 964).

These perspectives notwithstanding, this paper studies the concept of providence within the context of African ontology; that is, how does the African understand providence? To understand this, the paper would study African names and titles for God, African proverbs and African mythologies for indices of the African understanding of providence.

Methodology

This piece is an explanatory and analytical research on the concept of divine providence in African traditional religion in terms of their world view. And because the African world view is the animator of the African daily life, it would reflect manifestations of their concept of divine providence in their way of life. Given the very nature and concerns of this research, it would focus on the theological dimension of African religion, as it would be studying different African names with theological implications, African titles for God, proverbs and myths from different African religious backgrounds on divine providence. This work would rely mainly on secondary sources, that is, books, journals, internet sources, etc. The phenomenological and

hermeneutical approaches would be employed in the collection and analysis of data. In addition, through the philosophical approach, with analytical implications, this piece provides a deeper analysis to the concept of divine providence.

Divine Providence in Igbo-African Names

African names are not just given for the sake of identifying a person or a thing. African names are given with the purpose of history, may be, to remember a certain historical event, or as a prayer, in a prophetic sense, in anticipation of a favour, or to explain what is happening at the moment. As such, African names carry so much meanings, and from them, one discovers the culture, thinking, theology and philosophy of the African people. In relation to divine providence, particular Igbo-African names for persons and titles for God would be studied so as to understand from them how the African understands divine providence.

| NO. | IGBO NAMES | MEANINGS | PROVIDENCE |
|------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | <i>Chijindu</i> | My life is in God's hand. | An expression of dependence on God's providence. |
| 2 | <i>Chinwendu</i> | God owns my life. | This points to the occurrence of an event that expresses the family's or community's dependence on God's providence. |
| 3 | <i>Akachukwu</i> | The hand of God | The manifestation of divine providence is always a sign that the hand of God is with his people. |
| 4 | <i>Akamnachi</i> | I am greater in God. | It speaks of the joy of reliance on the |

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| | | | providence of God. One is better by relying on God's providence than relying on a fellow human being. |
| 5 | <i>Akaolisa</i> | The hand of God | This also, like in the case of <i>Akachukwu</i> , points to the manifestation of divine providence, and the experience of divine providence is always a sign that the hand of God is on his people. |
| 6 | <i>Arinzechukwu</i> | If not for God | Without divine providence life would have been worse than it is. |
| 7 | <i>Belusolisa</i> | If not for the sake of God | As in the case of <i>Arinzechukwu</i> , without divine providence life would have been unbearable. |
| 8 | <i>Chibuifem</i> | God is my light. | This attests to the fact that God's providence lights my way. |
| 9 | <i>Chibuike</i> | God is my strength. | It attests to the fact that God's providence is my strength. |
| 10 | <i>Chibuzor</i> | God leads. | God's providence |

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| | | | leads the way for me |
| 11 | <i>Chideziri</i> | God wrote my story. | God's providence was already in place right from the very beginning of time. God had provided for it, even before I was born. |
| 12 | <i>Chidumaga</i> | God leads me on. | God's providence leads the way for me. |
| 13 | <i>Chiedozie</i> | God has fixed it. | God's providence has fixed it. His providence is always available to fix my problems and challenges. |

Divine Providence in the Names of God

The names below are names given to God by the Igbo-African. These names were not given to the Igbo by God, as we find in the Old Testament Christian scriptures, but are names that the Igbo have given to God from their own experience of him.

| NO. | Names of God | Meaning | Providence |
|-----|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | <i>Okosisi na eche ndu</i> | The mighty tree that gives protection | God, as a spiritual power, is strong enough to provide protection for me. |
| 2 | <i>Echeta obi esike</i> | The giver of confidence | God, as a spiritual power, is my source of confidence. With him I cannot be intimidated. |
| 3 | <i>Agbataobi nwa ogbenye</i> | The friend of the poor | God's power is a source of |

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| | | | consolation to the poor. For, in spite of his power, he is close to the poor. He saves the poor from the treachery and injustice of the rich. |
| 4 | <i>Agbataobi onye ajuru aju</i> | The friend of the rejected | God stands for those who are weak and oppressed. He provides love and support to the weak. |
| 5 | <i>Olilianya nde ogbenye</i> | The hope of the poor | When the poor remember God, then they have the confidence to face the challenges ahead. |
| 6 | <i>Obata obie</i> | He whose presence ends every pain/misfortune | When God comes into your situation, he changes your pain and misfortune. |
| 7 | <i>Onye nzoputa</i> | The saviour | God is the spiritual power that can save those he has created. |
| 8 | <i>Chukwu na 'kpu nwa</i> | The God that creates children | Through his providence, God continues to bless his people with |

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| | | | children. |
| 9 | <i>Okwere nkwa meya</i> | The one that fulfills His promise | Once he has made a promise, he is a God that is able to keep his word. |
| 10 | <i>Odi mma na eme mma</i> | The good God that does good | Through his providence, God does good continually to humanity. |
| 11 | <i>Osebuluwa</i> | God holds the world or keeps the world in existence. | Through his providence, God keeps the world in existence. He holds the world in being. |

Divine Providence in African Proverbs

African proverbs are the wisdom of the African people borne from several years of experience and handed down from one generation to another. It is a collection of experiences, including their experience of divine providence.

| NO | PROVERBS | PROVIDENCE |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | God gave us the seed of every plant, but we must sow it. | Providentially, God has made a provision for each and every one of us for our survival. Our survival, therefore, becomes a cooperation between ourselves and God's predestined plan for us. |
| 2 | God pours rain on the sorcerer's garden. | Our being good or bad does not in any way change God's providence. He makes his provision for both the good and the bad. His providence is, therefore, not dependent whether |

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| | | we are good or bad. |
| 3 | God will prevent flies from stinging the tailless cow. | God always makes provision, even for the weak. It is through his providence that he provides support for the weak. |
| 4 | All things are done by God. | God has a hand in the daily events of our lives. |
| 5 | God gives you gifts. Do not forget where he took you from. | The provisions that we have are from God. They are gifts from him. |
| 6 | God makes the new day when he wishes. | God's providence is not determined by us. He decides and accomplishes as he wills. |
| 7 | People make plans but God makes decisions. | God's providence is at the heart of the success of our plans. |
| 8 | God lent us his property here on earth so that we too may lend what we have to our neighbour. | What we have are through the providence of God, and must be used in such a manner that we become the channels of the providence of God. There is nothing that we receive through his providence that is only for ourselves. Whatever we have through his providence is meant for others. |
| 9 | God keeps your cattle when you are away. | He works for your good, even when you are away or not taking cognizance of his power and providence. |
| 10 | God does not sleep. | This connects his provision with his omnipresence and omniscience. That he does not sleep only assures us of his |

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| | | providence at all times and in all seasons. |
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African Myths on Divine Providence

1. Nri Myth

The story of the Igbo, no matter how briefly considered, would be incomplete if one omits the Eri-Nri contribution (Madubuko, 1994). Tracing this history, Afigbo avers that Eri clan originated from the regions of Omumbala River, in Aguleri; from there they fanned eastward and established various communities (Afigbo, 1981). Uzukwu describes Eri as the father of all Nri; and tradition says that he came from *Chukwu* (Uzukwu, 1994). It is reported that the earth was not firm when he came into it. To solve the problem of flood, he employed blacksmiths from Awka to use their bellows to dry the flooded land. There was also no food for people on earth to eat. To provide food, he prayed to God and God demanded that he should sacrifice his first son and daughter to him. After the sacrifice and burial of his son and daughter, yam and palm tree began to grow out of the place where he buried his first son, while vegetables and cocoyam grew out of the place where he buried his daughter. If yam germinated from where Eri's first son was buried, it means that yam is the resurrected son of Eri, given to man to sustain life. Yam is also regarded as life (Madu, 2004).

In this myth, there is a cosmic drama among God, human beings, land and crops. Eri, the civilization hero, enjoys a special relationship with Chukwu, and through Eri's sacrifice, humanity now enjoys a special relationship with the land which offers food for its sustenance. The ritual act performed by Eri established a covenant between Eri, his descendants and Chukwu. This explains why yam is very prominent in Igbo sacrifice and life, one which warrants its annual elaborate festival throughout Igbo land (Kanu 2018, 2019).

2. Basare Myth

The Basare are of the Upper Region of Ghana. They believe that God created the world in several stages. The first stage was the creation of heaven supported with several pillars. This was followed by the creation of the world which was in the form of lightening and from which the moon and sun were made. However, the sun and the moon quarreled and the sun threw the moon into the mud. This explains why the moon is less bright than the sun and shines only at night for thieves and witches. The third stage was the creation of the clouds and a red cockerel that crows whenever it thunders. This was followed by the creation of the rain and a male and female rainbow. The last stage was the miraculous creation of two assistants by God to whom he gave the earth as a place to work. This came into being before the creation of mountains and valleys and the sending of rain to form rivers and lakes. Then he created human beings and animals (Abanuka, 1999).

3. Fon myth

The Fon people of the Republic of Benin hold in their myth for creation that God, known as Mawu-Lisa, followed a four-day programme in his creation of the world. This explains why they observe a four-day week. On the first day, he made the world and created the human person whom he placed in it. During the second day, he sent a special agent into the world to make it conducive for living for the human person. The third day was followed by God giving the human person the gift of sight, speech and the ability to know the world around him. On the fourth day, he blessed the human person with the gift of mastering over his environment so as to make it a better place for his own habitation and for the good of other creatures (Abanuka, 1999).

Implications for Divine Providence

The reason for the presentation of the above three myths is to locate in them the nature of divine providence within African ontology. The first myth is the Nri myth; like other African myths, it attributes to God or the Supreme Being the source of everything that does exist. This establishes a link between the creator and the creature. Divine

providence thus becomes a manifestation of the operations of the will of the creator in the creature. The creator created the creature not as an isolated reality but as a reality that operates within the context of a community of realities, a web-like relationship and interrelatedness (Kanu, 2019). Through divine providence, the supreme being maintains his relationship with his creatures by not only providing for them but sustaining their being. It is in this regard that Metuh (1987) observes that:

All beings in the universe find their meaning and purpose in the creative plan of the Supreme Being. They are still under his control because he made them and continuous to direct their actions to achieve his divine purpose. The heavenly realm of the deities, the earth an even the deities themselves have their purpose in God's providence (p. 39).

In the Nri myth, when Eri discovered that the earth was not firm when he came into it from Chukwu and sought partnership with blacksmiths from Awka to use their bellows to dry the flooded land, he was making use of the gift of wisdom (the way the world works) which is 'igwebuiké' in character to seek help for himself. This wisdom is a gift given to him by the Supreme Being for his own survival. Another manifestation of divine providence in the Nri myth was at the time when there was no food for people on earth to eat. To provide food, he prayed to God and God demanded that he should sacrifice his only son and daughter to him. Through the death of his son and daughter, God made a provision of food, not only for him but also for generations yet to come.

In the Basare myth, precisely at the last stage of creation, God miraculously created two assistants. The creation of these assistants shows that in the African concept of creation, God does not create and abandon his creation. He continues to provide for his creatures through various means, and from this myth, he provides and guides them through the deities who are the deans of the Supreme Being. He is, therefore, not a God that is away from his people but present to

them through his deans. Thus, in African ontology, there are various deities that provide for the various needs of the human person.

In the Fon myth, precisely on the fourth day, the myth says that God blessed the human person with the gift of mastering over his environment so as to make it a better place for his own habitation and for the good of other creatures. God's blessing the human person with the gift of mastering his environment is a way of providing for the future of his creatures. More so, in the Basare and Fon myths, divine providence manifests itself in the fact that the creation of the universe was done in stages, which means that God had already mapped out the plan of creation in stages before bringing them into being. Each stage was well planned by God for the fulfilment of a particular purpose.

Conclusion

The whole idea of divine providence is connected to the strong belief that the world was created by God. And so, the African does not believe that after the days of creation, or the order in which creation is described, that creation ended or that God abandoned his creation. There is a strong belief in the continuous presence of God in the things that he has created, and it is through his divine providence that he manifests his presence in the world. It is still his world; it is still his creatures. The Nuer tribe prays thus: "Our Father, it is thy universe, it is thy will" (Evans-Pritchard, 1956, p. 7) and the Galla people address God in these words: "O God, thou hast given me a good day. Give me a good night (Huntingford 1953, p. 74). These point to God's ownership of the universe and the indispensability of his presence in the world.

Since creation does not end with the last day or order of creation, Africans believe in the continuous process of creation by God through his divine providence. This is evident in the Twi people's saying: "God never ceases to create things" (Westermann p. 197), and among the Yoruba, when every new day emerges, they say that it is God's offspring (Idowu, 1973). After creation, God established laws and customs that would govern all that he has made and direct their

purpose towards his end. For instance, he created day and night and ordered their continuous manifestation. African proverbs such as “All things are done by God”; “God makes the new day when he wishes” and “People make plans but God makes decisions” point to the fact that God is still part of the daily evolution of his creation.

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF AFRICAN SYSTEM OF KINSHIP

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Abstract

In societies that are more complex in terms of industrialization and territorial endowment, kinship is difficult to notice. This is largely because such societies have other agencies that carry out the duties the kin groups are supposed to perform. But in less industrialized societies where traditional values are prevalent, kinship still plays roles for the individual. Most societies in Africa fall under this category. In these small-scale traditional societies, social organizations and social structure are understood only through the idiom of social relationship arising from the mutual rights and obligations which mark the kinship system. In Africa, the foundation on which kinship operates outside the society are the family and marriage. They are the only biological influence on kinship formation.

Introduction

The Advanced Learners Dictionary defines kinship as blood relationship with special attributes like closeness, sympathy or

similarity of character. The male partner is known as kinsman, while the female partner is known as kinswoman. This definition is for the purpose of plain understanding of what kinship is all about.

More elaborate definitions were the ones given by Robin Fox and Winick. For Fox, kinship is the relationship between "kin"; for example, persons related by real, putative or fictive (consanguinity).¹ For Winick, kinship is the social recognition and expression of genealogical relationship based on supposed as well as actual genealogical ties.² The conditions necessary for kinship to be created require societal acceptance. Impregnation and birth are not enough to create kinship. For birth and parenthood to have any relevance, the society will have to sanction it. It is the legitimacy conferred by the society that can confirm kinship. This requirement, as it is applied, justifies the Aristotelian view that the society is where man can actualize his potentials. Among the Yoruba in Western Nigeria, the marriage is consummated by fulfilment of some traditional requirements. The offspring of this union belongs to the kin group of the father. A woman can still have children for different men while she is still in her parent's house. These children will be identified by their different fathers; they cannot be said to belong to their mother's kin group, though these men did not marry her officially.

The Igbo consummate their fatherhood by the payment of bride price. The children born in such union belong to the father's kin group. If the woman is not married, the children born to her will belong to the mother's kin group. This is in contrast to what is obtainable in Yoruba area of Nigeria. Among the Igbo, there are peculiar situations where women marry fellow women and choose a particular man to impregnate them. Children born under such an arrangement belong to the kin group of the woman that married her.

These variations in different areas go to show that birth does not confirm kinship. It is the society that confirms which kin group one belongs to. Francis Suarez's position that, "since man is by nature a

social being he needs a political society in which to live"³ is justified. It is this society that defines his status and gives him the sense of belonging. Different societies in Africa have divergent application of kinship status. This difference is also manifested in the functions, expectations and importance of kinship to individual and the society at large.

Concept of the Family

The family forms the building block for kinship systems. It is the family that forms the basis for the expression of kinship systems. Kinship derives its relevance from the society. This is due to the fact that it is from the family that kinship is formed. The family is an important channel for the process of socialization from childhood to adult life.

The origin of the family has been a subject of controversy among philosophers with different specializations on the origin of family. Frederich Engels and L.H. Morgan posit that the family has passed through four successive stages.⁴ The primitive stage, Punaluan family, the pairing family and the monogamous family. At the primitive stage, men were promiscuous. This stage witnessed marriage between distant brothers and sisters. At the second stage, which is the Punaluan family, restrictions were introduced to prevent distant brothers from sexual relations with their distant sisters. The third stage is the pairing family, where one man to one woman arrangement began to dominate marriage. At the fourth stage, according to Morgan and Engels, marriage ties became more rigid. One man, one wife was finally established. These classifications show that each stage is an improvement of the former stage. Karl Marx and Engels clearly demonstrated that the different stages advanced progressively.⁵ In modern times, studies have shown that there are five types of family in Africa.

- i. Nuclear family: This is a family made up of father, mother and their children.
- ii. Polygamous family: This is made up of the father, his two or more wives and children.
- iii. Stem family: This is made up of two married couples who are related and their offspring.
- iv. Joint family: This is made up of two or more families with a family head and their children under one compound.
- v. Extended family. This is made up of many families, in most cases blood relations. They might live in different houses.

The extended family group, more than any of the other types of family, advances to kinship group in Africa. One will first of all be a member of his family before he identifies with his kin group. The extended family system is the most popular family system in Africa. It is from this extended family system that we graduate to kin group, from kin group to clan (tribe).

Uduigwomen writes that; “African society has been based on an extended family system which in turn expanded into kinship groups which further expanded into clan system”.⁶ The family is the basis of the African social life. It is from the family of a man that he undertakes both economic, social, religious and educational functions. At the level of the family, he generates the necessary support to enable him carve a niche for himself. The African believes in his family and strives to maintain his family's good name. He struggles to uplift his family and assist as much as he can in solving their daily problems. He derives his social status from his family. The great philosopher, Plato, in his theory of social stratification, insisted that the Guardians who should rule the Republic should not be allowed to have a family or private property, as these are the two most important hindrances to impartial rulership. Plato insists that the interest of the family tends to supersede public welfare.⁷

The Igbo in South East Nigeria take issues in their family seriously. They are prepared to work extensively to satisfy their family. In their

kingroup, the family is known and no man will like his family to be made a laughing stock in their kin group.

African Kinship cum Philosophy

Kinship in Africa has formed the social instrument for creating an enabling environment to assist the individual achieve his potentials in the society. Kin group has the mechanism to enthrone unity, peace and orderliness among the members. For Aquinas, "For the good life of the community three things are required. First, that the Community should be established in the Unity of Peace, second that the community united in the bond of peace should be directed to good actions, third that through the rulers diligence there should be sufficient supply of the necessities for good life."⁸

Various kin groups in Africa strive to create Aquinas' peaceful environment. Among the kingroup, any activity that will endanger peace is nipped in the bud. Before the coming of the white man to Africa, the Igbo kinship system maintained the security of their territories. Because they lived close to each other, it was easy for them to mobilize and counter an attack. They became more capable of monitoring themselves to prevent any member of the kin group from harming the other members.

According to Rousseau, "Human beings are driven by their instinct to live in clusters, in groups and this mode of life affords them the opportunity to socialize."⁹This need in man is the driving force behind kinship in Africa. It is the attempt to meet their need and care for the interest of one another. Kinship in Africa has done more than what Rousseau has said. The African of today has come to rely on his relationship with his kin group to fulfill the spirit of oneness in his interaction with his environment.

The individual African can thus only say: "I am because we are". The fundamental of the existence of the individual is the kin group. There upon the individual can only use his life energy towards maintaining

the cosmological or ontological interpretation and balance which generate positive social control and ensure genuine kin cooperation. The African who fails to conform to the dictates of his kin group pays dearly for it. The kin group applies strict disciplinary measures against him. The individual can be ostracized from the kin group. Once this happens, he loses the cooperation of his kin group. At this stage, he can be attacked by other people because he has lost his kin-group protection. At this stage also, he becomes an island unto himself, which is not an African way of life. The life of the individual at this stage becomes an inauthentic life that is not worth living. For Aristotle said that, "Right is the basis of the political association and right is the criterion for deciding what is just".¹⁰

In most African societies it is extremely difficult to become a member of a kin group, while in some societies it is easy. Nwanunobi (2001) recounts how one anthropologist, for instance, recalled how he had to be adopted as a son (kinsman) by the oldest male hunting and gathering group in Botswana before he was allowed to stay with these people during his fieldwork.

The capacity of kinship ties to remain strong in advanced societies is in doubt, but in some modern African societies, kinship has continued to be a dominant force in the election and voting pattern of the people. In the South African election, the Kwazulu Natal Province voted for Nkantna Freedom Party of Mongosutu Buthelezi of the Zulu ethnic nationality, while ANC won in other areas. The voting pattern in Nigerian elections is also a reflection of the over-dominant presence of kin group (ethnic nationality). In the First Republic, the Action Group won in the area dominated by the Yoruba ethnic nationality. The National Council for Nigerian Citizens won in the area dominated by the Igbo ethnic nationality. The Northern People's Congress won in areas dominated by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic nationality.

This same tendency manifested itself in the Second Republic, with the Nigerian Peoples Party dominating in the Igbo ethnic areas, while the

National Party of Nigeria dominated in the Hausa-Fulani ethnic areas. The Unity Party of Nigeria was controlled by the Yoruba ethnic nationality.

Extreme kin group solidarity can sometimes have negative effects on the society. This madness was witnessed in Burundi where Tutsi tribe and Hutu tribe engaged in wide-spread massacre of each other. This type of extremism was demonstrated by Adolf Hitler when he said: "We aspire not to equality but to domination. The country of foreign race must become once again a country of Serfs, of Agricultural labourers, or industrial workers. It is not a question of eliminating the inequalities among men but of widening them and making them, into law."¹¹

The Burundi violence is a manifestation of kinship extremism. The African, in his kin group, is not alone; he is seen in the picture of Plato's organicist theory where individuals are relevant only when seen as a whole. The kin group is always there to create soft landing in times of adversity. Even at a very old age, a man's kin group absorbs him. The Africans, in proper kin group arrangement, do not need the old people's home. The man's economic activity and material needs are mostly exercised within the kin group. In times of natural disaster, the kin group can come to the assistance of the kin member. During the Nigerian Civil War, the displaced Igbo tribesmen easily found shelter among their fellow kinsmen. This was the major reason why refugee centres were not common in Igbo land, despite the high casualty suffered by the Igbo people.

Plato, like most scholars, holds the economic function as the basis upon which society builds, with a view to satisfying those basic needs for food, clothing and shelter.¹² The three institutions - marriage, kinship and the family - are closely related. In traditional African society, kinship groups have contributed immensely in the consolidation of marriage contracts. It is through marriage that parent-child kinship connections in most societies are established. Traditional

marriages in African contexts have been more a relationship between two individuals. In most cases, the kin group decides the nature of marriage that is contracted. They act as pressure groups in the process of selecting a partner. For Mbiti JS, "Kin-group pressure is manifest in all segments of the man's social¹³ life. The man among his kin group will enjoy love, unity and trust".

The marriage of the individual members becomes the concern of all the kinsmen, since such marriages carry with them the potentials of affecting the size and fortunes of the kinship group as a whole. This informs the seriousness with which kin groups view marriage, since the offspring of that marriage will be counted among their kingroup.

For Mbiti JS, "To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community".¹⁴ In most African societies, it is the kin group that helps to sustain marriage. This is done in the areas of assistance in farming periods. Chinua Achebe recorded in his work "Things Fall Apart" that Okonkwo visited Nwakaibie to solicit for yam seedlings to plant. Nwakaibie obliged and Okonkwo was assisted to start his own farm.¹⁵ This assistance Okonkwo received from his kinsman enabled him to start his private business in farming to sustain his family.

Among the Igbo, for instance, it is very rare for a wife or husband to decide unilaterally to terminate the marital union. Before the case goes out of hand, kinsmen on both sides intervene to sustain the union. This is also predominant among the Zulus of South Africa.

Conclusion

In Africa, kinship is a major social institution for interaction among the people. The differences inherent in the application of kinship in different areas in Africa do not deny the fact that the African man knows that the family and marriage are crucial to the practice of kinship.

The degree of kinship influence is, to a large extent, determined by the industrialized nature of the society. If the society is highly industrialized, other agencies emerge to perform the role of kinship in the society. In less industrialized societies, the influence of kinship increases both as a means of identity and social participation. Plato's organicist theory encapsulates the importance of the institution of kinship to the individual.

Kinship can be beneficial in modern period as a measure of control in this period of social, moral and political corruption. The African kinship institution, if not for anything, has contributed immensely towards minimizing divorce in Africa. It has also helped the African man to survive adverse economic problems. In the kin group, utilitarianism, as conceived by Jeremy Bentham, which preaches happiness for all persons, is actualized. Though there are instances in which inter-kinship struggle has led to devastating consequences, like in Burundi, kinship for a long time to come will remain a veritable social institution for Africans.

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**AN ONTOLOGICAL DECONSTRUCTION OF THE
'EPISTEMIC AGENTS' IN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE
STRUCTURES**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide an ontological analysis of the influence of 'epistemic agents' in the determination of our stages, strengths and capacities of reasoning towards the structure of thought and branches of knowledge. It will access the role of 'epistemic agents' in the enhancement of intellectual development in African thought. These 'epistemic agents' include people, land, water and the entity of nature. The relationship among them is that they are the centre of knowledge, and our level of understanding of them affords us the opportunity to build genuine knowledge and strong social constructions on them. This will add to our knowledge built up as well This stems from the fact that when Africans encounter these 'epistemic agents', they either conceive them in terms of their significance, in worship (religions) or in knowledge (traditional, moral, medical, social, science and development). This brings us to the knowledge of them as empirical 'epistemic agents.' This paper presents these 'epistemic agents' as 'empiricities' that undertow the epistemic rules that moved and are still moving the thinking of the people. This paper argues the following, that; (i) Our knowledge of the epistemic rules generating knowledge from these 'epistemic agents' is ideologically saturated. (ii) Our linguistic pre-figurative

strategies of explanation are not enough to portray our indigenous understanding of them. (iii) The African understanding of these agents has been lost in the myths of rationality and science espoused by the Western dominant cannons, and as such, has been decoupled from the cognitive power of language and formalized systems of thought. The objective of this paper is to emphasize on the notion of 'epistemic agents' as the sources of the mental infrastructure of all human branches of knowledge and, more importantly, the foundation for Africa's self-development and research. The aim of this paper is to rescue African narratives from primordial silence caused by the suppressive effects of dominant classical traditional protocols and to propose an original development of the 'epistemic agents' in the invention of relevant indigenous academic disciplines from our genuine understanding of these agents.

Keywords: Deconstruction, ontology, empiricist, knowledge, 'epistemic agents', language, nature

Introduction

The central concern of this paper is that the Western orientations, research and knowledge about the 'epistemic agents' tend to dominate other orientations about them. It is such that other world views on these 'episteme agents' have been swallowed up in Western epistemological blocks, and the relevance of other sources of knowledge about them is contested and considered as myth or non-scientific. This calls for a review of knowledge development and other methodologies associated with the study of these agents.

African studies of these 'epistemic agents' is one of those epistemological blocks that have been dominated by the West epistemological structures. One has to ask; does it mean that there is

no genuine study of these 'epistemic agents' within the indigenous structures of learning? How can the Western paradigm be evaluated in contemporary African paradigm and pedagogy? Philosophers are continually engaged in discussions, emanating from diverse cultures and temperaments, about what knowledge is and what philosophers should do. In any country where the philosophical scene is overwhelmingly dominated by non-indigenous concerns and approaches, questions ought to be raised concerning this dominance. Moreover, it is important for philosophers to engage actively in the ongoing debates about philosophical perspectives that have emerged not only in contrast to the Western epistemological paradigm but also in contestation of it.

However, it is important, within the larger society, that philosophy in Africa shakes off the Western paradigm. Again, we have to state the reasons for these actions? There is need to recognize the character and meaning of philosophies dominated by the Western epistemological paradigm in Africa. There is need also to take cognizance of the use of the term 'non-Western', as it is objectionable to the extent that it positions other philosophies as caricatures of Western philosophy.

Furthermore, the dominance of Western methodologies in African researches is so overwhelming. It is such that research must be done based on an approved or given Western criteria. This leaves us to ask; is there no African philosophical research or epistemological paradigm? What is the relationship between philosophy and the culture from which it emanates? This is the wake of intellectual decolonisation, where other methodologies must be approved as standard, since they generate knowledge. This is ideological liberation. Thus, 'deconstructive' and 'reconstructive' challenges arise in the African epistemological paradigm, science and intellectual discourses. Thus, the need to deconstruct the sources that are considered as the foundation of all human engagements arises. It is part of the goal of this paper to engage in the ontological deconstruction of epistemic agents in order to create space to re-

evaluate African (indigenous) epistemological structures and paradigms.

Defining ‘Episteme Agents’

What are ‘epistemic agents’? By ‘epistemic agents’, we mean objects of cognition. They are objects that create impression on our senses the moment we come in contact with them. They are as well our objects of thought. This paper discusses them as *empiricities*; that is, they are empirical in nature. Again, they guide the direction of knowledge, science, discovery and experimentations, for instance: land, people, water, air, nature and lots more. In the physical science, land or earth crust is part of their study and researches. Biology studies the living nature, psychology studies human behaviour, and various aspects of human research and learning are specialties in any of these agents of episteme.

The presence of epistemic agents is well-defined within indigenous canons, knowledge structures and hierarchal systems. In this form, they are considered as episteme. Considerably, episteme is world view, a slice of the historical, common to all branches of knowledge which proposes on each other the same norms and patterns and postulates. It is a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular age/period cannot escape – a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand (Foucault, 1972: 191). This term, which Foucault introduces in his book *The Order of Things*, refers to the orderly 'unconscious' structures underlying the production of scientific knowledge in a particular time and place. It is the 'epistemological field' which forms the conditions of possibility for knowledge in a given time and place.

Our contacts and knowledge of ‘episteme agents’ reveal how our lives have conformed to the concepts inherent in the understanding them as ‘*empiricities*’. These ‘*empiricities*’ are evidenced in every aspect of our lives, socio-economic discourse, belief (religion) and labour. These

'epistemic agents' constitute the body of legislation that make up the principles and concepts that our bodies of knowledge consist of. This means that 'epistemic agents' serve as measures to determine our stages of reason and human development. It is within the study of these agents that we discover clashing classes, industrial revolutions, frontier experiences, catastrophic famines and scientific discoveries. This study as well provides us with the necessary knowledge to access civilizations and individuals bent on world domination, information revolution, philosophies, histories and varying ideologies.

The creative essence of epistemic agents is naturally connected. In the sense that these epistemic agents are outside of us, environmentally constituted, it is not hidden from any age, race and group. What is needed is our genuine understanding of them using a developed and functional language to create and convey our knowledge of them. In his definition of episteme, Foucault places great significance on language in the constitution of knowledge. He further elaborated;

By Episteme, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that gives rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems; the way which ... each of these discursive formations ... are situated and operated (Ibid, 191).

This could be simply understood especially when we see that nature is rationalized in connection to the epistemic agents. The validation of epistemological structures can be seen with the indigenous knowledge structures, even though the presentations may not be tantamount to modern-day intellectual canons and systems of 'scientific' specifications. An analysis of indigenous presentations could be deduced in three parts; (a) the world has a rational structure (b) this structure is knowable, and (c) it is relatively simple and easy to understand. This can be related in Hargrove's evaluation of Thales as follows;

Thales believed that the world was organized in an orderly manner and that the principles describing or governing this

order were true for all parts of the universe. Furthermore, he was convinced that these principles could be discovered and comprehended through the use of reason. In other words, [humans], by engaging in rational activity could uncover the secrets of the rational world ... (Hargrove, 1989:18).

This has led to the need to study the universe and all it has to offer, in order to improve humanity. This is also seen in the historical excavation of truth - philosophical, cultural, scientific and many other forms. The goal is to understand the world - epistemic agents.

The Paradox of Knowledge Formation within Indigenous Knowledge Structures

When we think about the paradox of knowledge formation from these ‘episteme agents’, we are reminded of the *empiricites* and *epistemic organization* of knowledge. These agents bring to our mind the structure of knowledge, especially when we see from the natural perspective - most times. They remain unknown to us only after deeper exploration about them. This is the only way we can afford the chance of genuine knowing. Thus, our knowledge and history emerge from our understanding of these agents, whether from religious, scientific historical and social constructions. For instance, countries are especially known for the people that live there, the rivers or water bodies surrounding them as well as their land masses. Obviously, nations are described essentially in terms of people, land and water. This could be best understood in terms of ontological relatedness. These serve as the reason why these ‘episteme agents’ influence the epistemic organization of knowledge. In this case, nations are known as great, developed and technological in terms of their level of research, exploration and discoveries of people, land and water. They are referred to as world powers. It is from the understanding of these ‘episteme agents’ that those archipelagos of branches of knowledge are constituted.

Hence, branches of knowledge are built based on the divisions of these ‘episteme agents’. The science, social science, humanities,

management and behavioural sciences are all discipline emanating from the study of these agents and their transactions. Our division of the different specializations of knowledge still rests on these agents. This shows that by exploring what constitutes the 'episteme agents' (what happens catastrophically within and/or between them, their cause and effect mechanism) that the contents of each discipline is created, and as well they do not succeed each other. Humans exercise their rational privileges and strengths to ensure that knowledge, its contents, demonstrations and practice are built, and adequate demarcations are placed on each discipline to ensure discipline in study, as this will enhance research and development.

Human beings are both empirical and deductive beings. They are the product of their lived social experiences as well as the constitutors of knowledge by the invocation of deductive knowledge. This placed the human person in a bi-standpoint in terms of knowledge; first as a subject of knowledge (episteme agents) and second as a knowledge creator (epistemic constructor or canon creator). Okoro wrote that:

There are two very important points we have to note (a.) that human being endowed with consciousness is the source of historical reality (metaphysical inquiry) (b.) human being endowed with consciousness is also the determinate of reality (epistemological Inquiry). (Okoro, 2011: 182)

The implication of this is to enable us to draw the limits of when humans are legislating knowledge formation from when they are objects of epistemological inquiry. This also recognized the human persons as not only a being-in-the-world but a being-with-others (Unah, 1996:60). The import of this is that not only is the human person constituted by his/her projects and relations with the things which s/he makes use of, s/he is also related to others, because in the first instance, others are also beings-in-the-world (Oyeshile, 2005:32). This means that the place of humans must be delineated within indigenous structures. This could lead to the various forms the epistemological paradox of humanity assumes. The import of this is that there is where the canon creation is assessed in terms of

objectivity from a subjective standpoint and away from bias. This is also where the contents and constitutions of knowledge are clearly demonstrated.

One of the contemporary paradoxes of knowledge formation within indigenous structure is using Western or other intellectual paradigms to evaluate, articulate and/or transfer knowledge of any form to African indigenous scholarship or vice versa. Basically, the influence of foreign scholarship on the attitude of writing and research can harm the organization of indigenous knowledge and their connections to native learning. This is why indigenous scholarship must be independent. Indigenous scholars should understand the implication of this. The true nature of indigenous knowledge forms is still not brought to limelight; thus, it becomes a suppressive agenda and another type of epistemological colonization. This means that a deconstruction of epistemic agent is a project worth taken seriously.

Indigenous Linguistic Pre-Figurative Strategies of Explanation Versus Formalized Systems of Thought

Frankly speaking, our access to knowledge reality is through language. Language is a scheme of skills vital to human beings. Within African studies of reality, there are doubts about the possibility of a genuine knowledge about reality without the use of indigenous knowledge. Knowledge building and the understanding of these ‘episteme agents’ in Africa have been polarized. This stems from the fact that majority of African scholars and the intelligentsia no longer think within their indigenous languages. Second is the fact that the foreign languages in Africa are not well known to all indigenous people and, as such, there is a vacuum in the thought system of scholars in their conception of reality. Thus “African academic philosophers (and scientists of all kinds) have had their philosophical (and scientific) discourses in the languages of some foreign culture; English, French, Spanish and Portuguese” (Wiredu, 1998b:147). The repercussion of this is that there is a paradox of understanding and transmission of knowledge that have double effects on both the

indigenous and foreign epistemological blocks. This is to say that the philosophy of our indigenous culture, as expounded in such language, must in principle be understandable to the people who own the language (ibid). This then implies that they are to juxtapose what they have learnt from the foreign with the indigenous, including the conditions, values, truth and knowledge-forming processes.

Third, most African scholars are faced with 'Reconstructionist' assumption about the nature of reality in their indigenous studies. Reconstructionist scholars believe that the indigenous knowledge lost in colonization, or undocumented forms can be reconstituted using modern assumptions in order to fill up the gap in knowledge. Hence, the African conception(s) of reality has (have) been distorted and the understanding of reality is left 'un-African.' This is evident in fact that none of the over twenty-three thousand (23,000) major languages in Africa are used in terms of serious research, and as building knowledge blocks in the world generally and in Africa in particular. Academic research is still done within the sphere of dominant languages such as English Language and French in Africa. In this regard, Kwasi Wiredu is of the view that;

What is immediately pertinent is to remark that unanalyzed exhortations to Africans to preserve their indigenous culture are not particularly useful- indeed, they can be counterproductive. There is an urgent need in Africa today for the kind of analysis that would identify and separate the backward aspects of our culture ... from those aspects that are worth keeping. That such desirable aspects exist is beyond question and undoubtedly many African political and intellectual leaders are deeply impregnated by this consideration. Yet the analytical dimension seems to be lacking in their enthusiasm (Wiredu, 1988:198).

This brings to mind an inevitable question; with what language do Africans conceive reality? This creates gaps and doubt for the possibility of a genuine knowledge about the reality of African studies? This calls for scholarly debates. This notwithstanding, even

though there are claims that reality is conceived in indigenous languages, how are these realities expressed? Considering the statement below,

The assumption ... that in speaking a person must be *guided*... There must be something at hand that shows him how to speak, how to put words together grammatically and within coherent sense ... what is being explained is knowledge – both knowing that and knowing how. The presence in him of the structure of the language or of its systems of rules is supposed to account for this knowledge – to explain how he knows (Malcolm, 1971:389).

We are still trapped with the technicalities of language - the ability to translate, transliterate and the search for synonymous between languages to convey necessary ideas and knowledge exactly. If these technicalities are not properly overcome, the ideas and knowledge under translation are subject to being discarded as irrelevant, lacking in logicity, unscientific, and as such do not have the capacity to meet the standard of knowledge. We see these in Western attitude to non-Western philosophies.

The most important fact remains that the agents of episteme is indeed 'out there.' They stir the creativity in minds. However, the articulation of these agents depends on knowing how the indigenous languages have developed and functioned so as to create and convey knowledge. The role of language is crucial in building systems of knowledge. Language is a receptacle of thought. Language is a medium for the transfer of knowledge. Thus, Amaku reiterates;

One Importance of language is that it expresses a unique world view; a people's conception of the world, their fears, hopes and aspirations ... language is a form humanity brings itself to expression. Treats of the diversity of structure of human language is the extent that the intellectual development of mankind stands upon its influence ... (Amaku, 2005: 104).

This makes the cognition-linguistic processes (meaning, coding, encoding, referencing, oratorical, thought processes, writing,

consciousness, rationality and communication and lots more) all prey to language use. The fact remains that our active articulations of these 'epistemic agents' depend on knowing how our indigenous language has developed and functioned to create and convey knowledge. There is need to emancipate these epistemic agents from the 'veil of ideas.' Our consciousness, rationality and communication can all become prey to the use of language. The massive changes and dislocations in consciousness are only manifested in the use of language. Reality perceived through these agents manifest in various forms, such as, religious, artistic, scientific, ideological, historical, metaphysical, epistemological, and the rest. The way we can understand them is through linguistic modes of consciousness. These various manifestations of the different understanding of episteme are only evidenced in the dominant use of language. These show that African indigenous languages have roles to play in our conception of reality. This is better conceived as *epistemic linguistic change*.

It more so reveals the fact that knowledge and other secrets of nature can be known through the vehicle of transparent language. Language is the essence of culture and constitutes the medium for cultural transmission (Okediadi, 2004: 126). The functions of language are different and important in terms of knowledge creation. Language, being transparent, must represent the true order of things. A less-developed language creates ambiguities in understanding reality. It possesses lesser track to reality. It is essentially used in presenting (telling or writing) and in some kind of knowing and understanding. Language is the essential underlying matrix that facilitates the growth and development of epistemological structures.

In essence, indigenous linguistic strategic figure of expression should be employed to express objectivity of knowledge structures. As against the formalized systems of thought, developing indigenous languages is the only structure and super-structure that should be created to address the paradoxes indigenous languages present in developing African epistemological blocks and other forms of

indigenous knowledge systems. In this instance, indigenous languages do not correspond to this contemporary scientific standard of acceptance. If we do not accept the referential nature of language, we raise doubts about the project of constructing an indigenous epistemological structure. This is because the referential nature of language is a key to indigenous reconstruction and construction paradigm which is important in several ways: building indigenous epistemological structure and developing indigenous languages. When we do not use indigenous language in its referential nature, the originality of our indigenous epistemology will be questioned in terms of its truthfulness and ability to solve the problems of the indigenous people. That is to say, if our language cannot produce the real meaning of knowledge, we are forced to seek the meaning of life outside there, either at the intertextual realm of the recorded and re-signified evidence or the cultural interpretation it generates. Put differently, if our languages lack the cognitive capacity to express our problems and knowledge about them, then we have to look elsewhere for relevant linguistic figurations of reality. This is one of the ways indigenous language lacks cognitive capacity for research, and the language automatically dies academically. Then we can pose this question: How many indigenous languages in Africa can stand as academic language?

Why we are emphasizing on the development of African languages is that if the indigenous language is opaque, it makes it difficult to deconstruct, construct and reconstruct our epistemological blocks and (re)orient and (re)create the future. We need a *linguistic deconstructive turn* in the creation of branches of knowledge. Language opens the avenue to explore the meaning invested by people on the ‘epistemic agents.’

An Ontological Deconstruction of the ‘Epistemic Agents’ in Indigenous Knowledge

Another issue with building indigenous epistemological structure is the imposition of cultural custodian of knowledge. Cultural custodians

of knowledge can be in form of kings, titled men, traditional priests and priestesses, community historians, philosophers and indigenous repositories of knowledge. When the place and roles of these cultural custodians are not properly addressed in building indigenous epistemological structures, it will make knowledge manifest in form of artefacts. This has affected the narrative nature and structures of agents of episteme in African knowledge systems. It turns indigenous knowledge into metaphoric or topological structures which are incapable of generating knowledge *per se*, especially when placed on the same contesting ground with knowledge from other continents. This is where the cognitive elements in indigenous languages have been misplaced, and what is obviously on ground is the African indigenous understanding which constitutes linguistic object-denotation problems. This may be seen as secondary referent. I am not arguing here that all African knowledge and science are representatives of cultural metaphors. But this is a key deconstructive insight and should not be dismissed as a footnote. African interpretations of these 'agents of episteme' are usually metaphoric because of the cultural-historical narrative. But then, there ought to be the contemporary urge to discover the past reality and reconstruct it scientifically. This is the time to think about African's indigenous knowledge forms, system, science, history rather than investigate them. This, however, places the questions of the myth of cognitive process and structures within African studies as well as clears the root mistakes exacted within traditional theory and foundations of ideas.

In the production of indigenous epistemological structures, naïve reconstructionist empiricism or constructionist deduction or statistical probability methodology can efface the impositionism of the indigenous scholars. The constant issue of textualization serves as evidence of the indigenous past or practices, traditions, cultures. This accounts for the evolutionary theory of indigenous knowledge forms because each "culture builds, with individual variation, on an almost identical ground-plan" (Nwigwe, 2004: 143). This is to say that irrespective of the development of human knowledge in this century, mythological thinking stands as background to it. To illustrate is this,

we find that the *Illiad* and the *odyssey* of Homer, the *Theogony* of Hesiod and so on occupy unique positions in the recorded literature of Western civilization. In these texts, man, gods and the universe have beginning. This is also seen in African-ethnic and tribal myths, which should not be seen as why they are inferior, but that myths have a universal stake in the development of human history, knowledge and science. And at the same time, it should be noted that European worldview is not ultimate in itself.

Its roles cannot be overlooked when we consider what marked the beginning of scientific inquiry. Again, sources of knowledge are not one directional but multi-directional, and as such African sources should not be neglected or allowed to be swallowed in the evolutionary process of other cultures, bearing in mind that the purpose of intellectual transaction often tilts in the favour of one against the other, and vice versa in other civilizations. Thus, there are three stages in building indigenous epistemological structures using the ‘epistemic agents.’ Thus, three phases are involved; (i) deconstruction (ii) construction and (iii) reconstruction.

Deconstruction phase: By deconstruction, it implies that there are knowledge systems already existing and thriving. So for the indigenous to come on board, there is need to create *intellectual space* before its structures are launched in. The necessity of this first stage stems from the fact that most “African scholars and/or philosophers will find that it is the philosophies of West that will occupy him most, for it is the part of the world that modern developments in human knowledge have gone farthest” (Wiredu, 1980: 49). This is the stage where intersection of intellectual forces plays out to create space for indigenous studies. This space will be created using indigenous language structures, conceptions, themes, ideologies and indigenous scholarly schools of thought and movements. This stage is important because ‘it will use for the service of the whole humanity the fruit of historical experiences of Africa ... and will break down all artificial barriers that separates mankind or necessitates the flowering of racist,

sentimental, continental philosophies which partition mankind into psychological and philosophical war zone which endanger philosophic horizon of the world' (Ozumba, 2003:9). This will enable basal shifts that will map out the space for this epistemic change. This will be most effective if the indigenous languages are used to present and represent the knowledge structure and epistemological toolkit of the indigenous people. Here, the use of indigenous scholars becomes inevitable, because their role is paramount, especially in the engagements of constructionist epistemology using the *phenomenological toolkit* of these *agents of episteme*.

Again, because they are indigenous scholars, the use of imposed linguistics, foreign thought analysis and influence of Western (or other) knowledge structures will be reduced to the barest minimum. This will enhance originality of thought, and the space created after deconstruction will be fully occupied by the growing of indigenous knowledge structures. This is why Falaye writes that:

Understanding African (Nigerian) Weltanschauung requires one to first and foremost, understand the problems and mysteries of the people. African (Nigerian) studies, therefore is that which analyzes the African (Nigerian) mystery, which concerns itself with the way in which African (Nigerian) people of the past and present make sense of their existence, of their destiny, and of the world in which they live, (Falaye, 2003: 28) (The emphasis is mine).

Another advantage of using indigenous scholars is that they are well equipped with the epistemic organization of knowledge with indigenous cultures. This is because they can prefigure and narrate the place of the 'episteme agents' as lived experiences of the people more cognitively than the non-indigenous scholars. The indigenous scholars are more equipped with indigenous languages; they can use the adequate language to retell the lived experiences of the cultures, using dominant indigenous epistemic figurative trope and expression. By using indigenous scholars for deconstruction, it will help eliminate part of the existing influences of dominant epistemological hegemony

and discourses. The manifestation of this will be strong inevitable inclinations towards the certainty of raising other indigenous epistemological foundations. Thus:

We can understand our representational activities ... only by re-describing them in terms of concepts of a total theory of the universe as physical system which, of natural necessity, evolves subsystems which in turn necessarily project increasingly adequate representations of the whole. To put it crudely, we must come to see physical universe as an integrated physical system, which necessarily 'grows knowers' and which thereby comes to mirror itself within itself (Rosenberg, 1974:144).

The use of indigenous languages will give grounds for the understanding of these 'episteme agents,' not as aliens, or secondary forms of existences or knowledge, but as concrete realities. This is because building new epistemological blocks from indigenous perspectives need evidential generation, re-regeneration and representation of knowledge based on using modes in relationship to the world as experienced and explained by the people, to the people as and when lived, through the use of dominant and subordinate narrative structures (language is the primary vehicle for ideological dominance). We may find out how each of the *agents of episteme* and its meanings invested by the people at a certain time in history changed and influenced their perceptions.

Construction phase: This is the stage of trooping, figurations and ordering of knowledge generated from these 'episteme agents'. This is a stage where knowledge needs foundation. Trooping operates at a great depth of human thought, creating meaning through otherness and destroying the dominant models of epistemological imaginations for indigenous superstructures. This is at the heart of the deconstruction project of epistemology. The necessity of this stage is cogent because some foreigners will not be willing to concede that Africans as traditional people and global citizens were unable to present a coherent worldview. There are many things to be considered in the

construction phase. There is need for defining the scope of indigenous knowledge and epistemology such that it must carry moral, ideological and power implications as well as show the principle of rational evidence. In this regard, Oruka noted that:

If African philosophy should vary from its western counterpart, the variation should not be fundamental. African philosophy to some of them is the work of professionally trained Africans in all areas of philosophy. It is desirable that the works be set in some African context but it is not necessary that they do so (Oruka, 1990, 65).

Even though philosophy is a universal discipline which does not need to have the African version, there is an essential aspect of it; it should be a discourse that is culturally based, and as such, ready to solve the problem of indigenous people. Then its geographical relevance is salient to ascertain the soundness and validity within discourses. This is because knowledge can be relative; its necessity is to the service to humanity. Thus, the implication of defining the scope and nature of indigenous knowledge should be done logically without losing the essence of drawing the demarcations between the epistemological boundaries of the African and others. Indigenous scholars should understand that there is background to indigenous epistemological structures which needs to be considered for its own worth. There are three levels of knowledge structure identifiable within indigenous knowledge forms. There is the folk knowledge which mostly is oratorical in transmission. There is also knowledge at the level of symbols and the written and modern forms of indigenous knowledge forms. Not only that, the cultural signatures of metonymy, synecdoche, irony, stylish figures of speech, proverbs, use of traditional axioms and all the uses of expression, should be properly characterized to avoid incoherence. We have to stop using certain axioms such as our people say, our ancestor say, Igbo says, Yoruba says, Efiks says. Let there be more coherence, logicity, consistency, and assertiveness in presenting our researches and their findings. For example, our belief-thought-process should be separated from myths.

In other words, there is need to separate belief from myths; in the case of animal and environmental rights, indigenous scholars should rationalize that the essence of traditional taboo system in the environment of animals of any kind is to preserve nature and not just dwelling on the myth set by ancestors or the gods. Other examples may be in not doing domestic activities in streams of river because it is not good to pollute the water body, and not dwelling on myths of certain kinds. It should be understood that the gods were part of the normative forms of traditional society. There are more examples in this regard. This is the stage of essence and conception, where three essential categories of logic come in to play; the logic of contrastive determinacy, the logic of determination and the logic of determinate individuality.

The construction of indigenous epistemology is an exercise in narrative cognition. This is where all metaphysical and epistemological questions are reduced for simple apprehension. The natural ideas must be retained at this stage, since it is a stage that shows that it comprehends all that applies to the world. To understand indigenous epistemology, there is need to construct and reconstruct one which will address the issues of correspondence or homology between cognitive narratives forms and lived experiences. Thus, Oladipo reverberated;

The new (knowledge structures) philosophy for Africa must be critical and reconstructive. It should be capable of inculcating in a large percentage of the African population those habits of mind such as Habits of exactness and rigours in thinking, the pursuit of systematic coherence and the experimental approach (Oladipo, 1998:17).

Again, Wiredu (1980:41) noted that ‘what is immediately pertinent is to remark that uncritical exhortations to Africans to present their indigenous culture are not particularly useful; indeed, they can be counter-productive’. The importance of reconstruction can be seen in Wiredu’s writings as follows;

There is an urge in need in Africa today for the kind of analysis that would identify and separate the backward aspects of our culture from those aspects worth keeping. Yet the analytical dimension seems to be lacking in their enthusiasm ... the principle of rational thinking is not entirely absent from the thinking of the traditional African ... the quest for development should be viewed as a continuing world-historical process which all people ... are engaged (1980: 41, 42, 43).

There is a need to halt and jettison the old uncritical habits of thoughts, and move ahead of the level of traditional thinking, since it is believed that the primitive always adopt inscrutable ontology. This means that indigenous scholars should work to recover truths, origins, science, and various appeals to knowledge forms, but more importantly, they are to provide an adequate correspondence between words, the world and worldviews.

The project of constructing an indigenous epistemology can employ different methodologies such as narrative, historical, explanatory analytical, critical, hermeneutical and ontological methods. There may be no need to emphasize on methodological orientations, but then there should be a detectable fissure between people and contact with any 'episteme agents'. The free style methodology here simply means the ability to put thoughts down without any standard methodological commitment. What is important is that our thoughts be lucidly expressed and found to be the true picture of the world view we are expressing. Logical analysts believe that the task of philosophy is conceptual analysis, while the integrative school sees the task of philosophy as multi-faceted. They hold that there are different methodologies which are all important (Uduigwomen, 1995:21). The task of philosophy in this project is beyond the restrictions of methodology. This means that free style methodology should be adopted. But then, originality in harnessing its complex ideologies, explicatory knowledge and rethinking of its entire structure and the study of its fundamental issues should be the objective of this project.

This will ensure that ideological implications in indigenous knowledge forms must account for epistemic change in building knowledge blocks. This is a radical benefit of deconstruction and construction to indigenous epistemology, breaking down the barriers of dominant epistemology and rebuilding its form and content, and more essentially, it is a cognitive structure of how we can explain our encounters of knowledge in our lives. By this, we will not only recover the past but also interpret it in our own time and place for ideological purposes.

The most basic hallmark of science must be *correctness* of thought, expression, and execution. Apart from accidental discoveries that can be made by anybody, it is '*epistemological correctness*' that causes discovery, invention and advancement. Freedom merely facilitates the communication and dissemination of discovery and invention (and, naturally, of everything else). Thus, there is need to remove inconsistencies and falsity hidden within the tracks of indigenous knowledge and "each elimination of obscure constructions or notions that we manage to achieve, by paraphrasing into more lucid elements, is a clarification of the conceptual scheme of science" (Rorty, 1979:200). From this, we approach a clearer pattern of canonical notation, its understanding of the structures and lining of 'epistemic agents' which will be useful for practical and experimental knowledge.

Reconstruction phase is a stage of legitimizations of indigenous epistemological structures and accurate evaluation of the development of indigenous human knowledge actions. It is a stage of re-interpretation and re-textualization, by re-evaluating in-between the lines, the several issues (universal or particular, physical or metaphysical, indigenous or alien, objective or subjective, elementary or complex and so on), systems of research and their strategies, origins and history of thought, and their ideological implication. This offers the opportunity for cultivating and establishing authentic African personality which is perceptual, inferential and holistic

(Ekwuru, 199:31-37). This will equip the African scholars with the tools needed to project perspectives and enhance the meanings, teachability, availability and understanding of indigenous epistemology and various knowledge structures. Ozumba (2003: 11) noted that:

All attempts at philosophizing become reconstructive- putting every experience to a positive use in other to achieve a more serene world. This proposal may be utopic, far-fetched and an outright impossibility. The idea here is to affect a revolution at the spirit level of our (indigenous) philosophical discourse.

Reconstruction offers valuable opportunity to mine original, deep and provocative explanations, thought patterns, schools and trends of thought offered by indigenous scholars. This could be done at an individual level, preferring the general level of explanation covering many other knowledge platforms, perspective and forming schools of thought. This gives room for classification and categorization in indigenous knowledge and thought patterns, and an opportunity to compare and contrast their ideologies and philosophies. The logic here is that reconstruction is the stage where analysis of already constructed indigenous knowledge forms and epistemology yields their epistemic products in which it is written. For example, within the history of modern philosophy, the reconstruction stage saw to the classification of the scholars of those periods as British empiricists (Locke, Berkeley and Hume) and continental rationalists (to include; Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz). It is a formal aspect of creating a systematic study of reality which provides the conceptual structure for a non-metaphysical interpretation of reality. It is the stage of objectivity and innovation purified by phenomenology and formulated without any reference to concepts of abstractions from reality. The logic here proceeds to generate categories of thought. This creates a multiplicity effect through re-engineering of thought yielding into epistemic social infrastructure and super-structures of knowledge blocks. This will only be achieved when already constructed knowledge forms are geared towards organizations and re-organizations of the contents of past writers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The relevance of the study on ‘episteme agents’ is numerous: it interrogated critically the understanding of the relationship and interconnectedness of humans and the natural environment (‘episteme agents’) for indigenous knowledge forms and structures. It enables the development of indigenous epistemological structures and bodies of knowledge that add to the scholarly world in Africa. It is also a meaningful task to re-create our world, grooming a more rational attitude to understanding reality from a more related (indigenous) perspective. This study enhances the understanding of related disciplines such as environmental philosophy and ethics. It ultimately enhances proper analysis of our cultural values, attitudes and formulates cognitive attitude that will ground a more harmonious way of understanding our relationships, world and natural environment.

We can neither shy away from nor rely extensively on the orientations of others, with regard to understanding these ‘episteme agents’. The need for their studies becomes immanent, and based on this, we make the following recommendations. The study of ‘epistemic agents’ is necessary:

- (i) To address the fundamental role of indigenous language in representing epistemic agents. This paper advocated for an epistemic linguistic change that will birth indigenous language autonomy.
- (ii) To enlighten African scholars on the necessity for the shift from dominant knowledge, cultural/linguistic procedures to develop African narratives and rescue them from the long primeval silence.
- (iii) This paper encourages academic groups to participate more actively in the apprehension of the educational developmental needs of the continent, through the use of indigenous linguistic phenomenological toolkits in researching on the ‘episteme agents’. It is worthy to note that there is need to recognize the importance of researches

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dealing with rural, cultural and regional centres, as they are of primary significance in addressing societal problems.

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IWA AND OMOLUABI: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE YORUBA ETHICAL CONCEPTS ON RAPE CULTURE

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Abstract

Despite the inherent nature of a human being to explore and experience his own sexuality, it remains one of the least discussed subjects in the circles of humanity. The perceived sacredness and secrecy of sexuality-related discourse among the African societies have led to gross inabilities to effectively study and relate the influences of cultures on African sexuality. However, the increasing prevalence of the mass media (including social media) has led to a massive awareness of sexuality and its attendant consequences in our societies. Increase in the occurrence of gender-based violence, such as rape, is an indication of a widespread moral decadence and flagrant disregard for human basic rights. Nigeria, being a socio-centric society, places an onus of shame on rape victims, which prevents the victims of such violence from opening up about their traumas, with perpetrators going further to commit greater offences leading to more breakdowns of law and order. Hence, it is imperative to utilise socio-cultural approaches to demystify the problem of sexual violence in Nigeria. This paper philosophically analyses the ethical and deontological perceptions of the Yoruba society on sexual violence. These include the preventive structures embedded in the Yoruba culture to curtail sexual violence and misdemeanours and the attendant consequences of perpetrating sexual violence. This paper also recommends

the indigenous Yoruba society paradigms of altruism and critical appraisals of the omoluabi and iwa ethos, as evident in the Yoruba Ifa corpus and general ways of life, as panacea for the prevailing incidence of rape culture in the Nigerian society. This is because the Yoruba ethical concepts of altruism, omoluabi and Iwa are thoroughly against social vices in the human societies.

Keywords: Rape, omoluabi ethics, altruism, iwa ethics, Yoruba society, sexual violence

Introduction

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria brought about a great awareness of the consequent realities of the pandemic and its attendant government policies such as the “stay at home” order. There was a massive increase in the occurrence and reportage of sexual violence and rape, which makes many to wonder if it has silently been a part and parcel of our society, or it is just becoming a national issue of concern due to the wide-spread influences and easy accessibility of the social mass media. The numerous unsettling stories of rape, ranging from the rape of minors, the elderly, people with mental disabilities, women and even the male gender have been a cause of concern, questioning the moral sanctity, norms and values of our society. The recent surge in the occurrence of rape in Nigeria places a great moral burden on our ethical standings and places the society in an ethical peril. Rape legal cases are reported, people are incarcerated, shocking statistics released, campaigns against sexual abuse and rape held, but each day brings with it even more horrendous cases of sexual violations such as gang rapes and the rape of infants.

Rape is a multi-dimensional socio-cultural problem with different complexities in its social, moral and philosophical considerations. There had been great difficulty in giving a definite definition to the concept of rape. The concept is considered controversial and the different definitions often considered unsatisfying (Scully, 1994;

Smith, 2004 and Rowland, 2004). Similarly, it is generally accepted that rape is an underestimated social challenge due to its under-reportage and the societal stigma attached to the victims (Groth and Birnbaum, 2004; Miller, 2004 and Rowland, 2004). The problem of rape is made more complex by the myths that are embedded in its analyses (Ward, 1995 and Benedict, 1993), and it is an established fact that despite the massive awareness and acknowledgement of the prevalence of rape in our society, rape culture is still subtly encouraged and little to nothing is sincerely done to address this menace. These facts further raise socio-religio-cultural questions as to the philosophy and psychology of rape and how far the Nigerian varying cultures address it. The “façade” attempts made at the debates on rape are masked by what du Toit (2005:256) calls “the institutional ‘normalisation’ of rape, whereby rape is officially illegal but officially tolerated. Hence, rape exists as a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon with broad implications for the general social well-being of a society- Nigerian, African and the global society.

The polarizing nature of the issues of sexual violence and rape, since its recognition as a crime and destructive form of victimization, has been an issue of socio-philosophical discourse (Kristine, 2016). Although this type of crime was not openly discussed, research has provided a greater understanding of the offence, its devastating effects and the social forces that continue to create an ecosystem where it can thrive (Roni, 2011). This ecosystem exists as a place where significant numbers of people are sexually assaulted, victims often feel silenced, and when they do speak, their voices frequently fall on deaf ears. Rape myths continue to dominate the dialogue about sexual assault, and they also tend to place blame on those who have been victimized. According to a research study on the role of communication in perpetuating rape culture, Burnett *et al* (2009) provide a number of examples of rape myths. For instance, if a woman says “no,” she really means “yes;” women are strong enough to resist rape; women who get raped are promiscuous; and women tend to falsely report rape cases. Further, rape culture is created when victims are challenged

about what they were wearing at the time of the incident, what/how much they were drinking, and with whom they chose to spend their time. Victim blaming, then, emphasizes the victim's supposed role in the rape and places responsibility on her/him.

The harsh realities of the prevalence of rape in today's Nigerian society no longer only raise the question of whether rape has been with us since or it is just becoming evident due to the prevalence of the social media, but it further raises mind-boggling questions on what can be sincerely done, individually and collectively, to address this social ill. The present-day Nigeria is where our daughters and sons are not safe and no one could entirely trust close family relatives to take custody of their children. It is well documented and widely accepted that rape causes severe physical and psychological pain and suffering. Further, it is undisputed that rape can have serious physical, psychological and reproductive consequences for the victims, including death, unwanted pregnancies, complications in childbirth, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. The Nigerian government compounds these acts of torture by failing to exercise due diligence in bringing perpetrators to justice and by failing to offer victims (particularly women and girls) any form of redress or reparation. The prevalence of issues of extreme paedophilic behaviours, sexual violence and assault of teenagers and even the rape of the aged and the vulnerable place the lives of every citizen in perpetual danger and fear of violent death. As suggested by Olowu and Erero (1995), addressing this panacea of sexual abuse and rape in the Nigerian society requires a solution deeply rooted in the country's systems, structure, values and culture. This implies that only a local solution can alleviate or mitigate a locally adapted problem.

This paper particularly suggests that in order to have a final institutional framework that will provide the needed panacea for Nigeria's sexual abuse and rape issues, it is essential to learn and explore the nation's valuable cultures, ethos and indigenous institutions which have been proven to effectively cater for the welfare

of the local people, even in the face of the failure of modern government to improve the lives of citizens. These ethos, cultures and norms are well represented and similar across various tribes in Nigeria, and they have been pointed out as major pillars in maintaining law and order before the advent of the Whites (Olowu and Erero, 1995 and Okunmadewa *et al.*, 2005). The perception and institutional understanding of local people, in particular, matter and the indicators of governance need to be redefined to reflect the expectations of local stakeholders, as well as their culture and norms (Olowu and Erero, 1995). Hence, it is imperative to utilise socio-cultural approaches to demystify the problem of sexual violence in Nigeria. This paper philosophically analyses the ethical and deontological perceptions of the Yoruba society on sexual violence. This includes the preventive structures embedded in the Yoruba culture to curtail sexual violence and misdemeanours and the attendant consequences of perpetrating sexual violence.

Rape: A Hidden Mountain

The word “rape”, from the Latin verb “*rapere*”, means 'to seize or take by force'. It is a forced, unwanted sexual intercourse; it is sometimes also called sexual assault, which can happen to both men and women of any age (Medhelp, 2008). Rape is perceived by many people as a sexual act. However, although rape involves sexual acts, it is motivated by the desire for power and control over another person, rather than by sexual attraction or the desire for sexual gratification. In other words, rape is a crime of violence (Omoera, 2004). Rape also occurs when someone forces or tricks another person into unwanted sexual activity, even if actual physical violence is not involved (Medhelp, 2008). Rape is a form of social deviancy which varies from one country to another; it changes overtime. Bourke (2001) argues that there is nothing timeless or random about rape; it is not a metaphor for the ruin of a city or nation; it is not an environmental disaster, but it is the embodied violation of another person. Bourke (2001) further describes rape as a felony in which a person is forced to have sexual intercourse without giving consent. Although reports by

non-governmental organizations, some police records, statements by state prosecutors and media reports indicate that rape in the family, the community, and by the police and security forces occurs on an alarming scale, lack of comprehensive official statistics makes it difficult to establish accurately its true scale. The lack of comprehensive official figures also makes it difficult to assess the extent of direct state involvement in perpetrating gender-based violence against women, or state failure to prosecute and punish perpetrators of rape. Some countries substitute the term 'aggravated sexual assault' for rape. Many countries include homosexual rape, incest, and other sex offences in the definition of rape. Cooper (2000) asserts that rape is most often motivated by extreme anger toward the victim or a need to overpower the victim. The motive is rarely sexual and violence is always involved. Forced sex is intended to abuse, humiliate and dehumanize the victim. Liebling, Sleggh and Ruratotoye (2012) observe that in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), women and girls bearing children from rape is a poorly understood subject area, as a majority of the people hardly appreciates the underlying causes and consequences of sexual violence, and their impact on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Rape is also seen as sexual intercourse with a woman by a man without her consent and chiefly by force or deception (SmarterSex, 2010). However, there are many rumoured or even reported cases of men who have been raped in contemporary societies, including Nigeria.

The concept of rape, both as abduction and in the sexual sense, made its first historical appearance in early religious texts. Rape culture is a concept of unknown origin and of uncertain definition; yet it has made its way into everyday vocabulary and is assumed to be commonly understood. The award-winning documentary film, *Rape Culture*, made by Margaret Lazarus in 1975 takes credit for first defining the concept. The film's narration relies heavily on jargon such as 'rapism' and 'phallogocentric society' and is more illustrative than definitive in dealing with rape as depicted in movies, music, and other forms of entertainment. Authors of the popular '*Transforming a Rape Culture*'

define the phenomenon as a “complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women ... a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent” (Buchwald and Roth, 1993).

Characterizing Rape Situations in the Nigerian Society

According to the African adage that says “self-awareness is the first step towards getting cured of madness”, characterizing the rape phenomenon in the Nigerian society is the essential in the journey to addressing the menace. Day by day, there arise new cases of rape, taking several dimensions and with several premises. At times, the premises surrounding a rape situation makes it difficult to make conclusion of the occurrence as rape. Hence, justice is subverted, undelivered or misguided in such situations. Generally, rape situations in the Nigerian society can be classified either as:

- **Forcible Date Rape:** This rather refers to “acquaintance” or “friend” rape, involving a non-consensual sexual activity between people who are friends or even people who have an existing romantic relationship, where consent for sexual activities is not given, outright, or is given under compulsion (Mosadomi, 2008).
- **Blitz Rape:** The rape suspect is not familiar with the victim. No contact has been previously established and it is also called stranger rape.
- **Group Rape:** This is also referred to as “gang rape”, where more than one person has a non-consensual sexual activity with the victim. The victim might be more than one also. However, it must be established that more than one person had sexual contact with the victim.
- **Incestual Rape:** This form of rape is incest, and is committed by the child's parents or close relatives, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles. It is considered incestuous in nature, but not in that form when committed by other elders, such as priests, nuns

or other religious authorities, school teachers, or therapists, to name a few, on whom the child is dependent.

- **Statutory Rape:** This refers to sexual activity in which the victim is below the age-of-consent. Unfortunately, the Nigerian age-of-sexual consent is a subject of controversy, as the Nigerian constitution is not expressly clear on it, whether it stands at 11years or 18years.
- **Prison Rape:** Many rapes happen in prison. These rapes are virtually always homosexual in nature (since prisons are separated by sex). These acts are mostly committed by people who were not homosexual before their imprisonment (FIDA, 2006). The attacker is usually another inmate, but prison guards may also be involved.
- **Bottle Rape:** This involved coerced sexual penetration with a foreign object.
- **War Rape:** Rape is usually used during wars, armed raids and military interventions as psychological warfare tools to humiliate the enemies. The Nigerian society is frequently occasioned with several reports of war rapes. Examples of such are rapes during military invasions of Ugborodo community in Delta State (2002), Odi community in Bayelsa State (1999), Choba community in Rivers State (1999), among many local invasions which are unreported or left unattended to.
- **Spousal Rape:** This is also known as marital rape, and till date is vastly regarded as impossible and non-consequential by the Nigerian populace. The African culture does not regard a forceful sexual intercourse between a woman and her husband as an act of rape (Kolawole, 1999), and it is believed that sex is a spouse's (emphasis on husband) right in marriage, and "grabbing" of such can never be regarded as assault. In many countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Malawi, to mention a few, it is not possible to commit the crime of rape against one's own wife or husband. Spousal rape is often accompanied with spouse abuse, domestic violence and retributory murders.

Iwa Omoluabi: The Socio-Philosophical Character Formation

The concept of virtue is one of the fundamental socio-philosophical cascades, as it deals with the ability to judge actions with regard to appropriate actions at a given time. *Omólúàbí*, the Yoruba term that mostly describes the theory of virtue ethics, presents a model (template) to compare individual characters with expected socially acceptable characters. Hence, the *Omólúàbí* ethics serves as a mirror to reflect the deficiency of human characters. The concept of *Omólúàbí* signifies courage, humility, respect, strength, worth, moral excellence, wisdom, as well as moral goodness (Bosede and Folake, 2019:1). *Omólúàbí*, an adjectival Yoruba phrase with "Omo + ti + Olu-iwa + bi" as the components, can be literally translated as a "child born by the chief of character", and such a child is expected to be exactly as his father (Wande, 1975). A Yoruba adage says: "*Omo Ajanaku kin ya ara, omo ti eya ba bi, eya ni njo*", meaning that "an elephant's child can never be dwarf, a child born by eya (bush animal) will surely resemble eya". Hence, the son of the "Iwa Chief" is expected by the society to be just like his father in terms of impeccable characters, which are expressed in several ways such as (Akanibi and Jekayinfa, 2016) *ọ̀rọ̀ síṣọ̀* (spoken word), *ìteríba* (respect), *inú rere* (having a good mind towards others), *òtító* (truth), *ìwà* (good character), *akinkanjú* (bravery), *isẹ* (hard work), and *ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀ pípé* (intelligence). The end of Yoruba traditional education is to make every individual "Omoluabi". To be "Omoluabi" is to be of good character. That is why the goal of Yoruba traditional education has always been to foster strong character in the individual and to prepare each person to become a useful member of the community (Jekayinfa, 2016:13).

The *Omólúàbí* concept is an encompassing one that determines the morality and the immorality of an act in Yoruba society in Africa, and *Iwa* (good character) is the sum total, the center core of the child begotten of Iwa chief. This is evident in the Yoruba oracle corpus on *Iwa*, *Ogbe otura*:

Orisa lo se laa ni feere - It is Obatala who made pawpaw like trumpet

O se enu re dududu - He made the mouth of the trumpet systematically

Komo araye o le maa ri n fon - For all humans to use for rhythm

Difa fun Orunmila - made Ifa reading for Orunmila

Baba n lo ree gbe Iwa niyawo - He wanted to marry Iwa (character)

Ebo ni woni ko wa se - a sacrifice was prescribed for him

O gbebo mbe o rubo - He made ebo as prescribed

Nje Alara o riwa n mi? - King Alara did you find/see Iwa(character)

Iwa la n wa o Iwa - We are in search of Iwa(character)

Ajero o riwa n mi? - King Ajero did you find/see Iwa(character)?

Iwa la n wa o Iwa - We are in search of Iwa(character)

Owaran-gun o riwa n mi? - King Owaran-gun did you find or see my wife?

Beeyan lowo laye - If one is rich in life

Bi o niwa owo olowo ni - If he doesn't have good character the riches will be lost

Iwa la n wa o Iwa - We are in search of Iwa(character)

Beeyan nire gbogbo - If one has all blessings in life

Bi o niwa ire onire ni - If he lacks good character all the blessings will vanish

Orunmila, often associated with divine knowledge by the Yoruba society, was described to have married Iwa (character) as a wife. However, due to his recklessness, he lost Iwa and things went wrong with him. He made divinations and he was instructed to make a sacrifice. However, despite the prayers and sacrifices offered, things did not get right with Orunmila. He was advised to look for his wife, Iwa - virtue - and until then will life not be good with him. This is a pointer to the fact that the Yoruba society believes that a man without virtue is living an unworthy life.

The Yoruba also attribute the disorderliness in our society to lack of *Iwa* virtues (Makinde, 2007:306):

Aimowa hu ni ko je ki aye gun

Ologbon ni eni ti o ti ko eko ogbon mimowahu.

Ogberi ni eni ti ko ko ogbon

This meaning that “it is want of knowledge of right conduct that has made the world a horrible place to live in. He is a wise man, who has studied the possession of the act of good, moral conduct. He who has not done so is a novice”. The Yoruba believe that wherever there is one problem or the other, the people involved are short of virtues and they are deemed ignorant. Similarly, the following maxims on *Iwa* reveal the esteemed position virtue occupies in the Yoruba society:

- (i) Ìwá l’esin (character is the ultimate religion) (Abimbola, 1977: 155)
- (ii) Ìwá l’ewa (character is a person’s beauty)
- (iii) Ìwá l’óbá awure (character is the best mystical protections)
- (iv) Ìwá rere lèsó èni’òn, ehin funfun lèsó èrin (Just as white teeth enhance a laugh, so does a good character befit a person) (Abraham, 1970).

Iwa: Peace in the Chaotic World of Rape

The ontological analysis of *eniyan* (man) and existence in traditional Yoruba thought system makes it vivid that we exist in an imperfect world ruled by multiplicity of good and evil forces, with forces influence and man, at the centre of the muddle. Man is vulnerable and the law of reciprocity prevails in men’s societies. These socio-cultural assumptions make the Yoruba society to hinge morality or appropriate mode of behaviour on the doctrine of Ìwàpèlé (Abimbola, 1975; Fayemi, 2009). *Iwa*, a core of *Omoluabi*, is a character that abhors aggressiveness as a mode of relations (Oladipo, 2002). Traditionally, the attitude of mind exhibited in *Iwa* manifests and is demonstrated in various ways, among which are the observance of taboo and right doing. In terms of taboos, the Yoruba society forbids recklessness and impunity. This is reflected in various Yoruba proverbs such as:

“*Sise sise lo nmu ewure, ti o fin s’oko iya ewure,*

Sise sise lo nmu agutan ti o fin gun iya e”

(It is a misdeed and an unfortunate act to have forbidden sexual relationship.)

“*Idimere so igi gun, ki o ma baa gungi aladi”*

(The chimpanzee should be careful of what tree to climb, lest he climb the ant-infested tree)

The Yoruba concepts of *Iwa* and *Omoluabi* campaign against reckless behaviours, as it is believed that every behaviour has consequences. These consequences are both spiritual and social. In fact, an essential quality among Ifa initiates is the mental discipline to be moderate and never over-indulge in any matter (Ilawole, 2006). Hence, an *Omoluabi* is expected to shy away from any act that might bring disrepute to his name and lineage. Rape (*Ifipa ba ni sun, Ifipa ba ni lopo, Ibalopo nipa etan*) is considered a social ill that is a taboo in the Yoruba society, with attendant consequences to both parties. Hence, the victim is expected by the Yoruba society to stay away from any act or association that might make him/her vulnerable to rape, and the perpetrator is expected to be severely punished. However, they, in no way, address the placement of burden of guilt on the victim.

Curbing Rape through *Eko Ile*

Eko ile (home training) is a fundamental part of the Yoruba family. It is the means through which family and societal values are inculcated into the young ones. It is considered as an inherent parental responsibility which should be shared by members of the entire community. The Yoruba society does not consider the *eko ile* as a duty solely reserved for the parents alone; rather, any member of the society (*Omoluabi*) is expected to share in this sacerdotal duty. A character-deficient person, either adult or juvenile, is regarded as lacking home training, and the blame is either put on the parents, community, individual, or all as a whole. *Eko ile* can be informal or formal and it cover cultural greetings and actions, decency in language and dressing, respect for the elderly, knowledge of cultural norms and practices, history of a persons' clan and family structure, riddles, stories and proverbs that teach wisdom, vocational choices and communality; all of which are reflected in sexuality. Informally, it takes the forms of storytelling, gossips and conversations, and folk songs. Formally, sexuality education is carried out through cultural

practices in plays, dances and arts, cultural beliefs, taboos, religious practices, and involvements in various performances (Olaniyan, 2016).

Eko ile, as an indoctrination, begins from the home and in the long run defines the morality of an individual. This is evident from maxims such as “*Bibiire ko se fi owo ra, bibiire ni ibi omoluabi*” (You cannot pay to be born in a virtuous home, birth/background is the foundation of being *Omoluabi*). Family upbringing fundamentally anchored on strict observance of taboos is the common character-moulding attribute expected from all would-be *Omoluabi* (Oyebade and Azenabor, 2018:12). These taboos cut across all strata of human endeavours; hence, all families and the community at large strive to align with the order. Therefore, “nothing mortifies a Yoruba more than to say that his child is ‘*àbiikó*’ (a child that is born but not taught, that is, a badly brought up child). A child is better *àkóogbà* (a child that is taught but does not learn), where the responsibility is that of the child and not his parents” (Awoniyi, 1975). The modern parents do not have time to inculcate *Iwa* into their children as expected of the Yoruba society. Hence, we have many misguided juvenile, youths and adults who behave as they deem fit, against the fundamental Yoruba *Omoluabi* ethos. Likewise, the erosion of our culture of neighbourhood by the Western culture of individualism has led to a massive disruption in the administration of *Eko ile*, as neighbours will rather keep quiet and look away than discipline another man’s child. Hence, this paper is of high opinion that bringing back *Eko ile* as a part and parcel of our society, as practised by the Yoruba society, will go a long way to shaping the philosophical outlook of individuals on the subject of rape. *Eko ile*, as an indigenous model, is an ideal of character development for individuals, state actors and societies at large, and helps to inculcate *Iwa omoluabi* which is fundamental to a safe living.

Rapist: Looking into The *Ifa* Corpus

An academic inquiry into the stand of *Ifa* corpus on rape indicated that little was actually said about it, despite many *Odu ifa* on sexuality and sexual orientations. The Yoruba *Ifa* divinity in a verse of *Odu Ika turupon* gave an insight into the divinity on rape and sexual abuse. The verse in *Ika turupon* goes thus:

Ori omode ko wo koto (a child's head cannot enter a calabash)

Ika tio ba wo idi alabahun ko tun jade mo (a finger stuck in the tortoise shell never escapes)

A fi l'aju eyin (except when you apply the hot charcoal)

Lo difa fun Agberowoye olori ode (Makes divinity for Agberowoye, the chief hunter)

O ri arewa obinrin ninu odan ti o fe fi s'aya (He saw a pretty lady in the forest, he wishes to marry her)

Awon agba ni ki o pa eran ki o fi tu loju (the elders asked him to appease her with bush meat)

Agberowoye ko, o ni ko je o (Agberowoye refused and said the lady did not accept him)

Lo ba d'ebu ti arewa l'oke odo (he laid ambush for the damsel on the way to the river)

Agberowoye ba fi ipa gba ibale re (He forcefully disvirgined the lady)

Ode, ki lo de ti o fi ipa gba ibale re (Hunter, why did you rape her?)

Agbon se, Ikamudu se (He bluntly denied)

Agberowoye bura niwaju orisa (Agberowoye swore an oath of innocence before the deity)

Nkan omokunrin ko ba de mo (His manhood hence stayed erect and refused to soften)

Agberowoye ba wo'nu igbe o ri alabahun (He entered into the forest and saw a tortoise)

Lo ba gba ibale alabahun (He raped the tortoise)

Ika tio ba wo idi alabahun ko tun jade mo (a finger stuck in the tortoise shell never escapes)

Agberowoye di oko alabahun (Agberowoye was stuck to the tortoise)

This *Ifa* corpus, which was the only explicit corpus on rape, relayed that though, there were no direct spiritual consequences to rape, the

social consequence are disgrace and embarrassment. Likewise, the Yoruba believe that sexual intercourse involves exchange of energies between the parties involved; hence, having an indiscriminate sex can lead to series of spiritual implications.

Conclusion

Rape, being a multi-dimensional phenomenon, requires aggressive multi-dimensional approaches to curb it in the Nigerian society. As much as the government tends to be combative in addressing this social ill, this paper preaches the proactive measure of inculcating the Yoruba ethos of *Iwa omoluabi* into the people, as this will form a basis for positive character formation. An *Omoluabi* will not rape; *Omoluabi* will not sexually abuse, as he/she has been nurtured to see crime against a fellow human as a taboo. The *Eko ile* component of *Omoluabi* ethos will go a long way in building adults who will acknowledge that, indeed, a good name is more than gold or silver. Imbibing the *Omoluabi* cascade of character formation in Nigeria will build a society that will shun systemic and surface decadence. This paper argues for the indoctrination of the Yoruba *Iwa omoluabi* in our children by involving it in civic educations in institutions of learning, and encouraging families to embrace spending time together. Prevention is surely better and cost effective than cure.

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: IGBO-NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has had far-reaching effects on the whole of humanity. It brought about several changes in people's lifestyles. Even though it is a problem that has affected the whole world, this article concentrated on the Igbo people of Nigeria. The Igbo race loves communing and identifying with one another, both in moments of joy and sorrow. They love visiting one another, sharing their experiences and encouraging one another. Families come together to celebrate. But the coronavirus has constituted a barrier to this way of life. For example, Covid-19 dismantled this family relationship, especially during the quarantine period. The emphasis of the Covid-19 protocol is on isolation. People are to be on their own. Families are not to mingle with other families. This has caused anxiety, fear, stress, conflicts, abuse, etc. Families have been affected morally, psychologically, emotionally, financially, etc. Therefore, this paper, using expository and analytical methods, looked at the areas that the family has been affected. Finally, suggestions were made on how best to respond in this kind of situation.

Keywords: Impact, Covid-19, family, relationship, Igbo-Nigerian perspective

Introduction

There is no doubt, as affirmed by many, that the world will no longer remain the same after the menace of Covid-19 in this our generation.

Things have already started changing, some of the changes are positive, while others are problematic and negative. The attack of Covid-19 as has been accepted worldwide originated from China, precisely in Wuhan, a city in the Hubei province of China. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a pandemic in March, 2020. According to some medical personnel, coronaviruses are mostly common in certain species of animals, such as cattle and camels. According to them, its transmission from animals to humans is rare, but this new strain likely came from bats, though one study suggests that pangolins may be the origin. They are not really sure the particular animal it came from. Therefore, it remains unclear exactly how the virus first spread to humans.

According to the report made by WHO, on the 30th of March, 2021, “We have not yet found the source of the virus, and we must continue to follow the science and leave no stone unturned as we do, said Dr Tedros. Finding the origin of a virus takes time and we owe it to the world to find the source so we can collectively take steps to reduce the risk of this happening again.”⁸

It is called Covid-19 because it started in December, 2019. This disease rapidly spread all over the world in a very short period of time. Covid-19 has affected and damaged different areas of our lives. The unprepared lockdown had massive impacts on the lives of many family relationships. Many homes were shattered, marriages broken, relationships destroyed, lives lost, abuses taking place, etc. In this paper, we shall concentrate on the positive and negative effects of Covid-19 on family relationships among the Igbo tribe of Nigeria.

⁸ WHO, 2021, “WHO calls for further studies, data on origin of SARS-CoV-2 virus, reiterates that all hypotheses remain open” Available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/30-03-2021-who-calls-for-further-studies-data-on-origin-of-sars-cov-2-virus-reiterates-that-all-hypotheses-remain-open?> Accessed 12/05/20 21.

Who are the Igbo People?

Before explaining who the Igbo people are, the paper gives a clue on the meaning of the word 'Igbo'. Indeed, some scholars have tried to explore the etymology of the nomenclature 'Igbo'. This is to offer clues to their origins and common cultural identity, even though this paper is not going to dwell on that. M.D. Jeffreys, for example, argues that "Igbo" means "forest dwellers" or the indigenous inhabitants of the forest region, whereas C. Ifemesia postulates that it is associated with the ancient Igbo people (Ndi-gbo) who lived in the forest region. In his own contribution, M. Onwuejeogwu maintains that the concept "Igbo" simply means "a community of people" who shared common values and ideas⁹.

The Igbo people, occasionally referred to as Ibos, are the oriental people of Nigeria. They are the third-largest ethnic group in Nigeria. Their indigenous language is also called Igbo. The native Igbo states in Nigeria are Anambra, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu States. "The Igbo people also occupy more than 25% of the population of Rivers and Delta States"¹⁰ located in Southeastern Nigeria, with a total land of about 15,800 square miles (about 41,000 square kilometres). Igbo people are socially and culturally diverse. They have many interesting customs and traditions, with a population of over 40 million throughout Nigeria. They consist of many subgroups. Although they live in scattered groups of villages, they all speak one language and different dialects. The one language makes it easier for them to understand one another. Igbo tribe is one of the biggest and most influential tribes in Nigeria. They are well-known for their entrepreneurial endeavours, both within Nigeria and around the

⁹ John N. Oriji, (2011). *Political Organization in Nigeria since the Late Stone Age: A History of the Igbo People*. Palgrave Macmillan, USA. Pg. 5.

¹⁰ Osita Fabian Chinedu (2020). "Impact of Covid-19 on the survival of Igbo owned businesses in Nigeria: the nexus" *International Journal of Financial, Accounting, and Management (IJFAM)* ISSN: 2656-3355, Vol 2, No 2, P.123.

world.¹¹ In the midst of the so many interesting things to say about the Igbo people, the paper is concerned with an aspect of the Igbo tribe, which is their family relationship and how Covid-19 has affected it. Therefore, the paper will discuss the concept of family first, its relationship and effects.

Igbo Concept of the Family

Believing that, universally, the family is an institution cherished by every culture, so, it is applicable to the Igbo people. The Igbo tribe sees the family as a very important institution in the lives of its people. All relationships, according to Igbo culture, emanate from the family. Igbo people have what is called immediate or nuclear family. There are also the polygamous family, which was common in the South-East in the past, and the extended family. The immediate family consists of the man, who is the husband/father, the woman who is the wife/mother and the children. Part of the immediate family also includes the man's servants, and other dependants.

The polygamous family setting involves one man with multiple wives: "Polygamy is part of Igbo culture and is well accepted and acknowledged by our people as a man's legitimate right, if he so chooses to have multiple women as mothers in his household",¹² while

¹¹ Adejoke Adeboyejo (2018), "An Introduction to Nigeria's Igbo People" in Culture trip. Available at <http://theculturetrip.com>Africa>Nigeria>. Accessed 14/05/2021

¹² UIU-LA (2018). "Igbo Family Structure". Available at <https://www.uiulosangeles.org>post>the -igbo-family-structure>. Accessed 16/05/2021.

Umu Igbo Unite- Los Angeles Chapter ("UIU-LA"), chartered in April 2017 is a local chapter of the national Umu Igbo Unite organization, and the first chapter on the west coast. Umu Igbo Unite is a U.S.-based, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that consists of a wide range of professionals and college students of Nigerian Igbo heritage who reside in the United States. UIU-LA was created to bring Igbo

the extended family comprises, as the name implies, the immediate or nuclear family and all the in-laws, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, stepbrothers and stepsisters, etc. Most often, the extended family is a strong support for each member of the household. This is because some members of the nuclear or polygamous family may not be so rich, some might have lost their husbands or wives, in which case some children may be orphans, etc. But among the extended family, there might be persons that are capable of taking care of the above-mentioned persons, which brings to fulfillment the popular Igbo saying that “*Igwe bu Ike*” (which means that there is power in number). Part of the meaning of ‘*igwe bu ike*’ implies the high value which Igbo people place on the extended family setting.

In as much as every member is important in the family, the father remains the head of the family. Three considerations are to be considered for further understanding of Igbo family life. These are the three kinds of family settings that are common among the Igbo people. The various family members have the specific responsibilities they carry out in the family. Such responsibilities are enumerated below: The father represents and speaks on behalf of the family in public forums. It is his responsibility to cultivate, grow, and develop the family wealth and resources. He serves as the family priest and spiritual leader and teacher of Igbo culture and traditions to members of his household. It is the father’s responsibility to lead by example, correct deviant members of the family when they go wrong, and provide for the needs of his household. The mother’s role is that of inspiring and fuelling the father with ideas to move the household forward towards progress and development. She is expected to preserve the family wealth and resources. It is the responsibility of the

youths and professionals together, establish a sense of community and educate members about the rich Igbo culture, while giving back to local communities and ensuring the younger Igbo generation in LA have role models to emulate.

mother to set and uphold standards of morality and purity in the family. She has to make the household homely and comfortable for every member of the family, including occasional visitors. Finally, it is her duty to love the father and children of the house, cook their meals, especially when the children are still very young. It is also her duty to maintain the cleanliness of the home. For the children, according to Igbo culture and tradition, children and dependants are expected to serve and remain under the mentorship of father and/or mother. Male children and dependants are supposed to be under the mentorship of the father, while the females are supposed to be under the mentorship of the mother.¹³

Igbo Family Relationships

The Igbo people love being with one another. They love staying together, eating and drinking together. They love celebrating themselves. They hold many festivities and cultural performances, which bring them often together, such as, new yam festival (iri ji ohuru), annual masquerade festivities (igba mmanwu), burial rites, iwa akwa festival, ekpe festival, the famous August break celebration for women and other social gatherings. Few of the listed festivities will be briefly explained. They travel far and wide to attend these ceremonies.

Yam Festival: This is mostly celebrated between August and October. Many Igbo sons and daughters travel back home to celebrate their annual yam festival. The essence of this celebration is to “officially present the newly harvested yams to God and the ancestors of the land. The festival is also an avenue to thank God for sustaining the life of the farmers, the indigenes of the land and the farm product (yam) through a successful planting season.”¹⁴ Masquerades come out

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mazi Ogbonna (2019). “The most important and celebrated festivals in. Igbo Land”. Available at <http://www.ekwendigbo.com>ar-aa>entertainment>item>. Accessed 17/05/2021.

whenever there are serious festivals like those mentioned in this paper and more.

Today when people are celebrating, they will invite soldiers or police to guard the place to make sure that there is peace and order. Masquerades were used for such purposes in the past. “While entertaining through dances and exhibiting extra-human feats, the masquerades would walk up to certain individuals and loudly expose any bad habits, crimes or misbehaviour of that person. As people would always take corrections from these exposures, the masquerades were effective in keeping up with traditional norms and values in the communities”.¹⁵

Iwa Akwa: This is an initiation into manhood. This is one of the most beautiful Igbo festivities. It is celebrated on every 3-years interval. It is a cultural heritage of the people of Imo State. It is mainly celebrated in Obowo Local Government Area of Imo State. The initiation is also held in other neighbouring towns like Ihitte /Uboma, Ehime Mbano, parts of Ahiazu Mbaise and other communities. Iwa Akwa takes place between the ages of 26-30 years. After the initiation, members are then eligible to pay taxes, partake in communal discussions and decision making of the community. The essence of this ceremony is to give the young men who have gone into the initiation to manhood the opportunity to make their contributions in social, cultural and political affairs of the community. In this stage of life, they can now sit with elders, wine, dine, discuss issues as they affect the community and suggest solutions. This affirms the Igbo saying that ‘nwata kwo aka, osoro okenye rie nri’; meaning that if a child washes his hands clean, he joins the elders to eat. Having made these preliminary discussions, the paper now discusses how Covid-19 has affected the above relationships among the Igbo people.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Impact of Covid -19 on Family Relationships

As of today, there is less tension as regards Covid-19 compared to 2020 and early 2021. The concern of this paper is to analyse the effect of Covid-19 on the Igbo family relationship during the lockdown in Nigeria. There was so much emphasis on the compulsory staying at home of everyone in order to decrease the chances of getting and spreading the virus. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended and still recommends that people should avoid attending crowded events because such events and gatherings increase people's risk of getting and spreading Covid-19. "Stay at home" became the slogan, so that one could protect oneself and others as well. The worst part of this was that it came without adequate preparation from both the government and the people. It indeed, it caused a lot of havoc in the family circle. Parents and children were psychologically, socially, financially, emotionally, morally, etc., affected, but the level of impact differs from one family to the other. What is obvious was that Covid-19 was very difficult to manage. It came with a shock; therefore, it created worries and damages as well. We shall now discuss some of the effects of the pandemic on family relationships among the Igbo people of Nigeria.

Psychological Impact: By nature, the Igbo man is brave and bold. He loves life and does everything to protect it. He does not fear challenges or threats. He takes responsibility for his actions and works hard to take care of his family, relatives and friends. The average Igbo man sees himself as a king in his own house, so nothing shakes him as such. But this braveness of the Igbo man was shattered by Covid-19. The emergence of Covid-19 caused a lot of disorganization in the society. This was caused by self-isolation, quarantine, social distancing, the news of the spread of the virus and the death of some of the infected persons. The above-listed points drastically reduced social interactions, leading to various forms of psychological disorder. Many persons suffered from depression, tension, anxiety and severe stress which led to increase in cases of high blood pressure. Many, out of fear, developed non-existent illnesses that led to spending of

thousands of Naira, only to discover that there was nothing wrong with them, apart from the fear of dying. This is because the Igbo man and woman cherish life so much and will not want to lose it.

Social Impact: The social impact on family relationship is like the two sides of a coin, the positive and negative. As earlier mentioned, the Igbo man is business-inclined and so the slogan ‘stay at home’ became a serious issue. He could not tolerate himself staying at home doing nothing. It was a big challenge. Apart from being an industrious person, the Igbo person enjoys being with others. According to Aristotle, man is a social being. The Igbo person, as a social being, interacts with others on a daily basis and depends on communication for his continual existence and survival. Even in the business enterprise, interaction is inevitable. Other resources of the business cannot be properly coordinated without effective communication between those involved in this enterprise. This is also because man is a relational being. This means that communication or interaction and other social activities are indispensable in man’s daily activities. “Communication is an indispensable component in human lives and existence and no society has been known to exist without it. However, the presence of any outbreak or pandemic poses a threat to human existence and inversely affects his social life, interactions and relationships”¹⁶. Such is the case with the covid-19 pandemic.

On the positive impact, since Igbo men are mostly business-inclined, they hardly give enough time to their family, to the extent that sometimes, children are not close to their fathers because they rarely have time with them. Covid-19, therefore, brought increase in social interactions within the immediate family. At this time, fathers can have time with their wives and children due to the stay-at-home guidelines.

¹⁶ Mirian OC, Danjuma YM, Amaonyeze NB (2021) Impact of Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic on Social Lives and Interactions of Nigerian Citizens. Arch Med Vol.13 No.3:15 , P.1

Moral Impact: In some cases, the obligatory stay-at-home directive led to domestic violence and abuses. Cases of illicit sexual relationships were all over the air, involving the married or unmarried, and the underage. There were cases of stepchild abuses by the father and stepbrothers, even abuses of one's own female child, etc. All sorts of atrocities took place. It was so bad to the extent that on the 10th of June, 2020, the Nigerian Minister of Women Affairs, Mrs Pauline Tallen, called on law enforcement agents to expedite investigation and prosecution of rape cases, as they spiked during the lockdowns. Her call was followed up by protests over sexual violence in Nigeria. She also said that rapes had reached an “alarming rate”, three times the typical level, as women and children were locked down with their abusers. Every state in Nigeria was affected, she said. In addition, Cece Yara foundation's report of May-August, 2020 has this to say, we recorded an increase in the number of child sexual and physical abuse reported to the Foundation as a result of the lockdown measures imposed by the authorities. An average of 15 child abuse cases was reported per week as against the 2 to 3 cases reported pre-COVID 19. The reason for this could not be far- fetched as children were locked-in with abusers and there is limited access to schools and other safe places¹⁷.

Financial Impact: Igbo people are known for their struggle to survive, no matter the situation. They are hardworking and abhor laziness. They are highly gifted in diverse areas. The source of their financial strength is based on this spirit of ‘we must survive no matter the condition’. The development of their homes, families and communities through business endeavours has always been the trademark of the Igbo people.

¹⁷Grace Ketefe, (2020) “Help to Stop Child Sexual Abuse in Nigeria” Cece Yara Foundation. Available at <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/sto/child-sexual-abuse-in-nigeria/reports/subid=155356>. Accessed 19/05/2021.

According to history, the Igbo people at several times had demonstrated a strong will and desire to develop their environment and economy. The source of their economy was mainly based on three sectors. They are: agriculture, non-agricultural production, such as delivering of newspapers to customers, babysitting, acting of movies, etc., and trade. According to history, they were said to have a high literacy rate more than other tribes in Nigeria, a factor which contributed to their occupying most of the strategic positions in the Nigerian civil service before the Nigeria-Biafra War.

Due to the loses they incurred during and after the war, most of them resorted to trading. The contributions of the Igbo people to the Nigerian economy, their host states and communities over the decades have attracted comments about their character and entrepreneurial spirit. I have heard people say that any village in Nigeria that has no Igbo man doing business is terribly bad. It does not matter how remote the village is and how meagre the business is. This implies that the Igbo can survive and prosper anywhere that human beings are. In view of that, Olanrewaju (1999), in his paper, “the Igbo Entrepreneur in the Political Economy of Nigeria”, says that the Igbo people, when compared to other major ethnic groups in Nigeria, dominate the entrepreneurial activities, especially in the areas of micro, small and medium enterprises. The distinctive characteristics the Igbo entrepreneurs have over others is the determination and perseverance with which they carry on, despite the civil war experiences and unfavourable economic policies meted out to them.¹⁸

All the efforts of the people were badly affected by coronavirus, with its attendant policies, especially the restriction of movement order in Nigeria, which was for the good of the citizens, to avoid the spread of the virus. The restriction on movement orders included ban on inter-state travel (except those on essential duties), ban on mass gatherings of

¹⁸ Osita Fabian Chinedu (2020). “Impact of Covid-19 on the survival of Igbo owned businesses in Nigeria: the nexus” *International Journal of Financial, Accounting, and Management (IJFAM)* ISSN: 2656-3355, Vol 2, No 2, P.123

people, and closure of markets, worship centres, social gatherings, schools, offices, etc. This restriction of movements and closure of markets and offices seriously affected the businesses of many Igbo people. They lost their goods; some of their goods were seized or stolen; some materials and goods got spoilt because of the lockdown. Many are still suffering from the adverse effects of Covid-19 on their businesses. The economic impact of the pandemic has affected family relationships in the following ways:

- a) The loss of joy and happiness in the family: The joy of a family is greatly affected by their financial situation. When there is lack and poverty, people are bound to be sad, as hardship increases. Many well-to-do families were badly affected. When a man has no money as he ought to, he gets angry at little provocations, which leads to domestic violence.
- b) Paying of school fees at reputable universities and colleges became difficult. Children were withdrawn from such schools and registered at low-income schools. This affected children's happiness too and their relationship with their parents.
- c) Increase in ill-health and death: Some families lost their breadwinners and other members to Covid-19 and other forms of illness. This is the worst scenario as regards the covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

From the analysis made above, it is obvious that the emergence of Covid-19 was traumatic and destabilized many families. The quarantine period made people's lives to become more difficult and challenging. Family relationships were put to the test and some problems naturally occurred. It negatively affected the daily routine of every family which led to severe changes in their lives. Lives cannot remain the same, based on the effects of Covid-19. Igbo people like social gatherings, attending tribal meetings and weddings, travelling from one country of the world to another. These were greatly reduced because of the pandemic. It is necessary to note that although the pandemic had several adverse effects, it also had some positive

effects, since it led to the cutting down of excesses in people's lifestyles and the discovery of alternative ways of doing things. Journeys were cut down and people used modern means of communication to pass information and to hold meetings online. Business trips have reduced. Orders are being placed for goods and they are being delivered. This has reduced the rate of road accidents and road mishaps. These sudden changes, known as the new normal, will gradually become part of life.

One of the advantages of rational beings is that they can easily adapt to situations. Despite the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on family relations among the Igbo people, many have adapted well by readjusting their lives.

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TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND THE ROOTS OF AFRICA'S ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The political economy of slavery was naturally a phenomenon suited for underdevelopment. Indeed, slavery, by its nature and character, was the highest manifestation of savagery. Unlike some other forms of degradation, it annihilates the soul and devastates the body. The European slavers devised hideous methods of kidnappings, battering, branding with red hot metal blades, chaining, dehumanizing and totally emasculating their victims. No calamity or tragedy in time and space equaled the ruinous effect of slavery on Africa's development trajectory. At the human psychological level, the African victims and their families were literally chased out of history, in the sense that they lost their humanity and identity. In reality, slavery arrested and completely altered the original and autonomous process of genuine development of states in the continent. The scourge of slavery brought about anarchy, despoliation, warfare, depopulation, murder, inter-ethnic rivalry and a general culture of fear and insecurity. As a result, African economies suffered from unprecedented forced migration of the pillars of production. The foremost impact of the five centuries long slave trade, by which an estimated 50 million Africans were taken away, was that it drained the continent of her productive population and thus fatally destroyed her economy. This paper, therefore, contends that the transatlantic slave trade fundamentally accounted

for Africa's socio-political and economic woes. Scholars and extant literature tend to promote the narrative that colonialism, neo-colonialism and leadership failure explain Africa's underdevelopment. While these factors are complicit in Africa's underdevelopment conundrum, the transatlantic slave trade remains the root of Africa's arrested development.

Keywords: Transatlantic, slave trade, arrested development and productive capacity

Introduction

Africa has over the years been associated with all forms of negativity and backwardness. The continent is indeed a metaphor for multiplicity of crises, ranging from poor leadership, political instability, poverty, parlous economy, upsurge in infectious diseases to a general climate of underdevelopment. It should be recalled that modern Africa as we know it today was an artificial creation by the European states at the inglorious Berlin Conference of 1885, during which some European countries sat together and parceled Africa among themselves for political and economic domination and exploitation. This tendency gave birth to colonialism, which is essentially outside the focus of this study. Before the era of colonization which actually lasted for only 75 years (1885-1960), Africa had suffered systemic and monumental devastation of 500 years of transatlantic slave trade, a period that completely suffocated and atrophied the African humanity and environment. As corroborated by Nunn (2008), for a period of nearly 500 years, from 1400- 1900, the African continent experienced four slave trades. By comparison, official colonial rule lasted from 1885-1960, a total of approximately 75 years.

Africa's development conundrum is mainly traceable to the long and tortuous experience of the transatlantic slave trade. The slave trade contributed immensely to Africa's development stagnation because it targeted human beings who are the subjects and sources of development for destruction. As a result, the evolving trend and

culture of genuine and autonomous development process in Africa was violently arrested, disarticulated and abandoned. Prior to the slave trade era, Africa was made up of civilized societies of reputable socio-political and economic significance. According to Chinweizu (1978), the hundred years between 1450 and 1550 were a period of social reforms and innovations in statecraft in the kingdoms and empires of Africa. African princes of that era were busy expanding and consolidating their rule, curbing unruly nobles elevating king's men to important offices, establishing or reforming imperial administrations, and creating professional, full-time armies to replace the draft armies of their past. Africa was thus an authentic developing and bastion of advanced civilization. It must be noted that Africa, before the rampaging incursion of slave merchants, was not a closed society, or in any form of state of autarky. It was a continent of evolving progress.

The Development Debate

The concept of development in extant literature of social sciences is contentious. Although opinions may differ on its commonly acceptable definition, there are empirical indicators which underscore development as an objective reality. Within the context of this submission, man is recognized as the centre piece of the development process. Through the application of his creative energy, man tames and controls his environment. It is essentially a process of man coming to terms with nature. As a multidimensional phenomenon, development can be viewed from the human and other perspectives or simply as an economic imperative. The economic dimension to the understanding of the development debate often subsumes other considerations, following the primacy of the material conditions in a given milieu. Ake (1981) maintained that once we understand what the material assets and constraints of any society are, how the society produces goods to meet its material needs, how the goods are distributed, and what type of social relations arise from the organizations of production, we have come a long way to understanding the culture of that society, its laws, its religious system, its political system and even its mode of thought.

Production is, therefore, basic to development. But production does not just happen. There are basic laws and tools which enhance productive capacity of any social system. These laws and scientific principles ultimately lead to the evolution or manufacture of tools or technology through man's attempt to subdue nature. Since man is first and foremost a producer, it then follows that other activities of man revolve around this pre-eminent attribute or take form from it. Man recreates himself through the exercise of his labour power. His ideas of political organization, law, justice religion and morality are all predicated on the nature, character and form of his productive capacity.

The substructure or the economic or production system, therefore, has preponderant influence over the superstructure or the idea system, because to subsist, man has to produce material goods from objects found in nature. Material production has always been and still is the basis of human existence (Boguslavsky et al, 1978). Development is definitely a process of transformative change. It consists of systemic interaction between people in a given society or environment and the forces or challenges of nature and existence. It is prone to positive reinforcement from one stage or level to another higher plane. Development is a dynamic reality. According to Daley (2021), development can be defined as bringing about social change that allows people to achieve their human potential. It is a process and not an outcome. Other critical aspects of development that need to be appreciated include the time element: development is not time-barred, it is rather time-driven, that is, it changes or transforms with time, subject to available human capacity. Social and human development requires a unified approach, integrating the economic and social components in plans, policies and programmes for people's betterment. The issues of environment, pollution, women, habitat, hunger and employment have come to the fore one by one. Two major contemporary concerns that require focus in any development initiative are that of human security and sustainability (Seers, 2020). Development is both disparate and cumulative. It is made up of apparently distinct components which ultimately work together to

improve the life experiences of the people. Sid-Israel (2021) contends that development is a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. The purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population, and the creation or the expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resources of the environment. It is within this conceptual context that Africa's development before the transatlantic slave trade would be situated and analyzed. The popular narrative, especially from European apologists, had always been that nothing like development ever occurred in Africa before the massive slave trade overtook the continent. Indeed, David Hume (cited by blackhistory.org, 2021) argued that the Negroes were naturally inferior to the whites, that there scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or in speculation. There was no ingenious manufacture among them, no arts, no sciences. This line of thought was evidently laced with lethal racial prejudice and immanently false.

Overview of Development in Africa before Trans Atlantic Slave Trade

In the course of our analysis, we have demonstrated that the concept of development is a universal phenomenon and not the preserve of any special people or group. It is an attribute of change and progress by people of every clime, irrespective of race, ethnicity or location. It is, therefore, conceptually misleading to describe any group of people as primitive or backward on account of their level of development. As Rodney (1978) observed, every continent independently participated in the early epochs of the extension of man's control over his environment, which means in effect that every continent can point to a period of economic development. Africa, being the original home of man, was obviously a major participant in the process in which human groups displayed an increasing capacity to extract a living from natural environment. Development is essentially a universal necessity with localized internal dynamics. The point being made here is that African societies, prior to the fatal assault by slave merchants, were

well organized and evidently developing in certain and autonomous direction. The societies moved at the pace of their needs following the rhythm of the intrinsic dynamics of change associated with their mode of production. No aspect of human endeavour expected of that stage of human development was lacking. Africa can, therefore, be credited not only with giving rise to the many scientific developments associated with Egypt, engineering, mathematics, architecture, medicine etc., but also with important early political developments such as state formation and monarchy. This demonstrates that economic and political development as well as scientific development was evident during this early period, perhaps more advanced in Africa than in other continents (blackhistorymonth.org, 2020). Even in sea voyages and navigational exploits, Africans crossed and traversed the seas and oceans in the course of business, trades and diplomatic trips. According to Blatch (2021), several lines of evidence suggest that ancient Africans sailed to South America and Asia hundreds of years before the Europeans. Thousands of miles of waterways across Africa were trade routes. Many ancient societies in Africa built a variety of boats, including small reed-based vessels, sail boats and grander structures with many cabins and cooking facilities. The Mali and Songhai built boats 100 feet long and 13 feet wide that could carry up to 80 tons. This, without any shadow of doubt, portrays the authentic African environment free from the pollution of transatlantic slave trade. Societies grew and interacted through a network of relationships borne out of mutual respect or even animosity devoid of a deliberate policy to totally dehumanize and brutally uproot a people from their natural homesteads for exportation as common merchandise.

Africans lived a life of ease and contentment, carrying out life responsibilities in the various areas of human activities. Essentially, agricultural cultivation was paramount within the economic chain of activities. Domestic animals like cattle and goats were reared. Family units were interdependent and shared things together. In most African cultures, what belonged to one belonged to all, and what affected one affected the rest. Individualism was contemptible because it was at variance with the social norms and values. Each individual as a

product of society was both an extension and completion of a larger unity. As corroborated by Falola (2020), in a decentralized civilization such as the Igbo of modern-day Nigeria and Kikuyu of Kenya, these societies were often broken into age group systems, and power was dispersed throughout the entire community, with local elders providing leadership, but with input from the population at large. Farm lands were communally owned and administered. However, family units had control over ancestral lands close to the homestead. Any claim to ownership of lands was basically collective. The land was cultivated yearly or by shifting to different areas to make for soil enrichment. Every member of the family has a specific role to fulfill. There were specific roles for the man, his wife or wives and the children. It was, therefore, important each member of the family unit knows perfectly well what tasks he or she was required to perform in their economic productivity and distribution of the family resources as to ensure the material prosperity of the group (Kenyatta, 1979).

With the discovery of iron, agriculture and warfare received fresh boost. This was quite early because knowledge of iron working was common in the savannah of West Africa about 300 B.C. (Ifemesia, 1965). Farm tools made from iron were developed, just as implements of war were manufactured. The iron age had a revolutionary impact on development in Africa. It brought a more aggressive subjugation of the external environment and a higher morale in times of war. The Kingdoms of Benin and Ife were led by the Yoruba people and sprang up between the 11th and 12th centuries. The Ife civilization goes back as far as 500B.C. and its people made objects from bronze, brass, copper, wood and ivory (abolition.org). The Savannah belt grew in power and wealth, as existing empires devised means to control and coordinate the surrounding markets. Ghana had then become the foremost imperial power in the sub-region. Its leaders extended their influence beyond the Savannah belt by routing the Berbers of the desert and annexing strategic towns like Taghaza, with all its salt deposit, and Wangara, noted for gold. Ghana grew by leaps and bounds and became renowned globally as excessively rich in gold

(Fyfe, 1965). According to aero-comlab (2020), the empire of Ghana dominated West Africa for seven centuries, reaching its peak in the 11th century. Based on the gold trade, the kings of Ghana were immensely rich and powerful. King Tunka Manin, who ruled in the middle of the 11th century, had a magnificent court in his stone-built capital of Kumbi Saleh, and is said to have been able to field an Army of 200,000 men.

Africa was well-organized, with several kingdoms emerging and contributing to the increasing fortunes of the continent. Many of the thriving states had either a central or decentralized governmental and authority structure for public administration and security.

Impact of Transatlantic Slave Trade on Africa's Development Trajectory

The greatest and most devastating impact of transatlantic slave economy was on the humanity of black Africans, both as individuals and as society. Slavery of the transatlantic variety was designed to terrorize, dehumanize, animalize and reduce the status of the average African to mere chattel to be bought and sold in the open market. The essence of the African person as a human being, his mind and spirit was completely crushed by the unspeakable savagery of violence unleashed on the victims by the white predators and their corrupt native allies. In essence, the cost and pains of slavery are beyond the physical. It was an unprecedented hideous attack on a people, their culture, history, civilization and development. Whatley and Gillezeau (2009, citing Patterson,1982) call the production of slaves the production of “social death”. It is a violent process where a person is brought to the brink of death, spared and then ritualistically put to social death, left to owe the remainder of his life to another person. One would think that centuries of producing social death would leave a mark on social outcomes and institutions, some with lasting consequences for development.

Slavery did not just arrest Africa's development; it disfigured, disoriented, disarticulated and mummified it. Any discussion of

African development is a discussion of rented ideas without historical foundations, the narrative of a paradise lost. The depth and profundity of slavery on the African mind over a period spanning some five hundred years totally distorted the African identity, his essence and dignity and left him a benighted spectator on the global stage. The plague of slavery caught Africa unawares. It tore through her very marrow and choked all attempts at advancement. Slavery forced Africa into systematic and potentially irreversible retrogression and structural decadence. According to M'Baye (2006), the trade brought about enduring insecurities, economic chaos, and political disorders in Africa. It arrested its development by exploiting its technological, agricultural and cultural skills for the development of the West only. It hampered Africa's mercantilist economy by halting its capacity to be transformed into the capitalist economy.

Armed with more sophisticated instruments of violence and repression, the invading European slave dealers encountered little or no resistance, as they pounded their way into the heart of Africa. The continent became deserted and impoverished because of slave raids. People fled their communities to escape enslavement. It is, therefore, pertinent to observe here that refugee problem in Africa was originally instigated by slave trade. This trade in human merchandise completely disorganized the African social setting. The continent was under siege, every form of freedom was drastically curtailed. Freedom of movement, association, farming, trade and other forms of social activities were severely threatened. People spoke in hushed tones, afraid of the air around them. A paralyzing culture of fear and insecurity was foisted on the minds of the people. There were occasions when entire villages were sacked at night by a barrage of gun fire. Houses were set ablaze. Natives wept in agony, as they ran with their family members struggling to escape the clattering chains of the slave raiders. More often than not, the fleeing Africans ended up in the cold embrace of their predators who then subdued them with more violence. In some heroic instances, some victims would summon the last reserve of their strength to fight to preserve their humanity. Kunta Kinte reacted in such vein when he was attacked by slave merchants:

“...rushing at him, he saw a white face, a club upraised, heard heavy footfalls behind him’ Toubob! His foot lashed up and caught the man in the belly- as something hard and heavy grazed the back of Kunta’s head...Kunta leaped into them - clawing, butting, kneeing, gouging- hardly feeling the club that was pounding against his back”(Haley, 1978).

It was a heroic fight for freedom by Kunta Kinte, but he lost out in the end. Although initially some forms of resistance were mounted against this infamous trade, these counter measures were either late in coming or unable to withstand the superior fire power of the invading slave dealers. Another critical dimension was the white man did not initially show himself as an oppressor. He came as a harbinger of a strange religion. People did not take him seriously. He was more like a tolerable nuisance. He successfully deluded the African leadership to believe that his mission was to bring back the lost tribes of Africa from the pit of darkness to the portals of light. There was no immediate reason to suspect the white man who, according to Achebe (1988), “came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay, he has now won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart”.

M’Baye (2006) also observed that the disruption of Africa’s political structures and socio-economic potentials was part of the stagnation of Africa’s technological progress caused by the slave trade. As Rodney has shown, the trade affected Africa’s economy by bringing about a loss of industry, skills, technological invention and production of Africans. On the other hand, Rodney argues that “what Africa experienced in the early centuries of the trade was precisely a loss of development opportunity, that is the ability to achieve the self-sustaining growth and progress that its enslaved young population could have secured.”

There was nothing of value that came into Africa throughout the long period of slavery. Instead, the European slave traders imported

spurious goods, ornaments of doubtful worth and those items which naturally tended to reinforce the depopulation of the continent. It was, therefore, no surprise that in exchange for slaves, the Europeans offered fire arms, gun powder and gin which intoxicated their African collaborators and made them act with maximum brutality and irrationality. These items offered for slaves were a novelty then and invariably conferred on their possessors a measure of invincibility. As a result of the rush for fire arms and other manufactured goods from Europe, the drive for slaves assumed frightful proportions. As observed by Nunn (2008, citing Bairoch, 1993), slavery was corruption: it involved theft, bribery, and exercise of brute force as well as ruses.

With the crumbling of the economic sector, the political structure followed suit. African leaders were whittled down by the rapacious army of instability, through the use of brute force and bribery. The local territories were now run from the slave ships, with the European slave merchants determining the terms of trade. In addition, they began to control the affairs of the land, at the expense of the local authority. The chiefs became mere stooges who invariably became bridges between the white man and his own people. Allegiance was, therefore, first to the slave cartel which sustained him on the throne. As corroborated by M'Baye (2006), the political impact of the Atlantic trade is visible in the changes it wrought in African societies. It subverted the existing political balance in traditional African societies. Since slavery became a dominant source of revenue in the continent, personal wealth was thought to derive from one's ability to help capture and sell one's neighbours or criminals to strangers. As a consequence, the scenario Europeans created became a Darwinian universe in which the African turned into a wolf preying on other Africans.

The resultant effect was that leadership was turned into a tool of oppression. Assumed enemies were rounded up by the local militia and sent off to the waiting slave ships. Revolutionaries and true leaders of the people were also hounded and destroyed. Governance

became arbitrary, as criminals held sway. At the level of culture, the African equally suffered untold devastation. Firstly, he was told that his religion was devilish. His language was also snubbed. He was forced to believe that he had no education because he could not read or write. His arts and crafts were described as creations of his demonic self. Indeed, the Africans before the slave masters were a bunch of sub-human species, created to fulfill their natural calling as slaves. Abiola (1992) argues that the rape of our religions, culture and folklore was meant to deny our humanity, so that we would be treated as beasts.

Conclusion

The transatlantic slave trade was the first form of crime against humanity, with respect to black Africans. It was a hideous and unprecedented form of genocide, because victims were subjected to both physical and social death, essentially, for whom they were as black Africans, akin to the Holocaust against the Jews. Slavery really took its toll on the African continent in a manner yet unrecorded in the history of any other people. Nothing in the annals of human degradation compares with the oddity of slavery, especially when viewed against the background of what Africa would have been without the blight of transatlantic slave trade. The greatest tragedy of the slave trade was the impact on the humanity and dignity of the victims. Having depicted and treated African peoples as less than human, the perception got engraved into the distorted minds of the Africans who began to accept the inferiority status in all ramifications of human endeavour.

Consequently, the flourishing achievements and civilizations of different parts of the continent began to crumble under the massive crises engendered by the rampaging horde of slave raiders. African societies steadily collapsed in all facets of its previous remarkable progress. The cultures were uprooted; the trade patterns, routes and commodities were drastically altered from non-human goods to human consignments. The political system was overthrown, with groups set against each other in the hunt and capture of human beings

as slaves. The slave economy shattered the society with depopulation, internal wars, displacements, and famine, arising from the destruction of the people's productive capacity. Due to the long duration of this despicable business, Africa suffered the greatest shock in her evolutionary process. Development in the continent was not just arrested. It was suffocated and laid to waste as if nothing ever happened in Africa. No other continent in the whole wide world was ever subjected to this heinous evil of developmental annihilation. Essentially, this accident of history explains the continent's consistent inability and indeed incapacity to overcome the crippling inheritance of negativity in virtually all areas that define or constitute genuine or autonomous development paradigm. It would take a great revolutionary effort by enlightened leadership to pull the continent out from this vicious cycle of underdevelopment.

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TABLE AND TRUST: THE AFRICAN CULTURE OF COMMUNALISM IN OGBA, EGENNI AND IKWERRE TRADITIONS

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Abstract

Communalism is a characteristic feature of the African culture. Africans celebrate everything together. They rejoice together, mourn together and share things together in the spirit of African brotherhood. In the same spirit of oneness, the Ogba, Egene and Ikwerre ethnic nationalities of the central Niger Delta in Rivers State of Nigeria share many cultural practices together. Some of these include: the kinship system, land and other property inheritance customs as well as mortuary rites. These three heterogeneous traditional ethnic nationalities trace their descent to the ancient Benin kingdom. This ancestry bond over time and space has been weakened by several factors, such as: migration, cross cultural contact, modernization and globalization. The research observes that no African nation is without challenges which has changed the African coloration of communalism. This paper, therefore, examines the concept of communalism and the associated challenges in Ogba, Egene and Ikwerre traditions. The paper adopts the historical and sociological approaches in the

discussion. The challenges include; religion education and politics. This paper concludes that the said ethnic nationalities (Ogba, Egene and Ikwerre), which had earlier practiced communalism, are gradually shifting to individualism. The study recommends a revival and renaissance of African traditional heritage to avoid a complete collapse of the culture of communalism in the area of our discussion.

Introduction

The Ogba, Egenni and Ikwerre philosophy of communism is togetherness. Here, to be is to be with others. According to Martin Heidegger (2011), "Being with" refers to the ontological feature of mankind being always with its kind. Therefore, in the structures of its 'being-in-the-world', he realizes his implicit reference to other humans around him. No one is an island; every human lives with others, either in the nuclear family, extended family, community or clan, and anything to the contrary diminishes the true essence of man in society. From the inception of man from birth, he is brought into the communion with others and realizes his being and life in the complex network of the living and spiritual members of the community. This sense of 'being with' properly typifies the sense of community in Ogba, Egenni and Ikwerre traditional societies which is demonstrated in welfare and care given to members in order to ensure a continuous enhancement of life and its sustainability.

The African traditional society is replete with rich cultures that are uniquely African and expressed by the people themselves through established institutions that reflect their thought pattern. The African by nature is homo-religious, enjoys communal existence and celebrates virtually everything, including childbirth, naming ceremony, puberty, marriage, age grade and chieftancy coronation, as well as death and funerals. Thus, anything that threatens her corporate existence attracts some level of resistance which often results in either external or internal conflicts that interrupt the peace of the traditional society.

This paper, therefore, examines the concept of communalism and the associated challenges in Ogba, Egene and Ikwerre traditions. The paper adopts the historical and sociological approaches in the discussion. The challenges include: religion, education and politics. This paper concludes that the said ethnic nationalities (Ogba, Egene and Ikwerre) which had earlier practised communalism are gradually shifting to individualism. The study recommends a revival and renaissance of African traditional heritage to avoid a complete collapse of the culture of communalism in the area of our discussion.

Theoretical lens: Pitzer's (2019) developmental communalism is both a theory and a process. As a theory, it focuses on movements that choose the communal method of organizing and the adjustments they make to their organizational structures, beliefs and practices to insure the survival and expansion of the movements. Developmental communalism theory contends that communal living is a universally available social mechanism at all times to all peoples, governments and movements. Secular as well as religious movements employ communal living, often at a vulnerable early stage, because it promises security, solidarity and survival. In another respect, communalism presents communitarianism as a method of social change with both positive and negative impacts, compared to individualism. Communitarianism is immediate, voluntary, collective, non-violent and experimental, but it can be isolating, authoritarian, and especially difficult, if it involves communities that require all the elements of a social microcosm.

As a process, developmental communalism is an adaptive continuum in both individual communities and the larger movements that found them. To survive over long periods of time, communal groups and their founding movements must adapt to changing realities within and without. The process of developmental communalism poses a double-jeopardy threat to both communal groups and their movements. If communal living becomes an unchangeable commitment, the founding movement may fail to make necessary adjustments, stagnate,

and die, thus causing the death of its communal groups. If the founding movement is dynamic enough to make changes away from the restrictions of communal living, the movement may expand while its communes become unnecessary or abandoned. In view of the arguments advanced in this theory, the following discussion diligently builds on its suppositions.

Communalism in Ogba

Ogba practice of communalism is based on consanguineal affinity. In Ogba, it is held that anyone who shares a similar gene with someone is automatically a relative. In this regard, every community has certain traditional features in common. These include common ancestry, ritual staff, farm land and kindred relationship. Once any of these is established, the person is automatically a relative.

In Ogba culture, the strength of the community is typified with the indestructible nature of the broom when held together. Ogba people hold that the broom can only be broken when it is scattered. Based on the above, the community is always stronger than any matter, especially those that concern well-being, existence and continuity.

According to Obodoegbulam (2019), Ogba people live in compounds. The head in each compound is usually the eldest male. He also doubles as the administrative officer. Every compound usually hosts a compound meeting hall known as “Ibra kran” (translated as living room of the forebears). The ibra-kran in Ogba is called Obokoro in Ikwerre, and Obi in Egenni. This is where all matters concerning the compound are anchored. Properties like land (Ali), lakes (Avran), economic trees like iroko (Oji), cotton (Akpun), oil palm trees (Eku), are held on trust. No individual exercises right of ownership over them. Here, the compound or lineage or kindred head is the custodian. However, he exercises no over-riding authority to devolve them without the consent of his kins.

The philosophy of communalism is demonstrated in certain wise sayings such as Na bu kaoha (the child belongs to the community),

Iku ya ibe (friends and relatives) ohu, gbuu ya biri ka gbuga uka (come closer does not result to quarrels).

Politically, insinuations such as katan (owned in common), je kata (move together), bia kata (come together) and re kata (eat together) express greater acceptability. Once togetherness is expressed on any instance, dissension is reduced.

The Ikwerre experience

Ikwerre people see themselves as one indivisible and indissoluble community living interdependently, with communal responsibility to its members, rather than an individual living independently. The value and sense of community is hence marked by belongingness and cooperation. The identity of the individual is not emphasized at the expense of his community identity. It is in this regard that Onwubiko (1991) submits that the sense of human identity, social security and their values are premixed on individual identification with and in the communal fold. Individualism as an ideology and principle of life, however, is not encouraged in Ikwerre society, even though it is not destroyed because none can live in isolation.

To this end, Steve Biko avers that,

We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence in all we do we always place man first and hence all our action is usually joint community-oriented action rather than the individualism.

Every individual is identified with and in a community, which offers them the psychological and ultimate security, as it gives its members both physical and ideological identity. It must be noted that in the African mentality in general, the community as an entity remains, while individuals, as persons, come and go. Therefore, the Ikwerre

society emphasizes communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community-identity. The community fashions and molds the individuals and censors the execution of such ideas through the family or clan. Its aim is to produce and present an individual as a community culture bearer (Kanu, 2015), sustaining and transmitting same to future generations. Emeakaroha (2002) identified the communalism in Africa, as in Ikwerre, as a system that is suprasensible and material in nature and both are found in a society that is believed by the people to be originally "god-made", since it transcends the people who live in it now. It is also "man-made" to the extent that it cannot be culturally understood independent of those who live in it here and now. It is for this reason that an authentic African (Ikwerre) is known and identified in, by and through his community. The individual, as noted earlier, does not exist without the community, and as such must go the way of the community. In the material term of reference, Emeakaroha notes that the individual must go to the "community centre" (Ihu ezi/Obiri or Obokoro), which is the social, political, judicial and religious centre. It is the communal meeting place for political discussions, communal tribunals, and games. It is, therefore, a traditional place of congregation for the entire community. In this sense, the community is "man-made" because, at the community centre, their tutelary deity often has a shrine; the centres, therefore become also the centre of communal religious worship, sacrifices and festivities. In this sense, the community there gathered becomes "god-made." For this reason, the transcendental term of reference obviously becomes the custodian of the individual's ideas. Besides, without the community - the clan - the ancestrally chartered system stands the void in strong and ever-present contrast, making real life impossible, since a man without lineage is a man without citizenship, identity and, to say the least, without community.

The sense of community is perceivable in the ordinary everyday life of the people in their struggle for survival. The traditional economy which is mainly based on farming and fishing is co-operative in nature. Among the Ikwerre families and communities, friends and kin come together to assist in doing farm work on rotational basis at no

cost (Ogba ngwuota), but because they will gain the same favour subsequently. Children in the family are seen to provide the main labour force for which reason men take pride in having many of them, especially males. The synergetic nature of the Ikwerre society is what makes two or more individuals to pull their resources together and uplift each other economically through the system of contributions called *otu*. This cooperation and solidarity extend to even building of houses and doing other things for their fellow and indigent members of the community. When any of them is in difficulty or experiences misfortune, all members rally around and help sharing in the burden. Kinship ties and love are what characterize the traditional Ikwerre society. It is only this sense of identity and belongingness that would make a community to tax themselves through the sale of the products of cash crops, like oil palm and other economic trees, and use the proceeds to sponsor the education of a brilliant or indigent child, even overseas. In this respect, the synergetic nature of Ikwerre communities is what makes the society very amiable.

Marriage as a social phenomenon is a duty and requirement which involves both the individual and the community. Marriage is a socio-cultural factor intrinsically woven with Ikwerre sense of community. In this regard, it is given an ontological and social significance as it is integrally bound to making possible a realization of the past, present and future, and even embedded in the birth of a new child. The union of the man and woman points to the order of creation, thereby giving real expression to the existence of the visible and the invisible (*hne be hu anya*) and the invisible (*hne be huo anya*) communities. It serves, therefore, as the meeting point where the living-dead and the unborn converge and manifest the end of marriage which is procreation for the continuity of the community (Agbokwuo, 2013).

Marriage relationship is guided by societal norms and values. Essentially, it is this cultural norm that defines certain prohibitions to marriage or otherwise and so the need for the community involvement. Ikwerre people practise exogamy and a patrilineal

system. Each family and lineage, minor or major, is related by blood. Marriage within a certain degree of consanguinity is not only strongly prohibited but tabooed. It is the more reason why marriage is not defined as an isolated matter but a collective responsibility of the immediate and extended families, in fact, the community. Mate selection or choice of spouse rests largely on the family and kinsmen after due diligence has been observed. Egelege, cited in Otonnaa (1993), observes that when a man identified a girl he wished to marry, he first reported to his parents who immediately undertook the study of the girl's family history. The enquiry was conducted under caution and tact, while maintaining some degree of confidentiality. In order to maintain a high degree of sanity in the family lineage, the enquiry sought to find out whether the family had any hereditary diseases, like leprosy, epilepsy, tuberculosis, etc., or any criminal tendencies. It sought also to know if the family was prone to barrenness and the tendencies to promiscuity in marriage, among others.

The culture of communalism is further entrenched in land ownership practice among Ikwerre people. Although land is a scarce resource, Ikwerre societies are relatively blessed with vast expanse of arable land for habitation and for agricultural purposes. It means everything, as their whole existence, spiritual and material, is tied to land and its ownership. According to Wabara (1992) and corroborated by Tassie (2020), land is held with so much reverence, since it is the foundation of community life and is held as the property of the community and of all family groups which include the living persons, the unborn and the ancestors. Hence, land carries with it the symbol of the family and community continuity. The unit of ownership of land is by lineage and the greater part of ownership of land tenure rules is concerned with defining the rights of family members and the limits to which those who are not bona fide members or strangers can go in matters of lineage land (Kasumu, et al, 1966, cited in Omereji, 2003). According to Akinpelu "the allocation was strictly according to need and the ability of the individual to develop" (1990).

A good human relationship in Ikwerre society is guided by the enduring principle of ‘live and let’s live’ which is centered on inter-personal communication and community relationship as its focal point. Hence, in an African community, everyone is accommodated. This African sense of accommodation, in the words Festus Okafor, accounts for why, “In traditional African culture, the weak and the aged; the incurable, the helpless, the sick were affectionately taken care of in the comforting family atmosphere” (1974).

Death and funeral bring community members as well as near and distant friends together. Before the commencement of funeral rites, information is first given to the members of the immediate family. The kindred is informed, followed by the maternal family of the deceased, then, the in-laws and other friends and acquaintances, and lastly to the entire community, which ushers in the commencement of the burial arrangements. The arrangement for the burial is followed by the invitation to all members of the family, immediate and extended, in-laws and acquaintance; the burial date is fixed; and duties and responsibilities are assigned in line with the norms and customs. At burial, the whole community is involved, which is a clear manifestation of the communal spirit of Ikwerre people. Death brings people together, giving people the opportunity to share their grief and condole with the bereaved family. Beyond the belief in the metaphysical connectedness between the living and the dead, the importance accorded to burial rites goes to show the strong notion attached to community belongingness. In this wise, the kinsmen, community people and friends pull their resources together in solidarity to ensure a proper rite of passage.

Origin of Egene

Egene is a group of people in the Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State in the Niger Delta geo-political regional structure in Nigeria. The Egene people trace their historic descent from the old Benin Kingdom (James, 2004). Talbot (1932), cited in Alagoa and Kpone-Tonwe (2002), gave an autochthony account of divine

settlement of the Egene ancestors on the banks of the Orashi River. The Egene language belongs to the Edoid group of languages, as it is reflected in the Inedua, Ogua and the Ediro dialect groups that make up the Egene Ethnic Nationality (Kay Williamson and Ndimele cited in Alagoa and Derefaka, 2002 and Enemugwen, 2006). The Egene people live in cluster houses and communities situated along the southern axis of the Egene/Orashi River (Izeogu, 2018). The people predominantly engage in fishing and farming as their occupation. Her other subsistent occupations are hunting, lumbering craft and commerce which are influenced by the geography of the Equatorial rain forest and their association with neighboring communities, such as the Ogba, Ekpeye, Zarama, Biseni, Okordia and the far Kalabari traders in the early 20th century (Joel, 2019). According to Joel, the Egene people practise Egene religion, based on their strong belief in the Supreme God (Oniso) whom they worship and deities and ancestors whom they venerate. Every aspect of the Egene culture promotes communalism, which is strongly expressed in her funeral rites as discussed in this paper.

The Egene people are traditionally religious. Their religiosity is expressed in their recognition of the supreme God whom they call “Oniso” and worship. The evidence of His worship is expressed in the names given to their children such as:

Onisodemuya, meaning: God is great or big. Other names include:

Onisosueya, meaning: God is alive

Onisokietu, meaning: God has given

Onisokienyeme, meaning: God is my strength

Onisobuana, meaning: thank God

Onisodemeya, meaning: God is with me

Onisodumeza, meaning: God abide with me, etc.

In the same vein, they venerate their ancestors and deities still in the names given to their children, such as: Adebo, meaning: big father; Adeyin, meaning: father has come; Iyame or Onume, meaning: my mother; Iyabo, meaning: big mother, etc. These names refer to their earthy parents. They also bear the names of their deities or ancestors whose names they give to their children. For example, “Onyugu”, etc.

From these names, it is suggestive that the Egene people rarely refer to God as father. He is usually addressed as God (Oniso), except in the Lord's Prayer where God is referred to as father (Asume) as addressed in the Scriptures. In the light of this exception and may be a few others, a school of thought is of the opinion that the Egene names with Christian bias are translated into Egene after the incursion of Christianity. This argument, however, does not contradict the fact that the Egene people are religious. They live together and know one another. They virtually share everything together in the spirit and brotherhood of communalism, as expressed in their traditional funeral rites.

Funeral Rites

The Egene funeral rite is a traditional and religious ceremony which the community performs when a member of the community dies. In Egene, an individual or family, no matter how wealthy they may be, does not bury their dead alone. I recall several incidents when some wealthy individuals and families felt that they could bury their dead without the extended families or community involvement. Such plans met with stiff resistance from the community members who argued that the deceased came from a biological family lineage and community, not from the wood. This attitude towards burying the departed is the same throughout the different cultures in the central Niger Delta. Thus, this influences the argument is the basis for cooperation in burial ceremonies and it strengthens communalism in all aspects of the people's engagement, from childhood to adulthood, unto death. A funeral rite actually starts before the burial, during the burial and after the burial.

Before the burial, at the incident of death, the bereaved family traditionally informs the maternal and paternal parents of the deceased about the death of their son or daughter, especially if the deceased is an adult. Such information is sent through a close member of the deceased family who is given a bottle of drink (usually alcohol) to announce the sad news. The drink is a symbol of respect and regret to

the maternal and paternal families of the deceased. It also conveys request and permission to conduct the funeral. If the drink is accepted by the bereaved family, preparations for the burial commence. Contrarily, a rejection of the drink could suggest a rejection of the information and demands that some explanations be made concerning the death, as the case may be. If all things remain equal, a date is fixed by the family and another bottle of drink is sent to inform the family of the bereaved about the burial date. In the early times, the deceased is preserved overnight locally or buried same day he/she died.

During the burial proper, very early on the burial day, the first daughter or any other chosen to do so will lead the women women of the community in a dance procession round the community, chanting the good virtues of the deceased. The bereaved family has its roles and the community has its roles to play in the funeral, both complement each other. The bereaved family provides one male goat that is used to entertain the community in addition to the entertainment that is made by family members for their friends and visitors who attend the funeral. Plantain and yam are the usual food during the funeral. The first daughter of the deceased is usually expected to coordinate this aspect of the funeral. When the general food is provided, tradition requires that the chief mourner tastes the food first in a ceremony referred to as “Oboeda”, interpreted to mean “hand of the witch”, to certify that the food is safe for eating by elders of the family. Another aspect of the eating ceremony is referred to as “Ude-esan”, interpreted to mean pepper drink, presented at the family hall called “Obi”, as a dessert after the main food had been served and eaten.

When the corpse of the deceased is brought, it is taken to the family house where it is laid in state for family members and sympathizers to pay their last respect. The children of the deceased file round the corpse in turn to make parting presentations to the dead. Such presentations include: wrappers, usually white or George wrapper, biscuits, soft drinks, cash, etc. The cash is used in buying items to entertain the women who stay around the corpse, who are called “Igburu Ivuram”, meaning womenfolk. Still on the burial day, the

bereaved family is expected to open a place where sympathizers and close family members are expected to make their contributions towards the burial. Money realized at the Obi is used to buy drinks, groundnut, garden eggs, etc., to entertain people at the Obi (family hall). At the end of the burial, another goat is presented by the bereaved family to the community to indicate that the burial is over, in a ceremony called “Okò Kpeyam”, meaning washing the canoe, which is usually the means of transportation during the funeral runs. Also indicating the end of the funeral is the sharing of the property of the deceased. This ceremony is necessary because it is the belief of the people that when the property of the deceased is shared and worn by the family members that are living, the dead also is clothed. The procedure for sharing the property requires members to pick any cloth of their choice that is spread on the floor. They are called in particular order of seniority, starting from the immediate family to the extended family. Those who choose a property are required to give a token amount that is used in buying drinks, groundnut, etc., to entertain themselves. The funeral ceremony usually lasts for seven days, and in each of the days, the family feeds visitors and members of the community within the period. The visitors engage in different dances, eating and exchange of pleasantries. The cost of doing all these is enormous and this informs the need for communal support to lessen the burden on the immediate family. So funeral rites in Egene are a communal engagement

The influence of modernity: Apart from the roles attributable to Christian missions and the corollary agents of colonialism, modernity also plays its part in the changes which are ongoing. Urbanization and industrialization in the central Niger Delta cultures of Ogba, Egenni and Ikwerre are some of the contending factors that are undermining the culture of communalism among the people. They disturb the traditional sense of solidarity in such a way that some people lose their sense of community and cultural ethos, thereby leaving them with little or no foundation in their traditional setting (Mbiti, 1969). In the urban centers, people develop alternative ways of living that betray

the traditional anchorage, which are open to the new Western-oriented structures in the web of change and modernization. This gives rise to a shift in socio-cultural views which manifest in a vastly increased range of choices confronting individuals (Gutkind, 1969). This whole new perception is sometimes very inimical to the welfare and solidarity of the community.

Conclusion

Funeral rites in the central Niger Delta communities are a communal responsibility, because members of the community show full presence and participation. They are not expected to engage in any farming, fishing or occupational activity. Those who may in error (or forget and) go for other businesses are expected to return by the invitation of a talking drum announcing the beginning of the funeral or the death of a member of the community. Funeral rites in Ogba, Egenni and Ikwerre are ceremonies that unite the people, and give them a sense of belonging and an identity. This sense of communalism is enhanced by the settlement pattern of the community which is cluster living, where everybody is a brother's keeper in every ramification, including security and food production. This culture is eroding because of cross-cultural contact and globalization, but it needs to be revitalized to sustain and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the people.

On the final note, the concept of communalism is gradually being eroded among the different cultures in the central Niger Delta societies, with the increasing wave of globalization and Christianity cutting across Africa and changing the people's worldview.

Recommendations: Considering the arguments above, this paper wishes to recommend as follows:

- (i) The basic ideas behind the culture of communalism should be taught to the younger generation.
- (ii) Those issues which discourage communalism in these modern times should be changed.
- (iii) Owing to the need for a better life, individuals should give birth to fewer children so that nobody will be a liability, which is one of the arguments against communalism.
- (iv) Every member of the society should endeavour to acquire a means of livelihood.

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