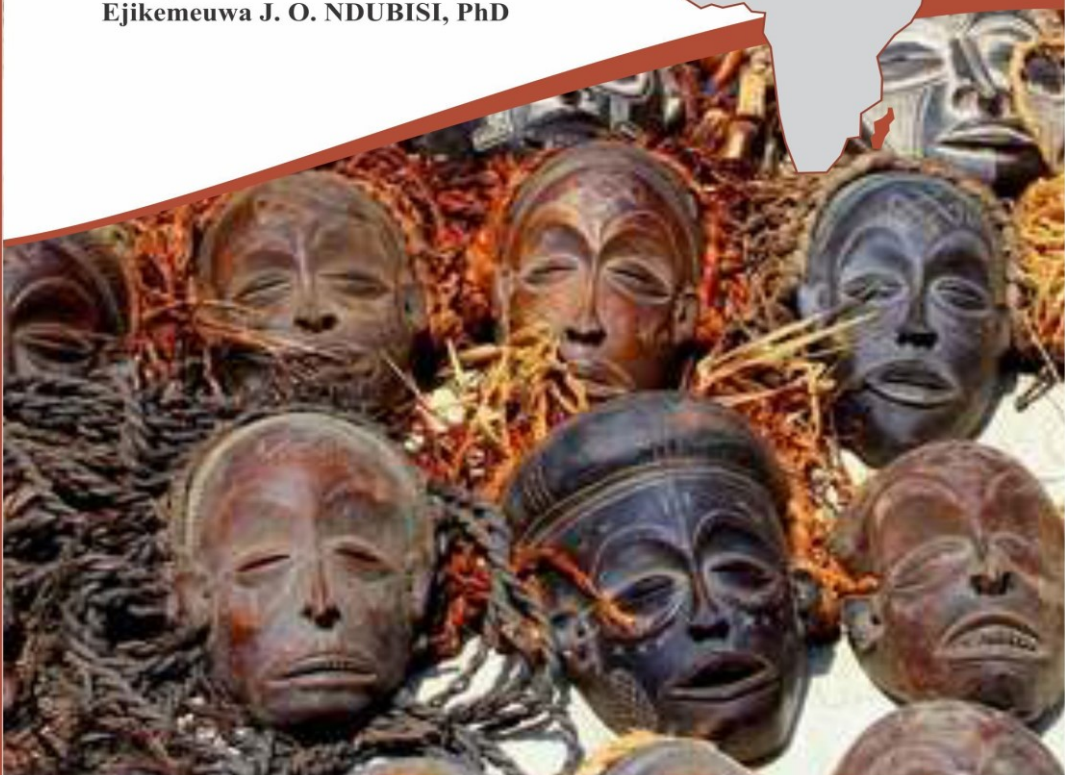# African Religion and Culture

Honouring the past and
Shaping the Future

**Editeors**

**Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD**
**Kanayo Louis NWADIALOR, PhD**
**Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI, PhD**

# AFRICAN RELIGION AND CULTURE: HONOURING THE PAST AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

*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**
**Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD**
**Kanayo Louis NWADIALOR, PhD**
**Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI, PhD**

# African Religion And Culture: Honouring The Past And Shaping The Future

Edited by: Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, Kanayo Louis NWADIALOR & Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI

First Published in 2021

A publication of The Association for the Promotion of African Studies

## Dedication

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

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Edited by: Ikechukwu Anthony KANU,
Kanayo Louis NWADIALOR & Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI

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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 Religion and Culture: Honoring the Past and Shaping the Future: 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* is part of the outcome of the conference.

# AFRICA'S ETHICS OF ELEGANCE

## Prof. Mahmoud Masaeli, Ph.D.
St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada

> A person is a sage in a philosophic sense only to the extent that he (she) is consistently concerned with the fundamental ethical and empirical issues and questions relevant to society and his ability to offer insightful solution(s) to some of those issues.
> -     Henry Odera Oruka, *Sage Philosophy,* p. xviii

## The issue

In October of 1990, I arrived at Conakry airport of Guinea, accompanied by my wife and three little daughters. It was terribly dark outside, crowded, and disorganized. Dim and scattered lights by candles and kerosene lamps lit up space to some extent. We were surrounded by countless taxi drivers who wanted to serve us. We randomly selected two taxi drivers and they carried us to Novotel located in the coastal part of Conakry. It was the only good hotel in Conakry at that time, i.e., thirty years ago. The next day, I could quickly rent an apartment in a neighborhood surrounded by slums, purchased some basic furniture and other necessary equipment, and started my own work as attaché in the embassy of Iran. This was the beginning of my acquaintance with Africa - a stage of discomfort.

Shortly, my (false) perception of Africa as a backward and unsafe continent drowned in chaos, poverty and civil wars became worsened than before. As a stranger to the continent, this wrong perception, learned from the educational institution and the media, had convinced me that the continent was in need of the saviour to help them get rid of the miserable life. During almost the first two months of living in Conakry, this misunderstanding pervaded my mind. The situation was so difficult for us that we were not able to grasp the truth of Africa's beautiful cultural identity hidden behind the colonial legacy. The

worst was our colonized mind, which was unable to unveil the veils of ignorance and find the truth in African identity and culture. But, it did not take so long for us to slowly get to know Africa, with an open mind and heart. Traveling to the interior of the country, especially Labe and Pita, and then trips to countries in the region from Sierra Leone up to Nigeria, and from Niger and Burkina Faso to the Republic of Mali, changed profoundly my mind. The real Africa was not the distorted social construct we were imagining. Africa was a land of natural beauty, community life, human spirituality, and the land of sages. This was my original and proper acquaintance with Africa; I call it Africa's philosophic elegance.

Is Africa an example of backwardness and underdevelopment in the world? Is this lack of development due to Africa's internal structures, local traditions and cultural identity? Is Africa responsible for the problems it is struggling with? Should promising change for a desirable life be achieved on this continent with the help of international aid programmes and foreign investments?[1] Or should Africa first rediscover itself, rely on the cultural context of its rich identity, and then pave the way for overcoming problems through a constructive dialogue with the outside world? Basically, how can the conditions of despair and hopelessness be surmounted in favour of a bright constructive path for the future? Who are the forces and forerunners of this clever move? How can its mechanisms be provided? This short article presents the stages of a constructive

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[1] Paul Collier in *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done about It*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2008, in response to the question why is Africa stuck, argues the condition of underdevelopment in the continent caused by domestic factors. He fully ignores the structural causes by colonial, and the post-colonial systems. Similarly Jeffrey Sachs in *The End of Poverty*, published by Penguin Books in 2005, favors a similar perspective, and hence, finds the role of foreign investors as the key in the development of the continent.

journey from the condition of discomfort caused by underdevelopment toward a philosophic elegance, using Africa's sagacity.[2]

**The condition of discomfort**
The conception of discomfort connotes a situation of suffering in both physical and psychological dimensions of the pain. This situation relates to a condition in which people's daily efforts to reach their goals are impeded often by structural causes beyond their ability to control. In the physical sense of the term, discomfort refers to the damage to the community of mankind caused by the modernization model of capitalist development. Basically, the people of developing countries that have paid for the advancement of the capitalist societies during the colonial role are the victims of this damage. As Peter Berger puts it, this damage needs a calculus of pain and suffering that has blatantly affected the living condition of billions in the world[3]. This damage is so profound that it would be very hard, if not impossible, to rectify and cure in the current structure of the world. Indeed, the condition of structural underdevelopment is a social construction imposed on developing countries. Andre Gunder Frank, the Marxist scholar of dependency theory, once said that we cannot hope to formulate adequate development theory and policy for the majority of the world's population who suffer from underdevelopment without first learning how their past economic and social history gave rise to their present underdevelopment. Therefore, the physical suffering caused by the condition of underdevelopment is not original or traditional. It is a situation imposed on people. Frank further argues that yet, most historians study only the developed metropolitan

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[2] Kenyan Philosopher, Henry Odera Oruka, in *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy,* published by Brill in 1990, encourages Africa's genius philosophy as the point of departure from the condition of underdevelopment toward development.

[3] Peter Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change, Penguin Books, 1975*

countries and pay scant attention to the colonial and underdeveloped lands.[4]

This historical and structural process of suffering is far deeper and more terrifying than we can imagine. In fact, what has happened is deadly and exhausting devastation deep within the meaning of life. The people of underdeveloped or developing countries are not only suffering from poverty and especially inequality, but most importantly, they are in a state of hopelessness and lack the capacity to cope with and rectify those historical sufferings. Berger relates this feature of suffering to the calculation of identity damage. For him, the calculus of meaning must be considered by the victims themselves as to how to overcome the condition of discomfort driven from hopelessness. In fact, the process of modernization, having been concentrated too much on economic progress, tended to fracture the bonds of community, and to deprive life of meaning. This has caused powerlessness, hopelessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, alienation, self-imposed stigmatization, and internal divisions within underdeveloped societies.[5]

As a result of the depression in the physical essence of life and distortion of its meaning, any hope for a desirable life now and in the future turns to a condition of despair and discomfort. Discomfort distorts people's intellect as well as their spirit to decide how they, in terms of their authentic identity, want to be and sets them to a living condition, which is empty of any sense of deep reflection on their worth and dignity. The end state of this cultural, intellectual and

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[4] Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," Monthly Review, Vol. 18, No. 4: September 1966.

[5] Denis Goulet, *The Cruel Choice: A New Concept in the Theory of Development*, University Press of America, 1985. And, Mahmoud Masaeli, "International Development: An Overview of Definitions, Historical Evolution, and Debates", in *Canada and Challenges of International Development and Globalization*. Ottawa University Press, 2018.

psychological situation would be a distorted picture of life, losing hope for the future, and finally pessimism. As a response to this devastating living condition, people should first think about themselves and their undeniable worth and dignity, so that they can recognize the beauties of their humanity and capabilities to form their own appropriate model of life. Then, relying on a determined will, they must question the hegemonic social and economic conditions that govern their society.[6] This determination will combine the two basic dimensions of life, i.e. the aesthetics for self-realization and criticizing the structures of domination in society, to create a new meaningful space for autonomous human reflection. This urges people to say no to the myth of modernization growth and free themselves from the false perception of life.

It is worth mentioning that discomfort breeds anxiety, and anxiety, in turn, generates passivity and negativity. In this condition, depreciation replaces the appreciation of life. People may say there is no hope. Life is not worthy of living. Life is nothing but a process of suffering; there is no moral judgment; "justice is non-sense, etc. The condition of discomfort, then, constrains the brain, hampers the growth of spirit, and sets people in a disturbance zoon with no hope, and consequently, no determined will to change their course of life. In this condition, people become either passive and take refuge in isolation and indifference toward their destiny, or turn to aggressive behaviour, destroying the lives of others as a remedy for their own discomfort. The former adapts itself to any situation and blindly obeys the leadership of the latter. The end state of this discomfort situation would be the collapse of the communal life, the demise of social virtues, and a condition of fragility endangering the life of all.

Another view of discomfort must also be explained. As a result of science and technological progress, the human condition has been

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[6] The best classical analysis of the hegemonic structure has been provided by Gramsci. See: Anthonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, Colombia University Press, 1992.

improved drastically. It has often been accepted that modern science and technology have the power to end all patterns of human suffering. Demagnification of human understanding, i.e. rationalization, transparency, and certainty in the knowledge of oneself and society, and progress in social sciences, render all obstacles against human prosperity and flourishing into the dustbin of history. Modernization, empowered by rationalization, brings hope for a better life and invests in man's hand its destiny. The history of the last three-centuries is a clear evidence of the demise of the hierarchical social systems, and consequently people's enjoyment of their freedom, all conducive to a profitable life of happiness and equality. However, this optimistic view of history and evolution of people's living conditions has been discredited by the emergence of colonialism of the lands and minds of people, inequality and suppression. The myth of supremacy and arrogance of Western scientific rationality signs undermined the entire promise of human freedom and prosperity, and instead paved the way for a rampant capitalist system generating many malaises for the world.

Africa is a clear evidence of the aggressive capitalism depleting natural resources of the continent at the service of the privileged classes and groups in Western societies. The post-colonial era could not free the continent from unbridled systemic capitalism. The mind of the people remained captured, let us say colonized. Frantz Fanon criticized the false self-perception of the black people who lost their origin, culture and identity while creating in their mindset a complex sense of inferiority. The black came to find only one destiny; to become like the white and intimate the culture of the former colonizers. The negation of the African soul is not just material or social activities, he said. It is an act of depersonalization that can be reversed through cleansing revolutionary violence. The colonial condition came to be a process of dehumanization and otherness making - an arrogant and unscrupulous racial discrimination. The end state is so trembling for the human soul. Physical pain, diseases, slavery, social hierarchies, and all patterns of traditional suffering

have been reduced to the minimum level. But, inequality, the invisible patterns of discrimination, and the demise of the communal life, on one hand, and losing the meaning of life, on the other, have exhausted the continent. While many are suffering from a miserable life trapped in exploitation, internal conflicts, corruption, massive displacement, and other social malaises, a minority consumes a lot, enjoys the luxurious world of fashion, fade and beauty. The process of modernization and nationalization in the post-colonial era created the seeds of destruction in itself. People may have a sense of emptiness; being abstracted from their real needs. A ceaseless race for materialist satisfaction has drowned many into a vortex of discomfort. Akin to many other parts of the developing world, Africa is suffering from both physical pain and the loss of traditional meaningful life.

## Africa's philosophic elegance

In the African intellectual movement, in spite of diverse orientations and perhaps contradictions, genius thinkers are striving to revive their original cultural traditions as a genuine response to the condition of discomfort. It is a philosophical movement that is not known to the Western observers, just as African tradition remains unknown to the non-Africans. In fact, the rooted nature of African philosophical thought, which determines the way of life and the standard of behaviour for its people, is less likely to interact with the abstract Western philosophical concepts. Thus, in Africa, philosophical thought expresses its historical identity. This philosophy is essentially tracing the roots of the current malaises back to the colonial transforming condition through which the continent lost its original view of life, hence is trying to revive and restore it as a definite remedy for the process of suffering. This movement must be called a philosophic elegance, intertwined with Africa's meaning of life, necessarily because it is all invented in the communal fabrication of personhood. In Igbo tradition, the person, who is the centre of the communal life and its philosophizing, is called *Mmadu,* that means the person as the symbol of the beauty of life in the pure sense of the

term. The person is the representative of the beautiful life, hence is not restricted to any specific racial or ethnic group of people; it is the member of the community of mankind. This means that everything in nature and even in the celestial world exists for him. The person is not the same as the Western individual, who is disengaged from the communal roots and the beauty of nature. It is a full human being, whose personhood is extended in harmony with nature, the communal life, and the beauty of being together.

I owe this understanding of Africa's identity as the source of philosophical reflection to my Nigerian friends. The harmony between human beings and nature is the essential soul of African philosophy. Anthony Kanu emphasizes harmony, but goes further to see a human being as a creature completing nature. This holist view of humanity gives the person the sense of who (s)he is, as opposed to the Western view of humanity in the abstract meaning of individualism. The person is fabricated in the community, nature and the creature. For him, the Igbo term "Igwebuike" best reflects this view of the human being. "When human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force".[7] This reflects the idea that in African thought, the meaning of life is summed up in communal relations and solidarity with the whole creature. For Kanu, communal life is defined even beyond the harmony between the person and nature. It is, indeed, his complementary role that signifies strength. "Igwebuike posits that no task is beyond the collective capability of a group".[8] This communal understanding of personhood eliminates any inconvenience. Therefore, one must return to the original roots of the term "human being" and its communal essence. This is the idea I want to call Africa's philosophic elegance.

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[7] Anthony Kanu, "New Africanism: Igwebuike as a Philosophical Attribute of Africa in Portraying the Image of Life" in *African Perspectives on Global Development*, edited by Mahmoud Masaeli and Sanni Yaya, Cambridge Scholars, 2018, p. 94.
[8] Ibid.

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In this perspective, the unit of analysis to tackle the causes of discomfort is not the disengaged self, the individual, abstracted from both the constructed world of the community or the natural world of

The "I" within the "we"

*Igwebuike*

The "community" within the whole cosmos

The "we" within the communal bonds
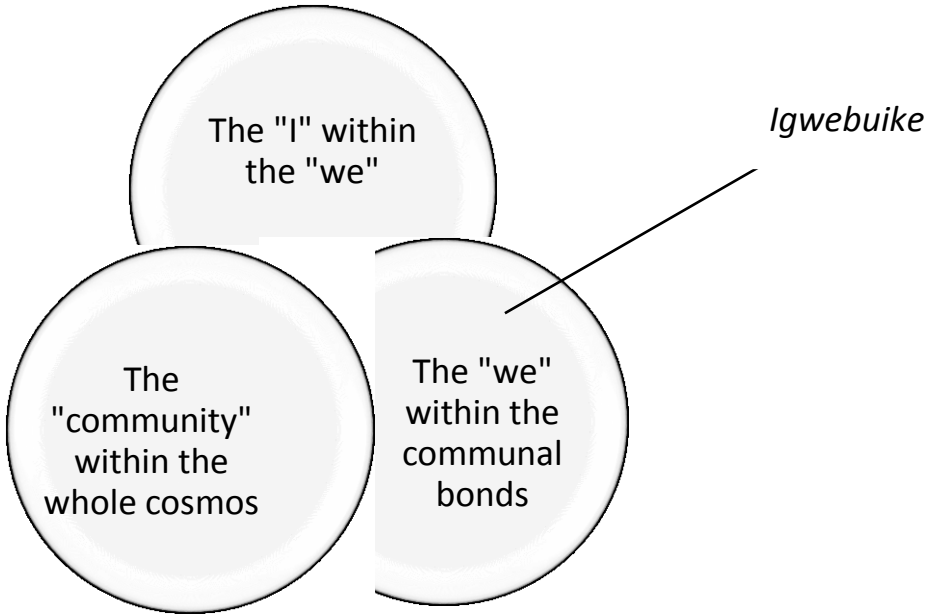
the creation. Rather, it is the person, whose sense of being is attained in accordance with the very Igbo term "Igwebuike". Therefore, life has an essential participatory element. "Life is a life of sharedness; one in which another is a part thereof".[9] This participatory process ignores the calculation of personal outcomes. Instead, it takes life as an active participatory and meaningful space with the full opportunity to live together and extend the sense of personhood together. This life is identified with insights, symbols, proverbs, belief systems, belongingness, and witticisms.

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[9] Ibid, p. 95.

This perspective of life and the person takes its root in all dimensions of the creation and human status as crystallized in its communal and cultural fabrication. As a result, the human capacity to understand which has been distorted by turning into an instrumental capacity gives its place a pearl of philosophical wisdom that justifies the very *Igwebuike*. This thought-provoking wisdom identifies communal belongingness and frees the concept of culture from its rootless understanding. *Igwebuike* urges a dialogical understanding of the complementarity of personhood to open up a process of mutual understanding, learning together, responding to communal needs, and drawing the picture of the "we" in the whole existence. This exalted meaning of person within the "we" considers life as the highest good necessarily because no creature is excluded from this sustainable view of life. "Because of the prime place that life occupies in African philosophy, everything that the African does is geared towards the preservation of life". This philosophic reflection on the meaning of the person and the communal life has the potential to overcome the condition of discomfort. Helping each other in time of crisis, the extended family, respecting the elderly, empathy with the oppressed, generosity and chivalry, and social responsibility and accountability strengthens the harmony, togetherness, and deeply rooted solidarity, and give meaning to the person and the personhood.

| Harmony, solidarity, and quality of life | The African conception of personhood | Communal identity and togetherness |
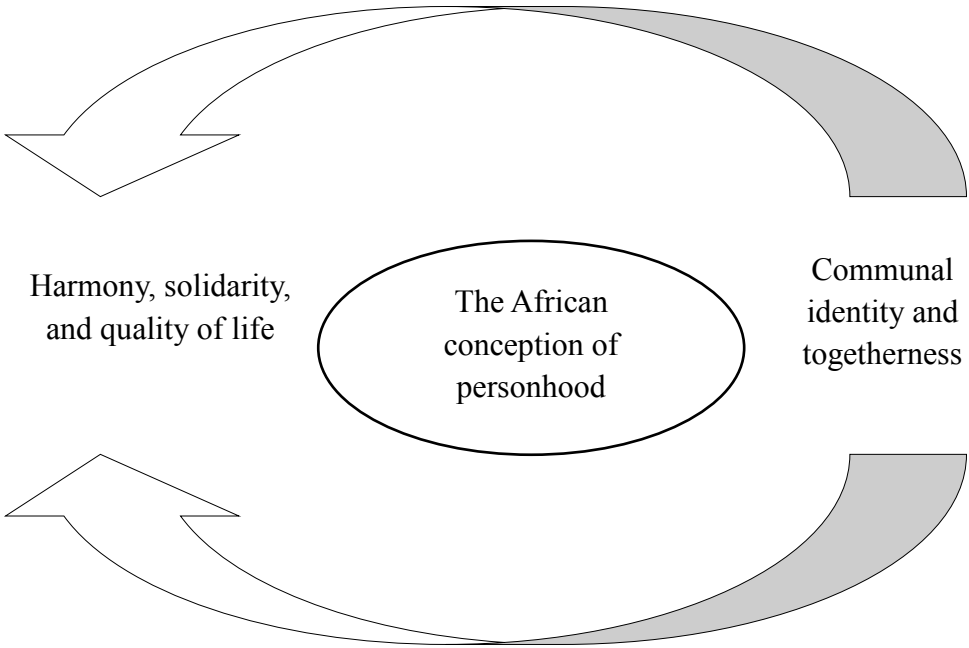
## Conclusion: Toward an ethics of elegance

How to move from the condition of discomfort to hope and action.

The first insight is to surmount the limitations of the modern (ized) view of life which rendered us into a situation of discomfort emptiness. This requires a twofold process of questioning our view of life and drawing doubt on the social relations and norms in order to be capable of reflecting on the sense of togetherness. This means a critical understanding of the meaning of life within the communal boundaries. "That existence is not only meaningful but also possible only in a community". Togetherness as a sense of belonging to the community provides the opportunity to enhance our awareness about the complex issues, problems confronting the community, concerns, expectations, and solutions related to the common destiny. A very significant openness provided immediately is to learn how to respect

the alternative perspectives of life, and avoid generalizations, hasty judgments and decisions.

The second insight is to understand and agree that deficiencies are always present in the thoughts and attitudes of oneself and others. This acknowledgment makes it easier to deal with conditions of discomfort, to embrace discomfort instead of trying to avoid it. This enables us to be more careful about the causes of discomfort and to realize that our behavioural habits cannot cure problems and pave the way for the future. This insight teaches us to consider changing our attitudes and assumptions about the meaning of life. It teaches that we must return to the roots of our identity to define our position in the face of discomfort and work responsibly to promote communal life.

The third insight instructs to go with the case-to-case analysis of the cases and problems deriving from the condition of discomfort. It teaches us to extend beyond the restrictions of the dichotomous views to be capable of removing communicative barriers. The path toward the ethics of elegance inspires hope with a plan of action.

# ON THE CONCEPT OF CREATION IN AFRICAN ONTOLOGY

**Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD**
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State
ikee_mario@yahoo.com
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1977-202X
**&**
**Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI, PhD**
Department of Philosophy
Kogi State University, Anyigba
ejike.n@kogistateuniversity.edu.ng

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2132-4309

## Abstract

*There is a general belief among the African people that the world was created by God. In fact, the creation of the universe is understood as being part of the natural attributes of God. Thus, he cannot be God and not be able to create. This explains why the African, during prayers, in songs and proverbs, refers to God as the maker or creator of the universe. This is also evident in the different titles that the African people give to God. The Akan call him the Excavator who created all things; the Akamba speak of him as the Maker of all things; the Banyarwanda speak of him as the Potter of Life; the Tiv refer to him as the Great Carpenter; the Kiga call him the fashioner; the Yoruba and Igbo refer to him as the Maker and Owner of Life. For the purpose of this research, this piece would study five African myths bordering on creation, to bring out the different dimensions of creation in African*

*ontology. These dimensions would include: creation by delegation, creation ex nihilo, the enduring nature of divine creation and the sustenance of creation. The phenomenological approach would be employed in the collection and analysis of data on the African concept of creation. Contrary to the absence of the belief in the creation of the world by God in some Western thoughts, this work argues that within the African parameter of belief, the world was created by God.*

**Keywords:** African, creation, sustenance, world view, God, phenomenology

## Introduction

In simple terms, the concept of creation naturally attainable through reason or the mind's interpretation of the world points to the action of creating and that which has been created. The first, which is the action of creating, stands for the productive activity of creation by a creator, and the latter, which is the created, stands for the reality that has been created in so far as it was created by a creator. However, in its theological and philosophical senses, creation focuses on the activity of God or First Cause who brings another reality into existence, that is, the entire substance (*totius substantiæ*) from a state of non-existence (*ex nihilo sui*). The implication of the idea of creation is that the creator, who is the first cause, has, within himself, an infinite power, wisdom, etc., who now becomes the source of the fecundity that creatures possess.

Before the advent of Christian writers, the idea of creation had perdued in various forms. In Aristotle's theory of cause and effect, he provided a singular philosophical basis for further argumentations in favour of the theory of creation in his Five Ways, which is obvious in the works of Albert the Great, Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure. These theologians, taking advantage of the Aristotelian philosophical disposition, embraced the relation of the world to God

as its efficient cause. With the advent of modern thought, the idea of creation changed substantially. Although Descartes (1983), Malebranche (1997), Leibniz (2004), etc., maintained its theistic brand, this was challenged by Spinoza (2004), and later gave way to realistic Pantheism, and the perspectives of Fichte (1988), Schelling (1801) and Hegel (1956) who introduced varying idealistic Pantheism (Catholic Encyclopedia).

Notwithstanding these perspectives, this paper focuses on the understanding of creation within the context of the African world view. It raises questions such as: How does the African understand creation? Was the world created by a supreme being? And if yes, was it created out of nothing or from already existing matter? To respond to these fundamental questions, the paper studies African myths of creation to draw from them the responses to these questions.

**Methodology**
This piece is an explanatory and analytical research on the concept of creation in African traditional religion in terms of their world view which is inescapably connected to their lifestyle. 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 myths from different African religious backgrounds on the creation of the universe by God. It would also touch on the African people's expression of this understanding of their relationship with God in terms of creation, especially in their names. This work would rely mainly on secondary sources, namely; books, journals, internet sources, etc. The phenomenological approach would be employed in the collection and analysis of data on the African concept of creation. In addition, this piece provides a deeper analysis of the concept of creation in African ontology.

**African Myths on Creation**

African myths are simple stories that tell of the origin and destiny of the human person (Kanu, 2015). The myths below are about the creation of the human person. The purpose of studying these myths is to understand from them the dimensions of the African concept of creation.

### 1. Ife Creation Myth

Very interesting is the Yoruba mythology of creation. The myth holds that Olodumare, the Supreme God, originally lived in the lower part of heaven, overlooking endless stretches of water. One day, Olodumare decided to create earth. He sent an emissary, the Orisha Obatalá, to perform this task, giving him what he needed to create the world: a bag of loose earth, a gold chain and a five-toed hen (Vega, 2001).

These different elements had their purposes. Obatalá was instructed to use the chain to descend from heaven to the water below. When he got to the last link of the chain, he poured the loose earth on top of the water and placed the hen on the pile of earth, and ordered it to scatter the earth, with her toes across the surface of the water. When the hen was done, Obatalá climbed the chain to heaven to report his success to Olodumare, who then sent his trusted assistant, the chameleon, to verify that the earth was dry, after which Olodumare gave the earth a name: *Ile Ife*, the sacred house.

After the creation of the earth, Olodumare returned to the uppermost part of heaven. However, before his retirement, he distributed his sacred powers to Obatalá, the Orisha of creation, and Yemayá, the Orisha of the ocean, who gave birth to a pantheon of orishas, each possessing a share of Olodumare's sacred power. Olodumare gave Obatalá the sacred power to create human life. Obatalá was the divinity that created our ancestors, endowing them with his own divine power (Vega, 2001).

## 2.   Efe Creation Myth - Congo

The Efe creation myth has it that God created the first human being with the help of the moon and kneaded the body of the human person out of clay. After this, God covered the body with skin and poured blood into the body. The name given to the first human person by God was Baatsi. After the act of creation, God whispered into his ear to beget many children, but to ensure that he impresses upon the children the following rule: from all trees you may eat, but not from the Tahu tree.

Baatsi had many children and he made them obey the rule. When he became old, he retired to heaven. His children obeyed the rule and when they grew old, they too retired to heaven. However, one day, a pregnant woman was seized with an irresistible desire to eat the fruit of the Tahu tree. She asked her husband to break some for her, but he refused. However, when she persisted, the husband crept into the forest at night, picked the Tahu fruit, peeled it, and hid the peel in the bush. While he did all these, the moon saw him and told God what the husband of the pregnant woman had done. This made God very angry with human beings, and so he sent death as a punishment among human beings.

## 3.   Nyamwezi (Tanzania) Creation Myth

The Nyamwezi creation myth has it that Shida Matunda created all things. After making the earth and water and plants and animals, he created two women and took them as his wives. His favorite wife, however, died. Then Shida Matunda buried her in her house and remained at her grave, watering it every day. After some time, a little plant began to grow from the grave. Then he was glad, because he knew that the dead woman would rise again. He did not allow his other wife to come near the grave.

But one day, when Shida Matunda had gone out, the wife was overcome with curiosity and she stole into the house. When she saw

the plant, she was jealous and cut it down with a hoe. The blood of the dead woman poured out of the grave and filled the house. When Shida Matunda returned and saw the blood, he was much afraid and said: "You have killed your co-wife and thereby caused all men, animals, and plants to die." It was from Shida Matunda and the surviving woman that all other humans descended.

### 4. Wassa Myth of Creation

The Wassa people of Ghana have a myth of creation that traces creation back to Onyankopon - the great God of fullness and satisfaction who, before creation, was the only being in existence. He created the world to become a companion to him, a wife. Added to the world which he created were also spirits who would also keep him company. He ensured that the world was beautiful and he asked the spirits to visit his wife from time to time. They would make their journey to the world using a long chain that springs from his throne. He also gave the spirits permission to inhabit realities that are on the earth. Their major responsibility was to run errands for him (Abanuka, 1999).

### 5. Basare Myth of Creation

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 lightning 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.

**Creation as an Ordered Event**

The African does not think that creation by the supreme being was a haphazard event. It is generally believed that it followed specific order. God first began with the creation of the spiritual world where he lives and then the material world where man lives. For instance, the Ife and Efe creation myths presuppose that the spiritual world was already in existence before God began the creation of human world, just to make clear that he had already created the spiritual world and all that dwell in it before he embarked on the creation of the physical world.

In the Basare myth of creation, God created the world in four stages. Also, in the Fon myth of creation, God carried out the activities of creation using a four-day programme which he marked out. In myths where days are not mentioned, the orderliness of the creating process is not lost. For instance, among the Vugusu, God created the spiritual world and the moon and stars and sun first, before he began the creation of the earth and the human person. Among the Akan, God created the world in the order of the heavenly universe, the earth, rivers, waters, plants, animals and man. The order that we find in creation affirms that man is at the center of the African universe, because we see that God creates every other thing in preparation for man's well-being in the world. Comparatively, this relates to the Christian understanding of creation as an event that took place in six days.

**Creation *Ex nihilo***

Most creation accounts among the African people are *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), meaning that there was nothing except God before he created the universe. For instance, the Banyanwanda, Nuer and Shona peoples hold that there was nothing before God created the universe in the original act of creation; however, after creating some realities, he now uses what exists to create other things (Mbiti, 1969). And the beauty of the understanding of creation out of nothing in African

ontology is based on the African understanding of the nature of God who is all-powerful and the first cause of all that there is. God is, therefore, the first subject matter.

The understanding of the concept, *ex nihilo,* within the African context does not in any way imply that 'nothing' is the source of 'something' that has been brought into existence. Rather than this, it only holds that:

a.    creation came into existence not from any pre-existing material that was already in existence that was not created by God;

b.    the implications of this, therefore, is that creation is not a change or transformation, since the latter process includes an actual underlying pre-existent subject that passes from one real state to another real state;

c.    creation is not a procession within a supreme being as in the case of the Trinity;

d.    creation is not an emanation from the substance of the Creator, since the Creator is utterly indivisible;

e.    creation is an act, which although has its emergence from the Creator and is an instantaneous operation;

f.    the consequence is that the creation is dependent on the Creator.

**Creation as the Prerogative of a Supreme Being**

In the African world, the prerogative of creating and organizing the world belongs to the supreme being. The names that the African people give to him affirm that he is Creator because they believe that creating belongs only to his nature as God. This is evident in African names, proverbs, songs, myths, etc. In fact, it is from the acknowledgment of his power of creation that many other titles or names of God emerge; names such as: first cause, omniscience, omnipotence, eternal, judge, pre-eminent, self-existent, transcendent, etc. In a Gikuyu hymn, in Mbiti (1969), they say that God has:

> No father, nor mother, nor wife, nor children
> He is all alone
> He is neither a child nor an old man
> He is the same today as he was yesterday (p. 34)

In a Pygmy hymn, in Young (1944), it is said of God that:

> In the beginning was God
> Today is God
> Tomorrow will be God
> Who can make an image of God?
> He has no body
> He is a word which comes out of your mouth
> That word! It is no more
> It is past and still it lives
> So is God (p. 146)

In the Gikuyu hymn, the idea that God has no father or mother or wife or children and that he is all alone points to the fact that every other thing that is in existence came to be through him through the act of creation. In the Pygmy hymn, there is an emphasis on the fact of his being in existence in the beginning. Being in the beginning without any other, he is, therefore, the first cause of all that there is.

The table below shows that the names that Africans give to their God are based on who he is to them, and these names point to the fact that he is the Creator.

| NO | NAME | PEOPLE | MEANING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Borebore* | Akan | The First, the Creator of all things |
| 2 | *Nwatuangi* | Akamba | Carver, inventor, originator |
| 3 | *Eleda* | Yoruba | The creator |
| 4 | *Elemi* | Yoruba | The Owner of |

| | | | the spirit |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | *Chineke* | Igbo | The providential creator |
| 6 | *Opu-Tamuno* | Kalabari | Great Creator |
| 7 | *Osanobua/Osanobwa* | Edo | Creator and sustainer of the universe |
| 8 | *Temearau* | Ijo | Creator of all things |
| 9 | *Aondo* | Tiv | The power above that creates and rules all things |
| 10 | *Chukwu* | Igbo | The Great God, the First Force that is the source of other forces |
| 11 | *Ekenweuwa* | Igbo | The creator that owns the world |
| 12 | *Onyeokike* | Igbo | The one that creates |
| 13 | *Ekejindu/Ekenwendu* | Igbo | The creator that owns life |
| 14 | *Ekekerummadu* | Igbo | The creator that created the human person |
| 15 | *Ekejiuba* | Igbo | The creator that is responsible |

| | | | for all wealth |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

The table below shows that the names that Africans give to their children are based on their belief that God is the creator of the universe.

| NO | NAME | PEOPLE | MEANING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Madueke* | Igbo | Human beings do not create or human beings are not creators |
| 2 | *Onyebueke* | Igbo | No one creates |
| 3 | *Chinwendu* | Igbo | God owns life |
| 4 | *Chikere* | Igbo | God created |
| 5 | *Chikeremma* | Igbo | God created the good |
| 6 | *Chijindu* | Igbo | God holds life |

**Creation by Delegation**

Even though creation is God's prerogative in African ontology, he can also create through delegation. He delegates his deans, that is, his deities who are subordinate to him but superior to human beings. There are particular deities that are associated with creation. God picks a particular deity from the college of deities and gives the responsibility of creation. While the deity carries out the task of creation, he does it within the limits of the commands of the Supreme Being, and thus, does only what the Supreme Being has ordained to be.

The fact that he creates through delegation does not in any way mean that he has lost his place as creator. For instance, in the Yoruba creation myth, creation began with Olodumare's decision to create the world, then he sends his emissary, the Orisha Obatalá, to perform this task, giving him what he needed to create the world. Also, in the Bambara myth, it was Faro, the god of water and master of the earth, that created the world at the authority of Amma, the Supreme Being. There are narrations that speak of God's word as creating the world, as in the case of the Fon myth. It was through the *Fa* (the word of God) that he brought reality into existence. In this case, *Fa* is not just a word, it is a manifestation of the will of God, an agent of creation.

**Creation as a Process: Divine Providence**

The African does not believe that after the days of creation or the order in which creation is described that creation ended. There is a strong belief in the continuous presence of God in the things that he has created. This is evident in the prayers that the African people say to God. The Nuer tribe pray to God in these words:

> Our Father, it is thy universe, it is thy will.
> Let us be at peace and let the souls of thy people be cool
> Thou art our father, remove all evil from our path (Evans-Pritchard 1956, p. 7)

The Galla tribe addresses God in these words:

> O God, thou hast given me a good day
> Give me a good night
> Thou hast given me a good night
> Give me a good day (Huntingford 1953, p. 74)

A common prayer among the Nandi tribe, recited at least twice a day, says:

> God, guard for me the children and the cattle
> God, guard for us the cattle
> God, give us health (Huntingford 1953, p. 135)

In the Nuer prayer, the person saying the prayer reminds God that the universe is owned by him and that our peace as his creatures is determined by him. He did not just create it and handed it over to his deans or creatures. The Galla see God present in his day and night, and the result of every day and night is the gift of God, and so he prays for a good day and a blessed night. In the prayer of the Nandi, the precious gifts of children and cattle that have come from God can only be safeguarded by him. This is why the Nandi prays to him for the protection.

The African believes that creation is a continuous process, as God continues to create the world through his divine providence. For instance, the Twi people hold that "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, in spite of the end of the days of creation. 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.

## Conclusion
The African idea of creation is a reflection of the diverse religious traditions in the continent. There are more than fifty myths describing the same act of creation by God in Africa. However, as is always the case, in spite of the diversity, there is always a connecting line that links all the diverse narrations of the story of creation in Africa. An obvious reality is the tracing of creation back to God the Supreme Being. In fact, creation is an attribute that is considered natural to him; he cannot be God and not create, and if he did not create, then he is not God. The next connecting line is the idea of order in creation. Although different religious traditions speak of different days, for

some, the universe was created in four days and for some, it was created in six days; for some, the heavens were created first, which was followed by the creation of the physical universe. In whichever narration, it is clear that there was order in the act of creation by God. An idea we get from the order in which God created the African universe is the presence of hierarchy in creation. First, the spiritual world is brought into existence and it is followed by the creation of the physical world. In the hierarchy of beings, spiritual beings that were first created with the creation of the spiritual world are endowed with more force than the physical beings created. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the hierarchy of beings in Africa, God takes the first place, followed by the deities and spirits before the human person and other physical realities. And the order in creation is further manifested in the relationship that exists between the different levels of being: man relates with God, the deities and spirits in an order that has been set by the creator. It is in this relationship that continuousness of creation is realized through divine providence.

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# TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN THE FACE OF NEW ERA: A BETTER SAFEGUARD FOR THE PROGRESSION OF HEALTHCARE CLAIM IN IGBO-AFRICAN WORLD

**Agama Christian Sunday, PhD**
Directorate of General Studies
Federal University of Technology, Owerri
christianagama19@gmail.com.
&
**Onyeakazi Jude Chukwuma, PhD**
Directorate of General Studies
Federal University of Technology, Owerri
**Jude.onyeakazi@futo.edu.ng**, **judefuto@gmail.com**
08033694748, 08129937821

## Abstract

*Traditional medicine has been an age-long mode of treatment. It has been in existence even before the domination of orthodox medicine, particularly in Africa. Almost everybody was highly dependent on it for survival when it comes to health issue. But gradually, orthodox medicine became the order of the day, putting the traditional medicine by the side. Today, the reverse is becoming the case, as there are many health challenges facing orthodox medicine. Medical doctors are too few to attend to the massive population that needs them. Many orthodox medicines are too expensive and do not get to the reach of the common man. Diseases are becoming resistant to orthodox medicine. Some ailments that defy orthodox medicine, such as amputations/bone settings, poison, snake bite, etc., can be comfortably taken care of by the traditional medicine. However, this paper aims at bringing out its effectiveness and how to protect it from the new healthcare directives. It claims also that*

*traditional medicine is not just an alternative mode of treatment to orthodox medicine, but that it is currently a better safeguard for the progression of healthcare system in Africa, since its usefulness has made some orthodox manufacturers to append the word "herbal" to their products, due to its potency and effectiveness. Scientists are turning to traditional medicine by studying its drugs and modifying them to look modern. Since traditional medicine can no longer be avoided, this paper concludes that sooner or later, traditional medicine will not only become a better safeguard for the progression of healthcare claim, but will remain the only saving grace that can save humanity from dying out.*

**Keywords:** Medicine, traditional medicine, orthodox medicine, African world, treatment

## Introduction

In the words of Heraclitus, "the only constant in life is change". This simple truth is all-embracing that even on the aspect of medical treatment, change is still constant. The change here thus remains that before the introduction of orthodox medicines, the traditional medicine used to be the prevalent medical system available in Africa, both in rural and urban areas. The earliest form of healing substances has been herbal medicines, but the coming of the Europeans marked a significant change in the history of traditional medicines in Africa. The colonization of Africa by the white ethnicity, together with the civilization which has come about the scientific understating of ill health, have become the basic and well-known products in managing diseases in the modern health system in Africa. This in effect brought about some accusations against traditional medicine. The criticisms so far have made a number of people to be afraid of making themselves available for receiving the traditional healthcare. But then, it is still important to think of the following questions: How then was the traditional medicine used in those days that men were noted for

longevity? Was traditional medicine so destructive and people were able to survive and produce the present medical doctors? What makes traditional medicine still effective in healing up to this age? This similar case makes the President of Madagascar – Andry Rajoelina - to question the world when their traditional medicine for COVID-19 was neglected. He asks: "what if this remedy had been discovered by European country, instead of Madagascar? Would people doubt it so much? --- What is the problem with COVID Organics, really? Could it be that this product comes from Africa? Could it be that it's not OK for a country like Madagascar, which is the 63$^{rd}$ poorest country in the world --- to have come up with (this formula) that can help save the world?"(https//www.france24.com).  Yet it is pertinent to note that orthodox medicine does not provide all it takes to cure people of their different sicknesses. Due to the same imperfection in orthodox medicine, traditional medicine is becoming a turning point in Africa.

In Nigeria, for instance, experience shows that orthodox medicine is mostly available in social media as well as other so called avenues of procuring the medicines (Egbucha, 2006). Where they are, an average income earner finds it difficult to obtain them, while others below average status go home disappointed. This explains why the rural populace has got new interest in the use of traditional medicine. Likewise, majority of the people in Nigeria today still find it difficult to afford the cost of anti-venom injections for snakebite when the incident occurs. Hence, snakebite is easily cured with medicinal plants. Bone fractures are also taken to traditional health centers for bone setting, which the orthodox health care system still battle to handle; while in most cases they cut off the affected part of the body.

Although there has been mix reactions and feelings over the use of traditional medicine in Africa (Bello, 2006; Feierman, 2002), traditional medicine is still in use in  present-day Africa, without many reported cases of adverse effects (Okigbo and Mmeka, 2006:83). Countries such as Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Mali are are reputed for treating over 60% of children who had fever that came as a result of malaria with the use of herbal medicine (WHO, 2006). Carpentier

et al (1995) revealed that there was an increasing demand for traditional medicine, especially in the case of rheumatic and neurological complaints in Burkina-Faso, while about 70% of the population in Ghana depends primarily on traditional medicine (Roberts, 2001). In South African (majorly the black South Africans), over 27 million people use traditional medicine to treat different kinds of diseases (Mander et al, 2007; Lekotjolo, 2009). In Tanzania, Makundi et al (2006) assert that traditional healthcare has made a wonderful impact on treating *degedege* (convulsions) in rural areas. In Nigeria (Lagos), Amira and Okubadejo (2007) uphold that a significant number of hypertensive patients at the tertiary health facility make use of both conventional treatment and CAM therapies.

The above instances summarize the true use of traditional medicine around African countries. These and some other vast knowledge showcase the evidences of growing demand for traditional medicine for primary health care in Africa. Recent studies about health care claims are testing whether traditional medicine system is becoming dominant or at least is paying important healing process of which can no longer be undermined as it was in third world countries. Therefore, traditional medicine, if properly harnessed, will become a better safeguard for health care delivery, since all and sundry will have access to it.

**Conceptual Analysis of Traditional Medicine**

Traditional medicine, also known as folk medicine, ethno-medicine, native healing or complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), is the oldest form of health care system that has stood the test of time (Abdullahi, 2011). It is a type of medical practice that has been culturally bound by aboriginal inhabitants who have been using it to combat different ailments affecting their life. The World Health Organization (2006) defines traditional medicine as "the sum total of the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health of physical and mental illness".

The World Health Organization Report (2000) further gives the features of traditional medicine to include:

a.      Traditional medicine is based on a belief that health is a state of balance between several opposing aspects in their human body. Illness occurs when an individual falls out of balance, physically or mentally. The "cause" of imbalance could be change of whether, intake of certain food; external factors, such as magical or stimulation and societal reasons. Traditional medicine tries to restore the balance using different therapies.

b.      Traditional medicine is based on the needs of individuals. Different people may receive different treatments, even if they suffer from the same disease. Traditional medicine is based on a belief that each individual has his or her own constitution and social circumstances which result in different reactions to "causes of disease" and treatment.

c.      Traditional medicine applies a holistic approach. It considers a person in his or her totality within an ecological context and usually will not only look after the sick part of the body. Besides giving treatment, traditional practitioners usually provide advice on lifestyles and healthy behaviour.

d.      Traditional medicine precedes modern medicine. Most traditional remedies have not been evaluated by sound scientific methods. This means that, at this stage, traditional medicine is not easily understood by modern medicine. However, traditional remedies have been "field-tested" by tens of thousands of people for hundreds of years.

From every indication, the traditional health care systems are still functional and effective in the use of their medicines by the majority of people, both in Africa and beyond. No wander Romero-Daza (2002) points out that traditional medicine remains the only source of medical care for a greater proportion of the population.

On the other hand, traditional healers are those who do not have any formal medical training but are considered (by the local community)

as being competent to provide health care using animal, plant and mineral substances and certain other techniques based on social, cultural and religious backgrounds as well as the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that are prevalent in the community regarding physical, mental and social well-being and the causation of the disease and disability (WHO, 2002). According to Cook (2009), the healers in Africa are being addressed in differently as *Babalawo, Adahunse* or *Oniseegun* among the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria; *Abia ibok* among the Ibibio community of Nigeria; *Dibia* among the Igbo of Nigeria; *Boka* among the Hausa-speaking people of Nigeria; and *Sangoma* or *Nyanya* among South Africans. The indigenous healers (doctors) are known for treating patients in all ramifications in both spiritual and physical aspects.

In Igbo understanding, every disease or sickness has connections with invisible, spiritual or supernatural and natural origins. In view of this, Iroegbu (2005) maintains that "for the Igbo, health is something shared inter-corporally and inter-subjectively, both in the worldly and other-worldly or the visible and invisible realms". It is as a result of this that the Dibia (traditional healer) practicalizes his duty towards being an expert in the general or particular field of healing. Besides, the supernatural and, at times, long vocational and initiatory apprenticeship into the art of healing are very exhaustive and demanding (Iroegbu, 2005). In as much as the healers are qualified by the type and nature of disease they treat, a healer's reputation is mostly relied on his level of expertise. A particular Dibia can combine more than one area of specialization, sometimes the physical and the spiritual. Thus, it is through this methodic healing that the Igbo have been able to protect themselves and take care of any health challenge that comes across their life.

However, this is why in Igbo African world, the English word 'medicine' cannot be properly referred to as traditional medicine and healing. The proper word for medicine in Igbo is ogwu. The term 'Ogwu' is not just limited to materials used for therapeutic reasons.

According to Nadel (1954), it involves materials which exercise remote and miraculous effects on the efficacy of other objects. In the words of Monica Wilson, as cited in Ogugua (2015), "Medicines in African beliefs can be used not only to heal or to kill, but also to secure power, health, fertility, personality or moral reform, to make a bride 'patient and polite to her in-laws, a chief majestic or judge complaint". The Igbo medicine is managed and controlled by those who know how to tap its power and the implications involved in its use. This is why it is not everybody that administers traditional medicine to people. It is believed to be destined to some sets of individuals or groups. "Thus medicines are thought to tap the power put by God into some herbs and other substances with those who know the right formula can tap and use for their own ends, good or bad" (Metuh, 1985). Above all:

> This understanding of the concept "Ogwu" is engineered by the dual though co-extensive perception of reality of the Igbo, in which there is no demarcation between the physical and the spiritual, the profane and the scared, as both the visible and invisible realities penetrate and permeate each other as postulated by the theory of forces, more so interaction of forces (Ogugua, 2015).

Meanwhile, this paper is silent on the spiritual, metabolic or metaphysical aspect of traditional medicine (and healing) attached to it. What is concerned about here is the capacity the African traditional medicine has in treating ill-health, which, to some, the orthodox medicines are incapable of treating, and not even the method the traditional healers applied.

## Areas Championed by Traditional Medicine in Igbo–African World

Bone setting is one of the areas championed by traditional medicine, compared to orthodox medical practice. The traditional bones setters

are experienced and specialized in this filed. They have the abundant knowledge and skill of setting broken bones through traditional methods. Patients that sustain the fractures are taken care of by the bones setters until they recover fully. It is worthy to note that the traditional healers or doctors are highly recognized in this field more than the practitioners in the field of orthodox medicine. Sofowora (1993) confirms this when he says that "traditional bone setters are known to repair compound fractures, and some are said to be so skilled in the art that they can heal fractures which do not respond to treatment in modern hospital". Merely looking at the method of bone setters at their practical operations, one will find out that it is not so complicated and complex. One can learn to handle the bone fractures if taught, and without the sense of keeping the secrecy.

Traditional healers also make use of hydrotherapy in their treatments. The peculiarity of this hydrotherapy among the traditional practitioners is that they use water, either cold or hot, or even the hot vapor state, with or without drugs, for treatment. At times, it is recommended for one to bath with cold water, especially a patient that is so weak, in order to regain strength and to boost the body system, but not in the case of one that is feverish, which is contrary to the practice of orthodox medicine. For the traditionalists, hot water is always prescribed for a patient that is febrile, either to bath with it or to drink it. Any of them may be done with herbs. Inhalation of steam that contains some herbs is also powerful in hydrotherapy. When the COVID-19 disease was ravaging the whole world at high rate, hydrotherapy was highly recommended, especially in Africa. Till date, the use of traditional herbs (medicine) is still effective as a precaution against the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Andry Rajoelina (the president of Madagascar) the patients who have healed from corona virus have taken no other product than COVID-Organics. Of course, 171 coronavirus infections and 105 recoveries with no deaths were reported in Madagascar. And this is why when the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the COVID-organics drink, which Madagascar's Rajoelina has touted as a remedy against the deadly

coronavirus, has not been clinically tested, Rajoelina declared vehemently that "no one will stop us from moving forward – not a country, not an organization"(https//www.france24.com).

Poison is another known disease that is cured by the Igbo-African traditional medicine. The Western medicine has not been known to cure or control poison cases. In most cases, when sick people who are suffering from poisoning are diagnosed, nothing is found. Yet, we watch them dying. The tradition healers (of this kind) know the type of herbs they use to treat the ailment. It is very effective, and many in Igbo land precisely can testify to it. A lot of testimonies have been given by the victims of the deadly poison sickness. The only problem with these traditional healers is that they hardly reveal the secret concerning the actual herbs they use for the treatment. At most, they can only reveal the secret to their favorite children who may wish to practice it with the parent.

Snake bite treatment in traditional medicine is also effective and cheap compared to orthodox medicine. Due to the availability of the simple materials, traditional healing can easily be got at a low price. It is not commensurable to the modern medicine (specifically the anti-venom injections). As such, many choose to get treated with herbs and roots of plants that prove very effective against snake bite. Amadi (1991) confirms that this has been proved to work against the lethal effects of cobra toxin.

There are many more other areas that traditional health care services provide for their people in Africa. In Igbo precisely, Tapan (2014) enumerates some health problems which the Igbo people have been able to tackle by themselves. Such problems, according to him, include: "…neurological disorders and some others… like eye disease, skin disease, fever, diabities, headache [birth delivery], arthritis, diabetes, diarrhea, stomach ache, and nervous disorders". Though these may appear to be minor,  yet, they are major,

considering the population that could have been congesting the orthodox hospitals and the level of poverty surrounding the countries in Africa. A good number of people are being saved from many deadly diseases via the affordable traditional medicines. Just as many could have died from one sickness or the other simply because they could not afford to pay for their treatment in modern hospitals, if there were no such thing like traditional medicines.

**Challenges Facing Traditional Medicine in Igbo-African World**
In every profession, there are always some challenges. The production of traditional medicine is not left out, just like orthodox medicine too. In Igbo, there are still barriers to translating the knowledge of traditional medicine into commercially reasonable health products. And the cause of this particular problem is because the knowledge of (each) traditional medicine has not been able to be channeled through any of the communicative links like radio, television, internet networking, as well as discussing it in seminars, conferences and distance learning programmes. These are some of the vital tools that will help the traditional practitioners to be more exposed with novel and practical steps to be taken in discovering the new medicines that solve human-related health problems. This will also make individuals, both home and abroad, to have access to the medicine, since there are proven information that enhance their productivity. In most developed countries, their traditional medicines are quite more effective due to access to proven information made available through different modes of media links. When the traditional healers begin to translate knowledge of their medicines to different parts of the world through the media channels and possibly through information communication technology (ITC), it will pave way for standardized traditional medicine not only in Igbo land but the entire African world.
Traditional medicine in Igbo-African world is still faced with problems of unethical practices. Unethical practices, according to Akarowhe (2018), are "practices which are not in conformity with a given institutional code - of - conduct, or a given profession or institution". It is expected that at this present era of globalization,

traditional medicine should be re-modernized from a primitive way of products manufacturing to a modern way. There should be neatness in performing a specific function of the medicine. Obu (2015) says that why this peculiar problem is associated with traditional medicine practitioner is because most of them are illiterate and they practise it in very remote areas. This is why some people get discouraged about taking the medicine. Therefore, there should be an inclusive education so that the primitive and barbaric standard of traditional medicine will improve to a more modern type.

Another challenge of this medical treatment is the unavailability of quality control. It is easily abused. As long as individuals can indulge in self-medication of traditional medicine, one who is not careful enough can make the mistake of applying a wrong medicine on an ailment. Thus, this particular problem on the practice of traditional medicine can "double blind a clinical and toxicological studies to prove their efficacy and safety" (Obika and Eke, 2019).

There are lots of fake healers and fake medicines simply because of the growing demand of the traditional medicines and the contributions of the medicines to the overall health delivery system in Africa. No wonder Ebomoyi (2009) asserts that in as much as the proficient healers could be rendering beneficial services to a large population, it might be common place to encounter quacks among the practitioners. Pretorius (1999:253) also makes a similar point by articulating some reasons why traditional healers increase the production of fake drugs. Thus, he says that, "in the current economic climate and amid the concomitant unemployment, there is a marked increase in the ranks of traditional healers among whom there are, unfortunately, quite a number of charlatans". To this effect, it is quite realistic that due to the above problem, patients may run the risk of buying or consuming the inferior quality.

The Western predominance mentality over the regulation and standardization of medicine that are usually swaggered by most influenced members in modern medicine is also another serious challenge that cannot be left out. It has been in circulation and well acknowledged that traditional medicine does not meet up with scientific paradigms or procedures with regard to objectivity, measurement, codification and classification. It is still an expectation that the physical ingredients of the traditional medicine can be analysed in the scientific pattern. But the philosophy behind this particular challenge is such that if the physical aspect of the traditional medicine is subjected to scientific analysis using the conventional scientific methods of investigation, what about the spiritual aspect of it? How can, for instance, the spiritual aspect of Ofo (incantation) in Igbo be analyzed scientifically? And then, the question remains, are we really looking for the scientific analysis and methodic rules, or the active healing of the medicine? How many persons in the world today are concerned about the scientific methods and analysis of the orthodox medicine before its uses? Given the inherent epistemological and ideological characteristic differences between orthodox medicine and traditional medicine, it is quite difficult to determine the efficacy and effectiveness of traditional medicine.

**Conclusion**
This paper has argued that traditional medicine has been long in existence even before the advent of white men ethnicity in Africa. It is of the opinion that irrespective of globalization and the challenges it has faced, traditional medicine will continue to grow not only in Africa but globally. The establishment of some core health treatments by traditional practitioners using traditional medicines in Africa (like, bone settings, healing of poison, snake bites, COVID-19 disease, etc) shows that traditional healers have made a great impact in promoting positive health care as well as serving as a good referral point to modern health care system. At least, the usefulness of traditional medicine has prompted some modern manufacturers to affix the word

"herbal" to their products, since there is a growing demand of the medicine.

However, this paper submits that since the goal of both orthodox and traditional medicines is to achieve, maintain and provide a satisfactory level of health care delivery to the large number of people. Traditional medicine should be recognized globally, provided it delivers people from the targeted ailment. Both traditional and orthodox doctors should acknowledge their areas of strengths and weaknesses, and refer to the other what they cannot handle. The philosophy and theories of disease symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment used in African traditional medicine should be established and learned, because the demand for the use of the medicine is no longer limited to its countries of origin but across the world. African leaders should develop interest and pay serious attention to global aims in the discourses of traditional medicine for the benefit of all and sundry. Above all, since many diseases are becoming resistant to orthodox medicine, and scientists are turning to traditional medicine by studying its drugs and adapting them to look modern, sooner or later, traditional medicine will not only become a better safeguard for the progression of healthcare claim but will remain the only saving grace that can save humanity from dying out.

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# INNOVATIVE TRENDS IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

**Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI,** *PhD*
Department of Philosophy
Kogi State University, Anyigba
ejike.n@kogistateuniversity.edu.ng
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2132-4309
&
**Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD**
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State
ikee_mario@yahoo.com
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1977-202X

### *Abstract*

*The human person has been confronted with fundamental health problems. These health challenges have led to the quest for various solutions. As a way to find cure for diseases, the human person discovered the medical values of some plants and herbs which have curative potencies. African people were not left out in this quest to find solution to the medical challenges of the human person and so we have African traditional medicine. African traditional medicine is a form of holistic healthcare system that provides healthcare services based on culture, religious background, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that are prevalent in a particular African community. Also, Africans view illness as having both natural and supernatural causes and thus must be treated by both physical and spiritual means, using divination, incantations, animal sacrifice, exorcism and herbs. Herbal*

*medicine is the cornerstone of traditional medicine in Africa. With the aid of hermeneutic and phenomenological methods in philosophy, this study discovers that the future of African traditional medicine is very bright if viewed in the context of service provision, increase of healthcare coverage, economic potential and poverty reduction. The study, therefore, calls on African Heads of Governments, NGOs and all lovers of Africa to facilitate the formal recognition and integration of African traditional medicine into conventional medicine in order to engender both sound healthcare delivery and economic development.*

**Keywords:** African traditional medicine, spirituality, divination, herbs, healthcare

## INTRODUCTION

The instinct to survive is always prevalent in the mind of everyone who has faced the threat to his or her life. Health is the greatest wealth and as such people go to any length to preserve their heath. Africans, like other races, have this instinct and inevitably their own means of responding to health challenges. These means may be by divinations, rituals, incantations, visions, trances, dream, and the intervention of ancestral spirits. African traditional medicine has passed through various evolutionary stages, which Chike Ekeokpara has described as trial and error: "It is quite probable that man as soon as he has reached the stage of reasoning, found out through the process of trial and error that plants can be used as food, that some might be poisonous and may lead to death when eaten while some had medicinal value and power". [1]

In this study, we shall focus on African traditional medicine, with particular emphasis on its innovative trends. To do this, we shall first

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[1]C. A. Ekeopara, "*African Traditional Religion*: *An introduction". (*Calabar: Natos, 2005) p.25.

of all explain some operational concepts and thereafter delve into the historical aspect of the traditional medicine in order to trace some important era in the life of African traditional medicine (ATM) and also to help us trace its evolution. Next, we will dwell a little on the influence of the religious aspect of the Africans on their medical system. In order to get a clear picture of what ATM is about, we will do a survey on the scope and science of ATM in these three aspects: divination, herbalism and spiritual activities. The innovations in the trends on ATM will be explored. The paper will end with a concluding reflection.

**TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**
According to *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, traditional medicine is the total combination of knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease. Traditional medicine refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being.[2] It comprises medical aspects of traditional knowledge developed over generations within the folk beliefs of various societies before the era of modern medicine.[3] Traditional medicine could as well be defined as the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, that are used to maintain health, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illnesses.[4] One can simply say that African traditional medicine is the African way of responding to health challenges in varied ways.

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[2]Traditional African medicine in  https://www.nobi.nlm.nih.gov (Accessed: 3/5/2021)
[3]Traditional African medicine in www.wikipedia.com  (Accessed: 3/5/2021)
[44] Traditional African medicine in http://www.sciencedirect.com (Accessed: 3/5/2021)

*Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI, PhD & Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD*

## HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

The development and use of traditional herbal medicine have a very long historical background that corresponds to the Stone Age. In the continent of Africa, the practice of traditional healing and magic is much older than some of the other traditional medical sciences and seems to be much more prevalent compared to conventional medicine. African traditional medicine is a form of holistic healthcare system that is organized into three levels of specialty, which include divination, spiritualism and herbalism, though these may overlap in some situations. The first African that began the practice of African traditional medicine was **Sangoma** or spiritual healer as he was called.[5] He is from South Africa. There were lots of controversies among African scholars with regard to the inventor of African traditional medicine. A historian, Mary Motley, said 'it was **Imhotep** from **Egypt** who started the practice of medicine in Africa',[6] while some opposed the assertions made by this renowned historian. The first physician of antiquity of any fame was the black Egyptian, Imhotep, who lived about 2980BC during the third dynasty, and he was so highly thought of in his day that he was worshipped as a kind of god centuries after his death. He cured physical and mental sicknesses. In later years, people slept in the shrine at his temple, dreamed of him, and went away cured.[7] Many scholars attributed African medicine to have originated from **Hippocrates**. Some said that Imhotep lived two thousand years before the Greek doctor Hippocrates who is called the father of medicine. It is an irony of history that African medical doctors are ignorant of the existence and contributions of Imhotep. It is evident that the ancient Egyptian medical practitioners employed both magical and scientific means.

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[5]Historical origin of African traditional medicine in http://www.sciencedirect.com (Accessed: 3/5/2021)

[6] I. C. Onyewuenyi. The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism (Owerri: Assumpta Press. 2015), p. 51.

[7] Mary Penick Motley, "*African, its empires, nations and people*"(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), p. 42

This is clear testimony against the views of some scholars who are unwilling to credit Africans with any discovery and who would not admit that African scholars were the originators of ideas and theories which the modern scientists are still trying to understand.[8]

## THE SCOPE AND SCIENCE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Traditional African medicine is a range of traditional medicine discipline involving indigenous herbalism and African spirituality, typically including diviners, spiritualists and herbalists. Traditional medicine is viewed as a combination of knowledge and practice used in diagnosing, preventing and eliminating diseases. This may rely on past experiences and observations handed down from generation to generation, either verbally, frequently in the form of stories, or spiritually by ancestors or, in modern times, in writing. It has also been said that before attaining knowledge in traditional African medicine, one is often required to be initiated into a secret society, as many characteristics of this form of medicine can only be passed down to initiates. These practitioners claim to be able to cure a variety of diverse conditions, including cancer, psychiatric disorders, high blood pressure, cholera, most venereal diseases, epilepsy, asthma, eczema, fever, and healing of wounds and burns.[9]

Diagnosis is reached through spiritual means and a treatment is prescribed, usually consisting of herbal remedy that is considered to have not only healing abilities but also symbolic and spiritual significance. Traditional African medicine, with its belief that illness is not derived from chance occurrences but through spiritual or social imbalance, differs greatly from modern scientific medicine which is technically and analytically based. Traditional medicine was the dominant medical system for millions of people in Africa prior to the

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[8] Ibid, opt. cit.

[9] D. Helwig, "*Traditional African medicine*, Gale Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine", in www.medicineherbaluses.com. Accessed: (4/6/2021).

arrival of the Europeans who introduced science-based medicine, which was a noticeable turning point in the history of the tradition and culture.[10]

**Herbal Medicine**

Herbal medicine is a part and parcel of and sometimes synonymous with African traditional medicine. It is the oldest and still the most widely used system of medicine in the world today. It is used in all societies and is common to all cultures. Herbal medicines, also called botanical medicines, vegetable medicines, or phytomedicines, as defined by World Health Organization (WHO), refers to herbs, herbal materials, herbal preparations, and finished herbal products that contain whole plants, parts of plants, or other plant materials, including leaves, bark, berries, flowers, and roots, and/or their extracts as active ingredients intended for human therapeutic use or for other benefits in humans and sometimes animals.[11] Herbal medicine is a special and prominent form of traditional medicine, in which the traditional healer, in this case known as the herbalist, specializes in the use of herbs to treat various ailments. Their role is so remarkable, since it arises from a thorough knowledge of the medicinal properties of indigenous plants and the pharmaceutical steps necessary in turning such plants into drugs such as the selection, compounding, dosage, efficacy, and toxicity. The use of herbal medicines appears to be universal in different cultures. However, the plants used for the same ailments and the modes of treatment may vary from place to place. The plants used for medicinal purposes are generally referred to as medicinal plants, that is, any plant which one or more of its organs/parts contain substances that can be used for therapeutic purposes, or in a more modern concept, the constituents can be used as precursors for the synthesis of drugs. For example, a number of plants have been used in traditional medicine for many years without scientific data to back up their efficacy. In this case, these plants, whole or parts, which have medicinal properties, are referred to as

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[10] Traditional African medicine, in https://en.m.wikipedia (Accessed: 3/4/2021)
[11] Ibid.

crude drugs of natural or biological origin. They may further be classified as "organized drugs," if such drugs are from plant parts with cellular structures such as leaf, bark, roots, etc., and "unorganized drugs," if they are obtained from acellular portions of plants such as gums, balsams, gels, oils, and exudates. Compared to modern allopathic medicine, herbal medicine is freely available and can easily be accessed by all. As a result, there is limited consultation with traditional healers, because there is a fairly good knowledge of common curative herbs, especially in the rural areas, except in the case of treatment of chronic diseases. Even where consultation is done, there is lack of coherence among traditional healers on the preparation procedures and correct dosage of herbal medicines. However, according to WHO, at least 80% of people in Africa still rely on medicinal plants for their health care.[12] In Nigeria, and indeed the entire West Africa, herbal medicine has continued to gain momentum, some of the advantages being low cost, affordability, availability, acceptability, and apparently low toxicity.

**Illness**
In African traditional setting, there was always an explanation as to why someone was suffering from a certain disease at a particular time. Illness is believed to be of natural, cultural, or social origin. Cultural or social illness is thought to be related to supernatural causes such as angered spirits, witchcraft, or alien/evil spirits, even for conditions now known to be well understood in modern medicine such as hypertension, sickle-cell anemia, cardiomyopathies, and diabetes. African traditional beliefs consider the human being as being made up of physical, spiritual, moral and social aspects.[13] The functioning of these three aspects in harmony signified good health, while if any aspect should be out of balance, it signified sickness.[14] Thus, the

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[12] ibid

[13] Ezekwesili-Ofili Josephine Ozioma and Okaka Chinwe, "*Herbal medicine in African traditional medicine* "(Enugu: SAN Press Ltd., 2012) p.56.
[14] ibid

treatment of an ill person involves not only aiding his/her physical being but may also involve the spiritual, moral and social components of being as well. Many traditional medical practitioners are good psychotherapists, proficient in faith healing (spiritual healing), therapeutic occultism, circumcision of males and females, tribal marks, treatment of snake bites, treatment of whitlow, removal of tuberculosis lymphadenitis in the neck, cutting the umbilical cord, piercing ear lobes, removal of the uvula, extracting a carious tooth, abdominal surgery, infections, midwifery, and so on. According to Kofi-Tsekpo, the term "African traditional medicine" is not synonymous with "alternative and complementary medicine".[15] African traditional medicine is the African indigenous system of healthcare and therefore cannot be seen as an alternative.

**Diagnostics**

The medical diagnoses and chosen methods of treatment in traditional African medicine rely heavily on spiritual aspects. There is a belief among the practitioners of traditional healing that the ability to diagnose and treat illnesses is a gift from God. Rather than looking for the medical or physical reason behind an illness (or a spell of bad luck), traditional healers attempt to determine the root cause underlying it, which is believed to stem from a lack of balance between the patient and their social environment or the spiritual world. In other words, supernatural causes, not natural, are attributed to illnesses. According to the type of imbalance the individual is experiencing, an appropriate healing plant will be used, which is valued for its symbolic and spiritual significance as well as for its medicinal effect.

When a person falls ill, a traditional practitioner uses incantations to make a diagnosis. The incantations are thought to give the air of mystical and cosmic connections.[16] Divination is typically used if the illness is not easily identified; otherwise, the sickness may be quickly

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[15] Ibid

[16] R. Onwuanibe, "*The philosophy of African medical practice*" (Enugu: Wisdom Press, 2019) p.67.

diagnosed and a remedy prescribed. Sometimes, the practitioner will advise the patient to consult a diviner who can give a diagnosis and recommend a treatment. It is believed that contact with the spirit world through divination often requires not only medication, but sacrifices.[17]

## Treatment

Traditional practitioners use a wide variety of treatments, ranging from standard medical treatments to the pseudoscientific and magical. Treatments may include: fasting, dieting, herbal therapies, bathing, massage, surgical procedures, among others. Examples of the pseudoscientific treatments include; the use of bleed-cupping, followed by herbal ointment and herbal drugs, to treat migraines, coughs and abscesses. A steaming mixture of herbs is both inhaled and consumed in the treatment of malaria. Fevers are often treated using a steam bath. The fat of a boa constrictor is used to treat gout and rheumatism and is thought to relieve chest pain when applied topically. Animals are also sometimes used to transfer the illness to afterward or for the manufacture of medicines for zoo therapy. For example, the bones of baboons are used to treat arthritis.

## Divination

Divination means consulting the spirit world. It is a method by which information concerning an individual or circumstance of illness is obtained through the use of randomly arranged symbols in order to gain healing knowledge.[18] It is also viewed as a way to access information that is normally beyond the reach of the rational mind. It is a transpersonal technique in which diviners base their knowledge on communication with the spiritual forces, such as the ancestors, spirits and deities. It is, therefore, an integral part of an African traditional way of diagnosing diseases. The "spirit world" is consulted to identify the cause of the disease or to discover whether there was a violation of

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Op. cit.

an established order from the side of the sick person. This is established through the use of cowry shells, throwing of bones, shells, money, seeds, dice, domino-like objects, or even dominos themselves, and other objects that have been appointed by the diviner and the spirit to represent certain polarities on strips of leather or flat pieces of wood. The divining bones that form the large majority of the objects include bones from various animals such as lions, hyenas, ant-eaters, baboons, crocodiles, wild pigs, goats, antelopes, etc. The bones represent all the forces that affect any human being anywhere, whatever their culture. Because of the revealing powers of divination, it is usually the first step in most African traditional treatment and medicine.

**Spiritual Perspective of ATM**
Spiritual-based cases are handled in the following manner:
Spiritual protection: If the cause of the disease is perceived to be an attack from evil spirits, the person would be protected by the use of a talisman, charm, amulets, specially designed body marks, and a spiritual bath to drive the evil spirits away. These are rites aimed at driving off evil and dangerous powers, spirits, or elements to eliminate the evils or dangers that may have befallen a family or community.

**Physical Perspectives of ATM**
If the illness is of a physical nature, the following approaches are exploited:
**Prescription of herbs**: Herbs are prescribed to the sick person, according to the nature of the illness. Each prescription has its own specific instructions on how to prepare the herb, the dose, dosing regimen, and time frame.
**Clay and herbs application**: Application of a mixture of white clay with herbs may be relevant in some of the healing processes. The mixture is applied to the entire body for a number of days, especially in the case of skin diseases. The view is that the human body is made out of the dust or ground; therefore, if the body has any problem, you would have to go to where it came from to fix it. The use of clay, with

some special herbs, is also sometimes used for preventive rituals to ward off the evil spirits responsible for an illness.

## INNOVATIVE TRENDS IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

With the advent of colonialism, which in turn brought about the Westernization of most of African countries, the practice of ATM first of all went on a downward trend, especially during the colonial period, as earlier pointed out. The importance of traditional medicine, however, dwindled during the colonial period, whereby it was viewed as inferior to Western medicine. It was thus banned completely in some countries, due to its association with witchcraft/voodoo, supernatural and magical implications, in which case, it was also termed "juju" (Nigeria) or "native medicine," since it made use of charms and symbols which were used to cast or remove spells.

Change is always constant and one can hardly stop change. Due to the advancement in technology and development in the society and around the globe, ATM has now remained in the dark, but has evolved and has undergone and still undergoing some innovations, and this modern use of ATM is becoming a trend. Firstly, the number one innovation in the ATM is the evolution of herbalism. This is because herbalism was easily and widely imbibed by Christians and the greater percentage that accepted Westernization, while others who seem to practice the other aspects of the system are seen as heathen. This does not mean that the divination and spiritual facets of ATM are not practised but they have not seen much innovation than their counterpart – herbalism. This having been said, we categorized this innovative trends into two broad classes or types in order to treat them to the best of our efforts. This classification was done based on the practicality and eminence the innovation is among our society.

## Societal Induced/ Paradigm and Innovative Trends in ATM

This class of trend came about because of the development of the society. For the sake of clarity, in the past, our forefathers used clay pots to eat because that was the most sophisticated utensil for them to use, but right now everyone uses either ceramics plates or stainless plates. This paradigm shift also affects the world of the ATM. In a way to make this class of innovations explicit, it is to be noted that the innovations in this class do not affect fundamentally how the ATM is practised but the output and product of the ATM. Some of these changes or innovation are:

**Herbalist Modern Clinic:** People now build and establish firms that claim to treat diseases through herbal methods and in the traditional way; examples of such are Baba *Ijebu*, Papa na Mama *Chukwuebuka*, etc. They are spread all over the continent.

**Use of Modern Medical Facilities**: Some of these firms now use some modern medical machines to determine what is happening to the patient and no longer the guess work which the traditional herbalist are seemingly accused of doing.

**Advertisement and Packaging:** The method of packaging of the ATM drugs are no longer primitive, but they are now packaged in the modern way and properly labeled and also properly advertised all over the media and the newspapers.

**NOVEL / FUTURISTIC INNOVATION IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**
The African traditional medicine system is guilty of major setbacks or loopholes, two of which are: **Data Oriented and Research Oriented.** The novel innovations tried to solve these problems or loopholes by making ATM system pass through some high sophisticated measures.
**Database and Information Oriented Innovation**
One of the traits that make the Western medical system progressive is effective data management – records of drugs, patients, doctors, health history, research, etc. This makes the Western medicine so effective

because there is a kind of follow-up or wealth of sure information about particular a disease and its remedy, or about a particular medicine and how it works. In recent times, profound effort has been made to incorporate this effective data management into the African traditional medicine system. An example of such efforts is pointed out by Razieh Mirzaeian, Farahnaz Sadoughi, Shahram Tahmasebian and Morteza Mojahedi in their research called *Progresses and challenges in the traditional medicine information system: A systematic review.*[19] Traditional medicine is experiencing its rapid advancements era based on health information technology. The modern and technology-based techniques are vital for controlling and maintaining the quality of the herbal drugs.[20]

**Creation of Traditional Medicine Database or Information System (TMDB OR TMIS)**
The creation of a database for storing a large portion of the data and their transformation into useful data has effectively contributed to the progress of TMIS.[21] This is a database that collects and stores data from many sources and reserves them for further usage. This database spans throughout the whole continent and beyond. China's Comprehensive Herbal Medicine Information System for Cancer (CHMIS-C) has served as an appropriate information resource for the TM researchers. In the same way, Web-based Decision Support System for Prescription in Herbal Medicine in Nigeria has played a significant role in controlling the quality of the herbal drugs prescription.[22]

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[19]R. Mirzaeian, "Progresses and challenges in the traditional medicine information: a systematic review" *Journal of Pharmacy & Pharmacognosy Research*, 7 (4), ISSN 0719-4250 (2019) pp.246-259,
[20] ibid
[21] Ibid
[22] ibid

The creation of TMDB is one of the main progresses achieved in the field of TM. Being common in China and India, this system has specifically been designed to support the decision-making system and data mining and processing. There are a lot of databases in TM. Traditional Chinese Medicine Database (TCMID) is the most comprehensive database in use in China, representing remarkable advances in information integration. Besides the combinations of the herbs, this database provides the three-dimensional structures of the herbal combination for research use.

There is universal standardization of traditional medicine all over the world, as encouraged by the WHO. Nowadays, different nations have recognized the critical function of the standards in promoting the levels of quality, safety, validity and efficacy of traditional medicine. These factors form the underlining of TM policies and plans. As a result, some nations have made effort to take effective steps towards the development of the TM knowledge base through sharing the information on the regulatory strategies.

**The Clinical Data Ware House (CDW) of Traditional Medicine**
There is also the clinical aspect to this data management. As one of the most significant TM information resources, CDW is a technical strategy used for storing, managing and processing the mass data. CDW integrates the data of the structured electronic medical record (SEMR) to be used for both the medical knowledge discovery and clinical decision system (CDS) in TM. In 2002, China created the TCM Electronic Medical Record (EMR) (TCM-EMRD). This database contains more than 3500 electronic medical records relating to the in-patients. In fact, it includes the data of TCM clinical practice on the inpatient, including the TCM diagnosis and the description of the concepts, symptoms and formula of herbal medicines. There are also discovery tools for TM modernization as a strong tool for knowledge acquisition from the data repository. Data mining has

found application in nearly all the TM areas. Technically, it serves as a support for the TM modernization process.[23]

The essence of these database and information management is to solve the problem of information deficiency and sloppiness. Those who practice the ATM in this modern era can now have a body or a place or a well of information they can consult while carrying out their work. It also eliminates the problem that comes with individuation as a result of differences in culture and language. One can have access to information that is not of his culture and the person will understand clearly what he is to do because the information in the database is written in such a way that everyone in the field of ATM understands it well.

However, sometimes, one medicinal plant happens to be named differently using the general, Latin, local or commercial names. In contrast, some others of different species take similar names. This becomes more complicated, given the prevalence of the terminology specific to different world languages. Currently, there is no universal terminology and a unified coordinated regulatory attitude. To standardize the structured clinical data, an integration of the systematic terminologies is required. Therefore, the innovation of ICTM becomes a saviour to ATM. Accordingly, in line with the information standardization projects such as International Classification of Traditional Medicine (ICTM), a new project for the compilation of an international standard terminology has been incorporated into the recent ICD programs.

There has been a clarion call for the integration of ATM and Western medicine even by the World Health Organization. A clear example is in Kwa-Mhlanga, South Africa, where there is a 48-bed hospital that combines traditional African medicine with homeopathy, iridology, and other Western healing methods, as well as traditional Asian

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[23] ibid

medicine. The WHO is trying its best to facilitate the global standardization of the TM and herbal medicines. Accordingly, in its planned strategy, it has attempted three goals, namely: constructing a database and compiling national policies, promoting the safety, quality and efficacy of the TM services through laws and standards establishment and integrating the TM services and self-medication into the national health system. Up to now, the majority of the relevant works using the clinical record of TM have been based on well-structured data of prescriptions extracted and organized manually. This method of data collection is highly time-consuming and cumbersome, making the provision of enough data required for achieving reliable knowledge impossible.

Developing a unique information system in TM capable of supporting a huge volume of non-homogeneous data and information is considered as an intriguing progress in TM modernization. The collected information is used for both pattern recognitions that is the main concept of diagnosis in TM and the treatment technique that may be herbal medicine prescription, acupuncture and other similar practices.[24]

Having seen how data management information innovation in ATM has solved the problem of lack of adequate information in ATM, let us see the innovations made on the side of research.

**Research-Oriented Innovations**
Due to the fact that traditional medicine is now gaining ground in this modern era, there is now an increase in the study of its related courses which have always been at the background, or new courses have been created in order to ensure a close research on the traditional medical system. Such disciplines are *Ethno Botany and Phyto medicine.* Ethnobotany is the study of a region's plants and their practical uses through the traditional knowledge of a local culture and people.[25] On

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[24] ibid
[25] Ethnobotany, in www.wikipedia.com (Accessed 07/05/2021)

the other hand, Phytomedicine can be defined as the study of the herbal medicine with therapeutic and herbal properties. A herbal medicine or a phytopharmaceutical preparation can be defined as a medicine derived exclusively from the whole plant or parts of plants and manufactured in crude form or as a purified pharmaceutical formulation.[26]

**Concluding Reflection**

The place of African traditional medicine in the lives of Africans is not to be doubted. Even though the African man is accused of imbibing Westernization, the inkling towards the African traditional medical practices has not ceased. A clear example of this claim was the experience during the Covid-19 in 2020. It was obvious that the Western system of medicine offered no hope to masses and this led to massive return to the use of herbs and traditional means of obtaining medical care which made ATM a beacon of light where other modes or systems of medicine have seemingly failed. The greatest development is that some who are not even Africans by any means are welcoming the ATM medical system because of its efficiency when used and practised well. In the era where everyone is advised to cut down on industry-produced equipment, the quest for natural and organic things is now in high demand, likewise that of health issues.

Some of the problems of ATM, which these innovations, as stated above, have made effort to solve, will make the practice of African traditional medicine a topnotch and a very effective system of curing and giving out medical services. The importance of ATM is now laid bare for all to try and to benefit from it, as the natural herbs and plant extracts are gifts from nature which it has given freely from its benevolence. This is a clarion call for the African man to preserve his environment in order to ensure the availability of such herbs and precious natural produce around us daily. These natural produce are

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[26] Phytomedicine, in  www.sciencedirect.com (Accessed 07/05/2021)

not far from us; they are all around us, only if we can utilize them well.

In sum, it is to be noted that with the rate which ATM is undergoing serious innovations, there will be a radical or complete paradigm shift from the demand of Western medical system to traditional system. Besides, some people see ATM as an alternative to Western medicine, but that notion is about to change in today's world. In fact, the African traditional medicine is a complete system of medicine itself which is different from that of the Westerners and particular to the Africans.

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# ADVANCING THE MERCENARIES OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN THE FIGHT FOR GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY

**Ifeanyi Okeke, PhD**
Department of Philosophy/Religion,
Alex Ekwueme Federal University
Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria
chilurumogu@gmail.com

## Abstract

*Globally, the world is under attack. Call it al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Boko Haram, or banditry. In fact, the list is endless. These organizations are increasingly assuming the position and posture of a hydra-headed monster. The military interventions of combined forces from America, Britain and indeed the United Nations joint forces have not succeeded in silencing these forces that tend to annihilate the entire humanity from the face of the earth. In Africa and particularly Nigeria, nobody can give the accurate figures of lives lost daily as a result of the activities of these terrorists, insurgents and bandits. Military weapons are daily acquired, personnel are daily trained, equipped and lined up to confront these forces, yet these anti-state forces do not feel perturbed, as they are increasingly posing and assuming greater dimensions against the people and states. It is to be noted that African Traditional Religion has mercenaries that can be deployed to assist in the curbing of the activities of these enemy powers. Such mercenaries as witchcraft, medicine, masquerades, secret cults and the like can provide the needed panacea for ensuring peace and security in the global world. The world recognizes and allows orthodox medicine to thrive*

*with traditional medicine in the provision and promotion of human health. Is acupuncture not a key component of traditional Chinese medicine? Do our laws and courts not recognize our customary arbitration, especially oath taking, as veritable means of conflict/dispute resolution? It then becomes pertinent that orthodox military weaponry can go hand in hand with African traditional forces and powers in our collective search for global peace and security. Indeed, the world stands to benefit from African Traditional Religion and its culture of peace.*

**Keywords**: Advancing, mercenaries, fight, global, peace, security

## Introduction

It will be proper to firstly offer some explanations concerning the purpose and usage of few terms which I deliberately decided to use in this work. The choice of the word "Advancing" has a dual meaning herein. The first connotes the upgrading, improving, making more efficient, uplifting, raising, elevation of the mercenaries of African Traditional Religion (ATR) so as to make them fit into the purpose for efficient use. The second meaning connotes pushing, moving forward, to advance towards, to proceed and to confront opposition of state powers with such mercenaries. Further, I carefully chose the word mercenaries here to represent the mystical powers abundant in African cosmology (world view) and traditional religion, with the exception of none, including the acclaimed "good" or "bad", "black" or "white"; not just because they will be paid in the long run like human mercenaries but simply for the purpose of easy identification as indigenous to the traditional African society.

## Overview of Security Challenges Globally

Globally, lives have been lost as a result of conflicts, wars and insecurity. In Darfur, over 300,000 people died (both military and

civilians) between 2003 and the present day. KIVU conflict claimed over 100,000 lives between 2004 – 2017. The war in North-West Pakistan, between 2004 – 2017, claimed between 45,000 – 79,000 lives. The Boko Haram insurgency claimed over 51,567 lives between 2009 and the present day ([www.wikipedia.org](www.wikipedia.org)). Africa is facing a lot of challenges. She is not alone in these challenges, as the challenges are of a global dimension. One of the challenges is the issue of security. It is doubtful if there is any African country that has not experienced one form of security challenge or the other. The al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Boko Haram, bandits and, quite recently in Nigeria'sSouth-East, **Unknown gunmen** at one time or the other have threatened, maimed and killed thousands and millions of people while propagating their reasons for taking up arms.

According to Akokpari (2007), human global insecurity has attained high levels in Africa, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over 40 percent of its 800 million people live below the poverty line and this percentage is predicated to rise. Over 28 percent of all children in Sub-Saharan African are underweight as a result of malnutrition caused by war and other forms of human insecurity. Livingston (2017) argues that insecurity - across a range of measures, including human insecurity in conflict and food insecurity - is intensifying across SWATHS of Africa, including particularly in conflict zones such as Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia. On May 19 (Thursday), 2021, the Africa Security Initiative of the Centre for 21$^{st}$ Century Security and Intelligence at Brookings hosted a discussion on conflict, famine, and security issues in Africa today, which was moderated by Michael O'Hanlon Karen Attiah of the Washington Post who opened it with an overview of the situation in Nigeria, where an estimated five million people face acute food shortages and famine. This figure is to be further juxtaposed with the number of deaths recorded. It indeed calls for an increasingly dire concern. The food crisis is further

compounded by the presence of Boko Haram, a Nigeria-based militant Islamist group, banditry and operations of the "unknown gunmen".

The latest fragility in Chad which led to the April 20th death of the former President of Chad, Idriss Deby, and the subsequent military coup have profoundly destabilized the country and other parts of West Africa. African Security Initiative, on the 7th of May, 2021, held a discussion on fragility in Chad and counterterrorism strategies in West Africa, observing that over the past year (2020), the security situation has deteriorated significantly in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Northern Nigeria. It is to be observed that the West African sub-region, like some other parts of Africa, is facing several challenges from militancy and terrorism precipitated by diverse sets of local militants and international terrorist groups. Twardowski (2021), while summarizing the future of peacekeeping in Africa at an event held on Friday 29th February, 2021, posited that the U.N. Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) played a critical role in fostering conditions for sustainable peace, yet serious challenges abound and more lessons for the future exist. In all of these, human casualties abound on the side of the civilians and military alike. There have been peacekeeping missions in Namibia, El-Salvador, Cambodia, Guatemala, Timor Leste, Burundi, Sierra-Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. Currently, there are 12 U.N peacekeeping missions. Four of the 5 most complex missions are in Africa (Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan).

In Nigeria, for example, a report by the Institute for Security Studies has it that images like those of the latest killings in Borno State, where 35 people were killed, constituted the bigger security challenges. Obadiah (2019) notes that the actions of the security forces, amongst other factors, are militating against the search for peace and security in Nigeria. Collier (2009) writes that Africa is currently facing two entirely distinct security threats, one from the rise of radical Islam, the other from increased natural resource extraction. Collier observes that African security forces are ill-equipped to meet these threats. He

points out an urgent need for strengthened security in the Sahel and enhanced intelligence against terrorism, especially in East Africa. According to Collier, Africa is facing new security threats that are likely to be beyond its current or feasible domestic military capacity, requiring amongst other things international military assistance, at least to the neighbourhoods of Sahel and the Horn of Africa. In the long term, African governments will need to improve domestic military effectiveness. One sure way of having this is by advancing the mercenaries of African Traditional Religion (ATR) to fight alongside the conventional state security apparatus.

Piombo et al (2012) point out that in reducing insecurity in Africa, the roles and responsibilities of the U.S military, U.S government and non-governmental communities are essential. But the authors failed to recognize the importance of the mercenaries of ATR in augmenting or complementing those they identified. The aforementioned is a further proof that Africa ought to look inward in her search for peace. Wars killed 5 million African children within 20 years, says a study (www.dw.com_delivery). Children were deprived of clean water and basic healthcare in armed conflicts, leading to preventable deaths. Conflicts accounted for seven percent of all child deaths in Africa. According to FACTSHEET, conflict–related deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa (2015) in the first two months of 2015 saw about 8,300 people die as a result of conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria, Cameroon, Sudan, Somalia and Nigeraccounting for roughly 90% of these deaths. The figures are extrapolated from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project which has tracked political violence in Africa since 1997 (www.africacheck.org). In the first two months of 2015, ten states accounted for 99% of conflict deaths in the region. Nigeria recorded 4,600 deaths; Cameroon, 950; Sudan, 700; Somalia, 630; Niger, 500; Democratic Republic of Congo, 253; South Sudan, 207; Burundi, 161 and Mali, 86 (Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project). Do all these not call for looking inwards by our political leaders?

**Identifying Places where the Mercenaries of ATR can Function**
As stated in the introduction, by mercenaries here the author is referring to the mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and cosmology. It has to do with things that are mystical and magical or mysterious, possibly having to do with the supernatural. It deals with what is beyond ordinary understanding (www.vocabulary.com). Mystical powers relate to or are characterized by mysticism, having a divine or sacred significance that surpasses natural human apprehension (www.e.dictionary.reverso.net). Gehman (2010) clearly states that mystical powers are powers beyond the ability of man to understand. They are not natural powers but powers from unseen and unexplained sources. These are powers of witchcraft, magic and sorcery. He states further that throughout Africa, people believe in a particular power that fills the earth. In fact, the universe itself has a power of force that affects people for good or for bad. Awolalu and Dapamie (1979) argue that magic and medicine in African Traditional Religion (ATR) are based on the belief that there are vital forces or supernatural powers in the universe that can be tapped and controlled by man. Magic, according to them, can be defined as an attempt by man to tap from and control these supernatural powers or resources of the universe for his own benefits. Medicine, on the other hand, is the art of using the available forces of nature to prevent diseases and to restore  health. It is prophylactic and therapeutic (preventive and curative). Magic and medicine have many things therefore in common.

Mbiti (1969) appreciates that in African cosmology, there is mystical power which causes people to walk on fire, to lie on thorns or nails, to send curses or harm, including death, from a distance, to change into animals (lycanthropy), to spit on snakes and cause them to split open and die; power to stupefy thieves so that they can be caught red-

handed; power to make inanimate objects turn into biologically living creatures; there is power that enables experts to see into the secret, hidden information or the future, or to detect thieves and other culprits. African people know these and they seek to apply them in these and many other ways. Magic, opines Mbiti (1969), is generally considered under good magic and evil 'magic'. The good magic is used by specialists to heal diseases, and for the welfare of the communities through the counteracting misfortunes, and in warding off or diluting or destroying evil power. The diviner or medicine-man then provides amounts of mystical power to people in form of charms, amulets, powders, rags, feathers, figures, special incantations or cuttings on the body. He uses it to protect homesteads, families, fields, cattle and other property. It used to be a common practice in those days to go into African homesteads and observe, for example, a forked post standing in the middle of the compound, or a piece of pot on the roof of the house, or a few lines of ashes strewn across the gate as you enter the homestead.

Mbiti (1969) tells a story to buttress the fact that amongst Africans mystical powers, magic, witchcraft and sorcery exist. According to him, when he was a schoolboy, a locust invasion came to his home area, which ate up virtually every green, including crops, trees and grass, making everyone not only grieve but also to be horrified. Ironically, the locust never touched the field of his neighbour who had used anti-locust "medicines" to protect their farms and fields. Mbiti tells another story of Neal, JH and his encounter with a particular tree that refused to fall when construction was going on around where it stood after all efforts were made. Later, a traditional 'priest' (probably a diviner) was summoned, who made a particular sacrifice after which the "magic tree" was successfully uprooted. This happened in Tena near Accra in the present-day Ghana. Neal further tells how his enemies sent the forces of witchcraft to attack him, but since he was already protected by "medicine" from African experts, he was not harmed. Similar experiences abound in Mbiti's book as referenced.

Okeja (2011) observes and rightly too that much of what witchcraft represents in Africa has been susceptible to misunderstanding and confusion. This he sees as a small part of a tendency amongst Western scholars since the time of the now largely discredited Margaret Murray to approach the subject through a comparative lens vis-à-vis European witchcraft. Janzen and Wyatt (1987) inform us about the complimentary remarks about witchcraft by a native Congolese initiate, "from witchcraft… may be developed the remedy (Kimbuki) that will do most to raise-up our country. The ancestors were equipped with protective witchcraft of the clan (Kindoki Kiandunlila Kanda)… They could also gather the power of animals into their hand… whenever they needed… if we could make use of these kinds of witchcraft, our country would rapidly progress in knowledge of every kind. You witches (zinkoki) too, bring your science into the light to be written down so that the benefits in it… endow our race".

Geschiere (1997) points out that in Eastern Cameroon, the term used for witchcraft among the Maka is djambe. It refers to a force inside a person. Its powers may make a proprietor more vulnerable. It encompasses the occult, the transformative killing and healing. Nunn et al (2017) confirm further and surely in the affirmative that in Democratic Republic of Congo, the belief in magical warfare technologies (such as bullet proofing) in the Eastern part of the country serves a group-level function as it increases group efficiency in warfare, even if it is sub-optimal - at the individual level. According to these authors, in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a region which has experienced persistent violence and large-scale conflict since the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, when Hutu militia fled Rwanda into the area. The area became the epicenter of the first Congo Civil War (1996-1997) and the second Congo Civil War (1998 – 2003). Since that time, conflict has persisted, with dozens of militant groups still operating in the region today. In the face of this insecurity, beliefs in spells that protect villagers and militants against death in combat have become widespread.

It was reported that in the village of Bulambika in the province of Sudkivu, where their women were occasionally raped and their houses set ablaze while their young men were gruesomely murdered. An elder of the village had a dream in which he was taught by the ancestors of his tribe to use supernatural powers to bullet proof the young men in the village and help them confront the source of the village insecurity. The protection would make those who had been bestowed protection immune to the bullets of the machine guns used by the enemy power. Any bullet fired at them would either miss or bounce off. The bullet proof was prepared and the power was tested on a goat, as the goat survived the gun attack. This proved to the villagers that the newly discovered "gri-gri" was effective. It was further reported that overtime, those with the bullet proof began to kill their enemies from whom they also obtained firearms and experienced peace thereafter.

The authors argue that this is one of the reasons why the belief in witchcraft persists. Okeja et al (2011) support this idea when they state that belief system in which such magical practices are deemed possible offers many benefits to Africans who hold them, as it provides an explanation that is constant with African cultural beliefs rather than appealing to Western scientific notions that are tainted by the history of colonialism (at least for many Africans). Waterman (2017) agrees that magic (including witchcraft) is first and foremost a technology, a primeval tool that humans stumbled upon eons ago for accessing an invisible realm that they sensed held the key to their well-being. It gave people an avenue to attain what their hearts desired - protection, divination, healing, luck, vengeance and, most of all, a sense of empowerment. It is a measure of comfort in a cold, dark world. According to Waterman, in Trobiand Islands, even till today, magic survives, and people still find the idea of it well, enchanting.
Boske (2020) is of the opinion that no culture can claim a monopoly on witches. There is little doubt that in every inhabited continent of

the world, the majority of recorded human societies have believed in and feared the ability by some individuals to cause misfortune and injury to others by non-physical and uncanny (magical) means. The more frustrated people get, they do often turn to witchcraft, because they are like "well, the usual channels are just not working, so let's see what else is out there". Grossman told me (Bosker) "whenever there are events that really shake the foundations of society – the American Civil War, turmoil in prerevolutionary Russia, the Rise of Weimar Germany, England's post war reconstruction – people absolutely turn towards the occult" (witchcraft). In the conception of Kohnart (1996), under particular circumstances, witchcraft becomes means of the poor in the struggle against oppression by establishing "cults of counter-violence". Secret societies in traditional Africa have suffered an acceptable definition, primarily because, according to Onunwa (2005), the term 'secret' may require a "qualitative" and "comparative" explanation. However, Wedge Wood (1930) attempted a definition which fits into the author's conception and work. She has described a secret society as "a voluntary association whose members, by virtue of their membership are possessed of some knowledge of which non-members are ignorant of. The nature of the knowledge will vary from one such association to another. It may comprise magical or religious ritual or spells, some sacred objects, the identity of the members, the ostensible functions of the society or indeed the very existence of family life".

Awolalu and Dapamu (1979) posit that the groups are secret in the sense that membership is usually restricted, and they often engage in mysterious activities. Quarcoopome (1987) puts it succinctly when he opines that the existence of secret societies is an important feature of West African social life and by extension African Traditional Religion. A person could belong to more than one secret society at a time. Some of the notable secret societies in Africa include: the Poro society (also spelled, Purrah or Purroh), Ekpe, Sande, Ogboni, Odozi Obodo, Okonko and many others. Poro society, according to Awolalu

and Dapamu (1979), is one of the more documented secret societies in Africa. It is a men's secret society in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, said to have been introduced by the Mende people in 1000 AD. Although it has affront as a hunting society, many believe that the group yields significant influence in politics, especially in Liberia. According to the New York Times, Liberia's notorious war lord, Charles Taylor, is believed to have co-opted the Poro society which helped him project an aura of mystery and invincibility ([www.face2faceafrica.com](www.face2faceafrica.com)).

Butt-Thompson (1929) observes that West African secret societies fall into three groups: the mystic and religious, the democratic and patriotic and the subversive and criminal. The Leopard society, also known as Ekpe or Mgbe, was the oldest of Cross-River secret societies in West Africa. It was all-time male and most likely originating as a warrior society, formed to curb criminal activities within their communities. Sigfried (1994) writes that members of the Simo secret society in Ghana, Mali and Sierra Leone, described as a masked cult, belong to the group of cults whose priests possessed immense knowledge of herbs and roots in the practice of medicine to cure specific ailments. According to Waterfund (2006), the traditional African, through the practice of medicine, evokes spiritual protection by the use of talisman, charm, amulets and spiritual bath to make himself invincible. According to Olupom (2004), when sacrifices are offered, at the request of the spirits, gods and ancestors, their supernatural powers are energized to act on the initiates, believing that the spirits are strong enough to swap the lives of the initiates with those of the sacrificed animals. Ezekwesili et al (2019) lend credence to the fact that through liberation, invocation and supplication by medicine men in Africa, the mystical powers are awakened to fight to protect their own. Masquerades which are believed to have and manifest spiritual powers remain till today the symbolic resurrection of the ancestors with powers to prevent an enemy power from destroying members of their families.

**Current Mystical Powers Protective Manifestation X-rayed**

The recognition of the existence of mystical forces in the universe is an important aspect of the religious heritage of the Igbo and indeed the African people. Anyanwu (1999) does not agree more with this assertion when he opines that even all over the world, man has always believed in and viewed the universe and its contents as having some innate spiritual dynamism which has been given the term mystical power or force. Man has, therefore, from the past tried to harness and tap the mystical energy to his own advantage. Man's effort to utilize these forces led to acts which can summarily be called magic, sorcery or witchcraft. The belief in the ability of mystical powers to offer protection, especially in times of insecurity amongst Africans and indeed Nigerians, is manifest even today. This could easily be deciphered from numerous events and actions. In our Nollywood, actors and characters are seen fortifying themselves for one reason or another. It may be in the area of sorting for a bulletproof to resist gun fires, to appear impregnable to machete cuts, the possession the power to disappear, especially from seeming danger, and the ability or power to see tomorrow. In practical terms, stories are told and experiences shared of some protective powers manifesting in armed robbers who appear to be indestructible by the firing of the gun, and their ability to disappear when in danger of being arrested by law enforcement agencies or any other enemy attacks.

Olayemi (2019) reports of a Kenyan soldier who showed off his voodoo as he shot himself and still stood gallantly after the scary exercise. The African soldier with powerful black magic bulletproof charm posted a video showing that no gun on the planet, including an AK-47 Assault Rifle, could penetrate him. The author concludes that "we need this in the fight against insecurity". Vanguard on-line also reported about same soldier in its July 24th 2019 edition, pointing out that after the soldier shot himself, he spat out the bullet unharmed; although the last gun fired was followed with a little blood, he seemed fine. This type of protection is known as "Odeshi" in

Igboland, meaning "it does not leak or it would not leak", which means if anyone shot them with a gun, it would not pierce their skin, hence their blood would not leak. The Bakasi Boys is a group of Nigerian youth vigilantes in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria, believed to be armed with an array of black magic artifacts and juju worn around their body. In parts of Anambra State today, they still enjoy popular support. Their greatest metaphysical power was their ability to be immune to gunshots ([www.iol.co.za](www.iol.co.za)). Even when shot multiple times at close range, they would not flinch nor sustain any injuries.

Ojioye (2018) writes that in May 2017, three months after a 34-years-old police corporal was posted to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Ogun State Police Command, he came face to face with death. The corporal (name withheld) said it was a locate-and-arrest operation at a community in Ijebu Waterside area of the state. The SARS team had got a tip-off about the hideout of an armed robbery suspect. But within moments of locating a house in which the target was holed up, what was supposed to be a routine arrest quickly became a gun duel. The corporal told a Punch correspondent, "I was one of the first sets of people to get into the house and before we could sight him, we heard gunshots. We thought we were there to arrest one person. There were two other members of his gang with him and they just started shooting us. If I had not used my amulet that day, I would have died without doubt because I was not wearing a bulletproof vest. A couple of bullets hit me but did not enter my body. A member of our team, who was hit by a bullet in the leg, died that day". Stories like this are common among operatives of Nigerian security agencies in a country where many policemen face armed robbers without protective gears. According to the corporal, the use of traditional protection is an open secret among security agents in the country, especially policemen. In the absence of the needed kits, like standard body amour, many policemen are toeing the traditional path of the warriors of old. The police corporal was reported to have confirmed: "I saw the bullet after

the exercise. Two of the suspects died in the shoot-out. The bullet left a mark in my right side where it hit me". He explained that he got the amulet through a herbalist he was introduced to by a colleague, who was not a member of the squad. According to the police corporal, "I cannot reveal the things the charm was made of because they are also things that can be used to render it powerless". The corporal was reported to have concluded: "the bullet proof vest we wear only covers the chest. God is the only protection that covers all parts of my body. This amulet is my protection kit and I consider it as a gift from God". One other policeman also admitted that he was "protected" the traditional way, saying he felt more confident anytime he went on an operation with his charm under his bullet-proof vest. Even among local vigilance groups, especially the Oodua People Congress, it seems to be a thing of pride to be protected. The Head of Operations, Vigilante Group of Nigeria's Lagos Mainland Local Government Branch, Mr. Ishola Agbodemu, believed that he might have lost his life without the protection of his gunshot-repelling charm. Agbodemu claimed he was shot in December, 2010 by the police, while working for a non-governmental organization fighting for the protection of slum dwellers.

According to Agbodemu, "It is only foolishness that would make people think these things no longer exist. Personally, I can attest to the fact that I have cheated death a few times because of it". A member of the Oodua People's Congress in Ado-Odo Ota area of Ogun State, Mr. Raheem Adetola, also shared his experience using a traditional bullet-proof. He said during one of their assignments, a group sprayed their vehicle with bullets from the rear. The bullets shattered the windshield. In the words of Odetola, "I led the team in the vehicle that day. I told all of them never to look back. If any of them had looked back, it would have been instant death. The shooting went on until we escaped. The protective charms we had at the time are still intact today". Local security men make similar claims. The coordinator of a vigilance group, popularly called Onyabo, in Ikorodu North area of

Lagos State, Mr. Matthew Adesanya, was reported to have claimed that his men had survived gunshots on multiple occasions because he insisted that none of them must go on an operation or patrol without protection. He was quoted as saying: "People make the mistake of thinking that these things are ungodly. Without the power of God, it never works". Saturday Punch of 17th January, 2018 reported that a prominent traditionalist and Ifa priest, Chief Ifeyemi Elebuibon, said that the use of traditional protection against gunshots and knife attacks are rife amongst Nigerians. According to him, on a regular basis, people consult him for such charms. He was quoted as saying: "Ayeta for gunshots and "Okigbe" for knife or machete attacks still exist".

Recently in the South–East of Nigeria, the unknown gunmen surfaced with an attendant increased security risk. Not a few believe that the unknown gunmen carry an extra power of bullet proof and disappearing ability. Eze (2021) reports how some unknown gunmen shot dead two soldiers on Monday night at a security checkpoint in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A private security personal attached to a nearby filling station was also shot dead, while several persons sustained injuries. Security officials in Nigeria have been the target of such death attacks. In one of such attacks, four soldiers attached to an oil company (Starling Global Ltd) were gunned down at a hotel in a community in Rivers State, Nigeria. Soldiers were said to be among eight security officials killed by unknown gunmen along the Omagwa/Isiokpo/Elele Owerri Road in Rivers State. In Imo State Nigeria, gunmen attacked and set ablaze the country home of the state governor, Hope Uzodinma. It is a general belief among some Nigerians that these unknown gunmen are using some mystical powers in their operations. An eyewitness at the Ebonyi shot-out that killed two soldiers claimed it was the soldiers that first opened fire on the gunmen as the bullets refused to penetrate the bodies of the gunmen. The attackers retaliated, killing two soldiers and one civilian who used to collect money for the soldiers at the checkpoint. As other soldiers saw that bullets were not penetrating the bodies of the gunmen, they fled the scene.

The same was the story about the gunmen who attacked a police station at Ihitte/Uboma LGA of Imo State, Nigeria. Eye witnesses claimed that the gunmen who covered their faces started by firing themselves with their rifles. After sometime, they turned to the police station before which time all the police men on duty who saw the gunmen shooting themselves had fled the station. Oota, L (2021) reports how a chief priest aided Benue robbery kingpin, Gana, with charms to escape the arrest and bullets of security operatives. The chief priest, whose name was given as Mr. Ugbe Lorlumun, owned a shrine from where he prepared charms and a boiling pot from which he was able to see the enemies of the late Gana and target them from his shrine. Mr. Lorlumun, who spoke in Tiv language, said he used his shrine to shield Gana from arrest by security agents until he (Gana) voluntarily decided to come out from hiding. In a similar development, and as a direct fallout of the Gana debacle, the police were reported to have warned native doctors against providing criminals with charms. The Ebonyi State Command's Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Loveth Odah, in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria was quoted to have urged native doctors in the state and the country at large to steer clear of unlawful businesses (www.guardian.ng). Instead of using the traditional means to aid crime and criminality I am of the very strong opinion that these charms can be put into effective use in fighting on the side of our people and citizens against criminal elements in the society.

**Recent Calls for the Use of Mercenaries of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in the Fight against Global Insecurity**
The World Health Organization (WHO), on the 31$^{st}$ day of August, 2003, in Johannesburg South Africa, called on African governments to accord recognition to traditional medicine, create an enabling environment for its practice, and integrate the time-honoured system of medicine into their national health systems. This call was made by the WHO Regional Director of Africa, Dr. Ebrahim M. Samba, in a message on the occasion of the first African Traditional Medicine Day

to be observed region-wide. Dr. Saba noted that for centuries, traditional medicine played a crucial role in combating multiple and complex conditions affecting Africans and that because of its popularity, accessibility and affordability, more than 80% of the people in the region continued to rely on it for their needs. According to the Director, "it is (therefore) incumbent on governments in the Region to reverse the erosion of the centuries-old traditional medical knowledge and practiced. This way, they will be restoring the glory of traditional medicine to its pride of place, and perpetuating the culture of its utilization". Flowing from such a call and bearing in mind that African traditional medicare is all-encompassing, including the use of mystic powers to protect, time is therefore ripe for Africans to advance the mercenaries of their traditional practice to enhance and fight for the security of their land ( www.afro.who.int/news).

Alfred Anedo and Edith Ngozi (2019) identify some Igbo traditional security systems that can be used to check security lapses and or challenges in Nigeria. Such security provisions include:

a.   Mystical barricade which they called Ngige. It works in the sense that when a thief who knows about it sees it, the person shelves the idea of stealing from the area. However, if the thief does not know it or ignores it and goes ahead to steal, he or she experiences an ugly development, including unreading scratches, boils all over one's body, protrusion of the anus, blindness, elongation of the tongue or any other physical problem.

b.   Witchcraft charm (Ogwu Amosu)

c.   Palm tree charm (Ngwu Ogwu)

d.   Mystical flood (Iji Ogwu), a mystical fence around their towns, especially during the civil war (1966-70), with a powder-like charm, appearing before the eyes of the enemy as though the whole area was filled with water without any anchor for any ship nor was there any ship or canoe to cross over with. Enemies were scared of getting close to such mystical waters. It remained so till the end of the war and nothing happened to the citizenry.

e.      Bulletproof charms (Ogwu Mkpu)
f.      Awe instigating charm (Ogwu Ibobo)
g.      Vanishing charm (Ogwu Nele)

The authors were of the opinion that it was because of the neglect of the Igbo traditional security system by the government of the day which replaced them with ammunitions, CCTV and other modern equipments for fighting crime which do not solve any problems that there is high prevalence of crime. The authors conclude that Nigerian nation would be a better place to live in if the government will understand and adopt these Igbo security systems in collaboration with the modern system for effective checking of crimes. This paper has joined in this call. Tade (2019) writes that as a commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, violent crimes in Lagos, such as armed robbery, kidnapping rape and gang-related crimes, are common experience there. Owing to this, the Lagos State Government has invested significantly in modern policing capabilities, while also recognizing and regulating the traditional crime-fighting structures. Tade appreciates the fact that traditional structures of fighting crime remain largely unexplored, and identified four of such traditional crime and conflict-fighting structures to include, the traditional spiritualist (elegboogi) and babalawo (diviners) whose task is to protect people from being victims of crime and assist in demystifying puzzles surrounding theft; the family court (ile-ojo agbo-ile) whose task is to mitigate crises, especially petty theft; the king's court which is superior to the first two as they preside over cases of murder, etc; the traditional extrajudicial measure which involves the invoking of the spirits or community's deities with other ancestral deities which involves the preparation of charms; the satirical sanction or shaming. Tade, therefore, calls for the harnessing of these traditional methods to manage conflicts and crime, noting that these methods should be regulated by the police to prevent rights violations.

In a similar development, Alli et al (2021) write that aerial supply of arms, ammunition and food to bandits is a major reason for imposition

of "no fly zone" order on Zamfara State. The country is in a very precarious situation at this moment and every intelligence system that can help to pull it back from the brink will be followed through. It then became a thing to gladden  hearts of Nigerians when it was later reported on www.free.onlin-training that a mystery helicopter supplying weapons and ammunitions to bandits and cattle rustlers  has been arrested by locals using supernatural powers at Arina village in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. This was done through the sending of bees to cover the body of the helicopter and chasing the pilots away. Such a report is also made by www.radiobiafrafreedom.wor and [www.legit.ng](www.legit.ng). With the aforementioned great feats in areas of fighting against enemies of states , one will agree that the time is ripe to further  mobilization of traditional powers to defend Nigeria, the continent of Africa, and the world at large.

**Conclusion**

In Africa and the world, security agencies seem to be losing ground, while the continent bleeds. There is concern by government officials, security experts and ordinary Africans that the ongoing attacks on security agencies in the South-East and South-South, which appeared to be coordinated, are getting worse by the day, and have already worsened the security challenges in the two regions, with Boko Haram insurgency raging in the North-East, and banditry, kidnapping, and the ongoing bloody conflict in different parts of the country. Is it not, therefore, time to engage the mercenaries of ATR to firstly fortify state security agencies, complement the fighting forces of the agencies with these mercenaries and further pass a law to incorporate the operations of these mercenaries into the Nigerian constitution? There is no gainsaying the fact that such mystical powers through witchcraft can be deployed to attack and demobilize our enemy's powers even at their point of settlement and take off. Through the ability of seeing into the future, such powers can easily detect evil plans of insurgents or bandits or unknown gunmen, while our security agencies are kept

on alert and deployed  timely to destroy them wherever they are located. Security forces can be further protected by the use of charms as bulletproofs, with some selected medicine men fighting alongside our soldiers at the battle front.

## Recommendations

The current near invincibility of non-state actors against the peace and stability of the worlds, Africa and Nigeria, calls for the fortification of states security architecture with mercenaries of ATR. The activities of the Boko Haram, bandits and unknown gunmen, which seem to be overwhelming our security agencies, should not be treated with further levity and kid gloves. Africa, through her mystical powers, can support our soldiers, police and other security outfits by calling out their mystical powers to duty in the following ways.

1. The government at different levels can engage our medicine men to come out with further and clearer practices that can enhance and fortify our security men in the line of duty.
2. Our medicine men with powers to fortify our men at the battle field should accompany them to such battles to play complementary roles.
3. Such practices should be made part of our laws and or constitution.
4. Our security operatives should firstly be fortified with such traditional powers as bullet proof or disappearing powers.
5. Such laws should have provision for punishment against anti-social or anti-state uses.
6. These attempts could further be emulated, domesticated by other nations into their fighting and security apparatus.

The writer has no doubt that mobilizing the mercenaries of ATR to fight alongside our security agencies against crime and criminality will in no small measure support the global search and fight for peace and security.

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# THE VALUE OF AFRICAN MUSIC: THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

**Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI, PhD**
Department of Philosophy
Kogi State University, Anyigba
ejike.n@kogistateuniversity.edu.ng
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2132-4309
&
**Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD**
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State
ikee_mario@yahoo.com
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1977-202X

## Abstract

*There is no gainsaying the fact that culture is a significant aspect of every human society. No doubt, culture has many facets and music is a part of culture. Music allows people to express themselves effectively, as it gives words to the innermost feelings of human beings when words can be scarcely found. African music is no exception to this fact. However, experience has shown that African music has been relegated to the background in our contemporary society. Consequently, there arises the need to appraise the value of the African music, considering the past, the present and the future. Therefore, employing the hermeneutic and prescriptive methods of philosophy, this study observes that there is need to delve into the origin of African music by laying bare its uniqueness and also to evaluate or reappraise the role African music has played in the past, in the present, as well as its prospects (in the future). This study discovers that African music is so*

*unique, symbolic, and also a powerful tool for social change. As a vehicle that drives the social life of the African, African music has been a major tool in the hands of social reformers to bring about the needed sanity on the continent. In this regard, the study recommends, among other things, that the contemporary African should appreciate and cherish African music to be able to reap the enormous benefits therein.*

**Keywords:** African music, culture, social change, social reformers, innovation

## Introduction

Africans live and move as if something is lacking in their way of being, unless music is involved.[1] No wonder Plato posited that music is a moral law that gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything.[2] As a continent where over two thousand five hundred languages are spoken, Africa has grown from being the earliest known source of Western music. As unique as it has grown to be, African music has become a driving force behind the multi-cultural quest of many leading nations of the world. Hence, the future of the African music would be quite dazzling owing to the success it has recorded from the cradle of civilization in Egypt until now. This study is aimed at exploring the past, the present and the future of African music. It begins by going down memory lane to x-ray the origin of African music by capturing its uniqueness. Succinctly, its various characteristics are laid bare, while its effective powers are outlined. Further, musical instruments of African origin are outlined, while striking examples are given to drive home the points.

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[1] C.M, Achike, "Liturgy and Church Music", *Journal of Arts and Humanities,* Vol I, no. 2, (2011) pp. 75-92.

[2] BrainyQuotes, "Plato", Retrieved from https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/plato_109438 (Accessed: 9th May, 2021).

## Music: A Brief Exposé

It was Cicero who once remarked that any systematic treatment of a subject should start with a definition so that everyone may understand the subject of discourse.[3] According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, music is the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity an continuity. For Nnanyelugo E.C. & Ukwueze C.C, music has, in recent times, been defined from different perspectives. For Larry Austin, music is a wanted sound. Johann Wolfgang Von Geothe once remarked that, "Music is something innate and internal, which needs little nourishment from without and no experience drawn from life."[4] For Obicheta J.C, it is a process of "creating and making pleasant and organized sounds with the human voice or other musical instruments."[5] Music is the food of the soul. It is the sound that can

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[3] E.C. Nnanyelugo & C.C Ukwueze, "What is music? A Definitional Enquiry into the Concept and Meaning of Music as Art, Science and Technology", p. 139, Retrieved from
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://oer.unn.edu.ng/read/what-is-music-a-definitional-enquiry-into-the-concept-and-meaning-of-music-as-art-science-and-technology-vol-20-no-1-2017/file.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjrtuCN0bLwAhXsShUIHXKIBWQQFjAKegQICBAC&usg=AOvVaw2M8Ko4bjVOc8TvML-UxEBc (Accessed: 4th May, 2021).
[4] E.C. Nnanyelugo & C.C Ukwueze, Op. Cit., p. 141.
[5] J.C., Obicheta, *Graded Music for Senior Secondary Schools and Colleges*, (Eziowelle/ Onitsha: Jenison Publishing Company, 2013), p. 3, quoted in E.C. Nnanyelugo & C.C Ukwueze, "What is music? A Definitional Enquiry into the Concept and Meaning of Music as Art, Science and Technology", Retrieved from
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://oer.unn.edu.ng/read/what-is-music-a-definitional-enquiry-into-the-concept-and-meaning-of-music-as-art-science-and-technology-vol-20-no-1-2017/file.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjrtuCN0bLwAhXsShUIHXKIBWQQFjAKegQICBAC&usg=AOvVaw2M8Ko4bjVOc8TvML-UxEBc (Accessed: 4th May, 2021).

speak to every situation with a powerful positive result. It is one language that can be understood by all language groups in the world.

## Music in Africa

The traditional music of Africa, given the vastness of the continent, is historically ancient, rich and diverse, with different regions and nations of Africa having many distinct musical traditions. According to an unknown source, the music of Africa must have had some influence on ancient and medieval European music. As a proof to this, Donald Jay Grout claimed that music was an inseparable aspect of European religious ceremonies. This credit is given to the ancient Egyptian empire as the origin of civilization – music and culture inclusive. He was able to trace the early origins of Western art music back to ancient Greek heritage.[6]

## The Unique Features of African Music

Africa is as diverse and unique as its cultures and peoples and has flowered in many indigenous forms as well as been shaped by foreign influences. Although there are many different varieties of music in Africa, there are a number of common elements to the music.[7]

**It is the source of Western music and culture:** For an unknown source, the music of Africa must have had some influence on ancient and medieval European music. As a proof to this, Donald Jay Grout claimed that music was an inseparable aspect of European religious

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[6] "The Traditional African Music", Retrieved from http://artsites.ucsc.edu/igama/2%2520-%2520Encyclopedia/e-LEGAM%2520Content%2520Files/C%2520-%2520FAAISCJ/01_Chapter1.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwi-xLq4ybjwAhUWhP0HHeUFDl8QFjADegQICxAC&usg=AOvVaw3WMxXwNwIpE_-lCLDx6YKD (Accessed: 7th May, 2021).

[7] New World Encyclopedia, "Music of Africa", Retrieved from https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Music_of_Africa (Accessed: 9th May, 2021).

ceremonies. As a result, he was able to trace the early origins of Western art music back to ancient Greek heritage.[8] No wonder, the South African singer and UN Ambassador, Miriam Makabe, once said that "African Music, though very old, is always being discovered in the West."

**African music is very symbolic**: For majority of Africans, culture is communal and music permeates every facet of African traditional life. This is something communicative, interactive and participatory. Hence, they have a "vast array of meanings attached to traditions and symbolism."[9]

**African music is a wonder to explorers:**
For instance, the Igbo music, and Africa as a whole, combines singing and dancing. The harmony of the songs, instruments and dancing steps are seen to be magically interwoven.[10]

**Traditional African music is mostly passed down orally**:[11] This has been the case in the past, owing to the low literacy level of the inhabitants of the continent. In recent years, with the growing literacy level and the advancement in technology, the African music has, no doubt, got the media – videos, songs recorded in studios, the internet, etc., – to ensure continuity.

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[8] "The Traditional African Music", Retrieved from http://artsites.ucsc.edu/igama/2%2520-%2520Encyclopedia/e-LEGAM%2520Content%2520Files/C%2520-%2520FAAISCJ/01_Chapter1.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwi-xLq4ybjwAhUWhP0HHeUFDl8QFjADegQICxAC&usg=AOvVaw3WMxXwNwIpE_-lCLDx6YKD (Accessed: 7th May, 2021).

[9] V.O, Ajala, "African Natural/Cultural Communication Media: A Survey and Meanings and Usage at Traditional Ceremonies", *Journal of communication*, (2011) Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 1-2.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Wikipedia, "Music in Africa", Op. Cit.

Edited by: Ikechukwu Anthony KANU,
Kanayo Louis NWADIALOR & Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI          93

**African music holds a pride of place in her religions:** Songs and music are used in rituals and religious ceremonies, rites and liturgies which convey meanings and aid worship. Also, they pass down stories from generation to generation.[12]

**African music is very vast:** This is owing to the diversity of cultures and tribes existing on the continent. For BBC's Bestie, African songs include accompanied and unaccompanied solos, duets and choruses. Unaccompanied choruses are an example of a cappella singing. Songs are usually either strophic (split up into verses) or are in call-and-response form.[13]

**Types / Genres of African Music**
The study of African music is actually very vast, owing to the diversity of culture, language, and the existence of diverse cognitive modes in Africa. According to African Music Safari, the following are some of the genres of African Music.[14]

**FUJI:** This is the popular music genre from Nigeria, based on traditional Muslim Yoruba tribe.
**AFROBEAT:** Fela Kuti created it by fusing traditional Nigerian music, *jazz* and highlife. Today, it is often mixed with Hip-hop or *Makossa* and famous even outside Africa.
**BIKUTSI**: This is a dance music developed from the traditional music of the *Beti* in Cameroon. The sexy dance moves remind us of the popular *Mapouka* of the Ivory Coast.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] BBC Bestie, "Africa", Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z2xbgk7/revision/ (Accessed: 9th May, 2021).

**[14]African Music Safari, "List of Music Genres in Africa", Retrieved from http://www.africanmusic-safari.com/music-genres.html (Accessed: 9th May, 2021).**

**CHIMURENGA MUSIC:** This is the popular style from Zimbabwe. The melodies played by modern instruments are based on the traditional *Mbira* music of the *Shona* people.

**HIGHLIFE**: This is the genre from Ghana and popular in all of English-speaking West Africa.

**ISICATHAMIYA:** Harmonious and gentle *Acappella* sung by all male choirs from the South African Zulu.

**MAKOSSA:** This urban dance music from the capital city of Cameroon reminds them of the *Soukous*.

**The Value of African Music**
Music in Africa has developed over the centuries. From the cradle of civilization in Egypt, it has grown with the African cultural heritage to an unimaginable degree. It is no doubt, therefore, that African music has a lot to offer to the world. Below are some of the developments in African music in the past, the present and the future:

**The Value of African Music in the Past**
In the past, when music was developing, there were some values attached to it, among which include:
**African music is the origin of Western music**: This is buttressed by Ogunmodede F., while quoting Cheikh Anta Diop, that Africa is the cradle of Western Civilization. [15] Hence, it can be deduced that Africa, particularly her music, has served as the spring-board to the now-known Western Music and multi-cultural heritage.

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[15] F. Ogunmodede, "On the Historical Evolution of Schools in Africa", Retrieved from https://academicjournals.org/journal/JPC/article-full-text-pdf/492CC1357048&ved=2ahUKEwjCsqrj-7XwAhWMlxQKHTTXB3gQFjAAegQIAxAC&usg=AOvVaw1ktrpilFTsRJoIimHpQEER (Accessed: 6th May, 2021).

**The African songs and dances enabled teaching and promotion of social values**: This is especially during the celebration of special events and when major life milestones are celebrated. Through this means, oral history, other recitations, and spiritual experiences are interchanged and learnt.[16]

**The value of African music at the present**
Music has developed to be multi-dimensional in function. The following are some of the functions music performs in recent times:

**African music** *gives life and identity to the human society*:
In the words of Odili E.I.,[17] this is evident in the fact that the music of a people is influenced by their environment. A good example is Jasmine, who was always talking about Shakira. From her, we learnt that Shakira's mother is from Columbia, while the father is from Lebanese. So there is a lot of Arabic, Iranian and other cultural influences in her music. Her songs are a mixture of different cultures and that contributed to her fame.[18]

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[16] Wikipedia, "Music in Africa", Op. Cit.

[17] E.I. Odilli, "Music as an instrument of Communication in Igbo Communities: A case study of Aniocha
North L.G.A of Delta State" [Unpublished Undergraduate Project University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2008] quoted in E.C. Nnanyelugo & C.C Ukwueze, "What is music? A Definitional Enquiry into the Concept and Meaning of Music as Art, Science and Technology"*,* Retrieved from
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://oer.unn.edu.ng/read/what-is-music-a-definitional-enquiry-into-the-concept-and-meaning-of-music-as-art-science-and-technology-vol-20-no-1-2017/file.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjrtuCN0bLwAhXsShUIHXKIBWQQFjAKegQICBAC&usg=AOvVaw2M8Ko4bjVOc8TvML-UxEBc (Accessed: 4th May, 2021).

[18] British Council (Producer), *Elementary Podcasts – Series 1 Episode 2* [Podcast], (Scotland: British Council, 2013) Retrieved from
https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/general-english/podcasts/series-1/episode-02 (Accessed: 8th May, 2021).

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**Music as an integral aspect of African children's games and everyday life**: Children attend most of the evens that take place in the family and community. During their plays, youngsters copy the songs and dancing steps performed by their elders during ceremonies. Some of the time, they borrow and could play adult's instruments for their songs, games and dances.[19] This formed a good avenue for the continued existence of the African music and inculcation of values.

**The Future of African Music**
With the recent developments, owing to the receptivity of the African music, the future really holds a lot in store for the African music in the following ways:

**African music can serve as an object of unity** whereby foreign cultures are studied to have a more multicultural society. This is evident as the UNESCO identified music as the most universal of the performing arts, serving "as an integral part of other performing art forms and other domains of intangible cultural heritage."[20] In other words, music brings people together, "strengthening the fabric of the community which in turn reinforces people's commitment to support each other and the community."[21]

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[19] "African Music and Musical Instruments", Retrieved from https://prod.wp.cdn.aws.wfu.edu/sites/88/2012/04/ShakeRattle-Teachers-Guide.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjbgJCx-rbwAhXCgVwKHRagDZ8QFjAAegQIAxAC&usg=AOvVaw2FAqBaq49HfKBDh7SUAcQz (Accessed: 7th May, 2021).
[20] UNESCO, "Performing arts" quoted in D. Joseph, "Promoting cultural diversity: African music in Australian Teacher Education", Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1146456.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjXs4uK6rXwAhWPD2MBHYsVDS4QFjAAegQIBBAC&usg=AOvVaw3bUVtKbfT9JQed4z4ONkjx (Accessed: 6th May, 2021).
[21] D. Joseph, "Promoting cultural diversity: African music in Australian Teacher Education", Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://files.eric.ed.gov

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**Introduction of African music in the curriculum of foreign nations:** Africans in the diaspora can achieve this, owing to the growing need for cross-fertilization of cultural diversities, as this would promote intercontinental unity, rather than differences.

**With foreign trade, Africa has got a lot to give the world:** Foreign trade goes along with the transfer of rich social make-up of the African music, which in the long run, adds to the richness of the pillars that make up the diversity of other nations.[22]

**The Effective Power Of African Music**
According to Tagg P., Music is that form of inter-human communication in which humanly organised, non-verbal sound is perceived as vehiculating, primarily affective (emotional) and/or gestural (corporeal) patterns of cognition.[23] The African music is not an exception. It has the following potentials:

**African music is giving due significance and sense of identity to the Africans in the Diaspora:** Owing to the point stated above , Joseph D. spells it out that the notion of African culture (evident in her music) has a powerful cultural crucible and signifier of African diaspora identity formation and engagement.[24]

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/fulltext/EJ1146456.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjXs4uK6rXwAhWPD2MBHYsVDS4QFjAAegQ
IBBAC&usg=AOvVaw3bUVtKbfT9JQed4z4ONkjx (Accessed: 6th May, 2021).
[22] D. Joseph, Op. Cit.
[23] P. Tagg, "Towards a definition of 'Music'" p. 3, Retrieved from
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.tagg.org/t
eaching/musdef.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjz7t3e6LLwAhUKZcAKHageCAwQFjAAegQIAxAC
&usg=AOvVaw23IRGP-9Ptv24kONUXkaDq (Accessed: 4th May, 2021).
[24] P.T. Zeleza, *In Search of African Diasporas: Testimonies and Encounters* (Durham: Academic Press, 2012) quoted in D. Joseph, "Promoting Cultural Diversity: African music in Australian Teacher Education", Retrieved from
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://files.eric.ed.gov

**African music comes with the prospects of widening the African horizons:** This is the view of Ndwamato G. M. In the nearest future, the cross-fertilization of knowledge, engaging in cooperative advancements, bracing up to changing old assumptions, and the opening-up of new opportunities for development, for him, are some of the possibilities for artistic ventures.[25]

**The African music has grown to be an object of social change:**
The nature of African music is such that it is said to be a vehicle for social connections, discussions and ideas. According to Silva D.D., in Africa, a variety of NGOs, bands and activists are trying to make a difference through music. Prominent like others is Miriam Makeba (Mama Africa) named the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador in 1999, partly for her anti-apartheid struggle which was evident in her song, *Soweto Blues* (1977).[26] The Sigauque Project is a band based in Maputo, Mozambique, whose music is all about raising issues and trying to bring about change.[27] Also, the project, Musicians Against Xenophobia, brought together musicians from Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe to produce four songs about discrimination.[28]

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IBBAC&usg=AOvVaw3bUVtKbfT9JQed4z4ONkjx (Accessed: 6th May, 2021).

[25] G. M. Ndwamato, "African Renaissance, Indigenous African Music, and Globalisation: Collusion or Collision?" Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227677309_South_Africa_and_the_African_Renaissance&ved=2ahUKEwiT9t2P-rXwAhU7AWMBHZLzA0MQFjABegQIBBAC&usg=AOvVaw0Wpa7w4jl1vLD08eqBB1vh (Accessed: 6th May, 2021).

[26] Wikipedia, "Miriam Makabe", Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam_Makeba (Accessed 10th May, 2021).

[27] D.D., Silva, "Music can Change the World", Retrieved from https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2013/music-can-change-world (Accessed: 9th May, 2021).

[28] D.D., Silva, Op. Cit.

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**African music is full of meanings that can influence people's lives**

"The curious beauty of African Music", Nelson Mandela noted, "is that it uplifts even as it tells a sad tale. You may be poor, you may have only ramshackle house, you may have lost your job, but that song gives you hope." Hence, for social messages to take root, they must be accepted by a large number of people, and individuals are more likely to accept these messages if their peers do.[29] For instance, when music is played over the radio, people hear and sing along to the songs, repeating the messages so that they and others really hear them. This gives people an opportunity to understand what messages the music holds and then to speak about them. A good example is *Obi Dimkpa* (Brotherhood of Youth) composed by Prof. Laz Ekwueme, Nigerian Musicologist, scholar and actor in 1980 in Pyong Yang, North Korea. It talks about brotherhood and unity, loving one another, expunging malice among individuals, etc. (See ***Appendix 1*** for the sheet of the composition).

In sum, African music has functions for social control, social integration, signalling, for dissemination of information, for inspiring, for entertainment, as means of recreation, for encouragement, for solicitation of supernatural assistance, for reparation and thanksgiving.

**Some of the Challenges of African Music**

African music is not without some teething challenges as outlined below:

**Impact of digital and social media on the development of songs:** According to Fayoyin A., and Nieuwoudt S., the pervasiveness of digital media, characterized by the utilization of various communication formats such as images, video, text, audio and driven by the combination of communication and information technology through the internet, has affected the production of some songs. The ubiquity of new media platforms has further increased independent production and sharing of songs on development. Young people are

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[29] Ibid.

currently using songs of various genres to highlight health and development issues in various parts of the continent. The packaging of songs is now including more creative sound and visual effects. It is, therefore, argued that the digital media will be critical for greater dissemination of development-related messages through songs.[30]

**Prejudices against African artists:** For Forchu I., in contrast to the practice in the traditional society where the musician is accorded due respect and merited honour just like other members of the society, and in Europe and America where musicians are idolized, the contemporary African musician has to contend with prejudice against him by the society. This stems from the blind imitation of their Western counterparts in their mannerisms, dress code on stage and off stage (very often they appear over-dressed and sometimes almost nude), eccentricity, promiscuity, use of hard drugs and the attendant social implications. This affects negatively the sensibility of the general populace.[31]

**Unfavourable government policies:** The music industry in some African states is being strangulated by some unfavourable policies by the government. Also some of the nations' currencies with their incessant depreciation deal a great blow to the industry, since the

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[30] A. Fayoyin and S. Nieuwoudt, *The Power of Song in the Struggle for Health and Development Outcomes in Africa: Lessons for Social and Behaviour Change Programmes,* Retrieved from https://www.hilarispublisher.com/open-access/the-power-of-song-in-the-struggle-for-health-and-development-outcomesin-africa-lessons-for-social-and-behaviour-change-programmes-2165-7912-1000342.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiassXB3r_wAhXSX8AKHRItDTcQFjAAegQIBRAC&usg=AOvVaw0KiXbjWa69Ip-X2CvEhDHX (Accessed: 10th May, 2021).

[31] I. Forchu, *Nigerian Popular Music: Its Problems and Prospects in Development,* Retrieved from https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ujah/article/view/67009&ved=2ahUKEwiNn7fm4L_wAhUyQUEAHSKFCocQFjAAegQIAxAC&usg=AOvVaw2Nn78p284c3nD7SVodZp3Z (Accessed: 10th May, 2021).

prices of modern musical equipment are exorbitant and often impossible for producers and musicians alike to procure.[32]

**Poor coverage of copyright laws of some nations:** The copyright laws of some African states and their weak implementation protect only art works that are recorded, written or fixed to a material form, but offer little or no protection whatsoever to live performances. As a result, plagiarism and piracy abound. For instance, Seligman G. posits that an estimate of the piracy level is between 85% to 90% in West Africa in general, and more than 50% in Nigeria.[33]

The policy makers fail to realize that music is a potential foreign exchange earner, particularly at a time when most of their foreign exchange earnings come from other sources. This is a dangerous situation for the nation because of the volatility of some of those sectors, hence, the need for economic diversification via the music industry.[34]

**Concluding Reflection**
In spite of the vastness of its cultural dimensions, African music has been, right from the cradle of civilization in ancient Egypt, a motivating factor in the present need for the cross-fertilization of cultural values and the adoption of same. As an integral part of the African life, music has occupied a pride of place in the annals of African history, including the past, the present and the future of the continent. In view of the challenges facing the music industry in Africa, this study maintains that African music needs maintain its

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[32] I. Forchu, Op. Cit.

[33] Seligman, G. "The Market for African Music" Quoted in I. Forchu, *Nigerian Popular Music: Its Problems and Prospects in Development,* Retrieved from https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ujah/article/view/67009&ved=2ahUKEwiNn7fm4 L_wAhUyQUEAHSKFCocQFjAAegQIAxAC&usg=AOvVaw2Nn78p284c3nD7SVodZp3Z (Accessed: 10th May, 2021).

[34] Ibid.

originality while complying with the trend of the contemporary society. This is owing to the need for conformity with the fast-changing world. The African culture, with its music, no doubt, needs not be closed up. Yet, as it continues to be open to changes in the form of developments, there is still the need to maintain the originality, as that makes us who we are.

Also, more needs be done in the media industries. There is need to be relentless in an effort to project African cultural values and heritage through music. With these, the gap would be bridged, as the African music still has a lot to give to the world.

 "African people", says Chinua Achebe, "did not hear about culture for the first time from the Europeans."[35] This explains the independence of the various aspects of the multi-cultural African society. In sum, as a part of the historical make-up of the past, African music has been discovered to be the spring-board to the development of the now-known Western music and culture. Today as well, with the various efforts of notable Africans in the diaspora, African music has travelled beyond borders to be a prominent make-up of the diversities of other cultures that have received it. In the nearest future also, the prospects of the African music, apart from being an object of unity, still show that it still has a lot to give to the world. Aside being the origin of Western music, the African music uniquely symbolic, passed down orally, holds a pride of place in the religions in the African setting, and lastly, African music is very vast.

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[35] Retrieved from
https://www.google.com/search?q=value+of+African+music+quotes+logo&amp;tbm=isch&amp;chips=q:value+of+african+music+quotes+logo,online_chips:chinua+achebe:4o8nz6kE8n8%3D&amp;client=ms-android-transsion-infinix-rev1&amp;prmd=inv&amp;hl=en&amp;sa=X&amp;ved=2ahUKEwju64Pn_r7wAhVQaBoKHfrqDNoQ4lYoAHoECAEQBQ&amp;biw=360&amp;bih=616#imgrc=W0AZLH7oxi37qM (Accessed: 10th May, 202

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The power of African music has been discovered not to be in doubt. Its power gives a sense of belonging to the Africans. It also comes with the prospects of widening the African horizons and has been a good tool of social change. It is equally full of meanings. The African music is not solely dependent on Western musical instruments, as they have been making music before the European inventions. They vary from region to region. Some of these serve variety of roles, as some are confined to religious and cultic rituals or to social occasions. There are equally restrictions as to the age, sex or the social status of the player.

In a nutshell, the topic of this discourse is, admittedly, very vast and efforts have been made to lay bare most of the necessary points. This is, however, not the wholeness of the needed knowledge. Rather, further reading and research on the same topic is encouraged.

## Appendix: *Obi Dimkpa*

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# AFRICAN CULTURE TRENDS AND FUTURE HOPE: HOSPITALITY AND DRESSING IN IKWERRE (EVO) CASE STUDY

## Tasie Onyedikachi Henry, PhD
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt
hitasie@gmail.coom, 08166272911, 09016790340

## Abstract

*The culture of hospitality and dressing, for the African, is a unique phenomenon of global concern. Hospitality and dressing are striking identities for the distinct African communities in Nigeria. In the pre-colonial era, the way an individual dresses in Evo community determines his status, occupation and religious affiliation. On the other hand, it is expected that a stranger is properly cared for when he or she visits the house of a native. These are as a result of the communal-centric nature of the people. In the pre-modern era, everyone cared for the welfare of a kinsman. However, there is a recent decline in the act of hospitality and modest indigenous dress styles today in Evo communities of Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State. This is as a result of forces of social and religious changes in the communities in modern times. This paper surveys the challenges of the decline in hospitality and inappropriate dressing styles in the culture of Evo people, including its participation in the social vices that trend in the society. Thus, using a phenomenological approach, this paper addresses the drastic development that will be achieved when these traditional ethos of hospitality and appropriate dress styles are reinstituted in Nigeria (forestalling rape, abuse and molestation) which will*

*impact coherence and order in Nigeria and enhance national unity, peace and progress.*

## Conceptualization of Culture

Chukwuokolo J. Chidozie (2014) viewed the etymological derivation of the word 'culture' as originally from the Latin word 'Cultura', meaning to cultivate. Citing Alfred North Whitehead, he suggests that culture does not mean an end state, an achieved state; rather, it is a process of achieving through cultivation. He further cited B.W. Andah who saw culture as an embrace of all of material and non-material expressions of people as well as the process through which these expressions are communicated. Culture is, therefore, the totality of human experience in all ramifications.

E.E.Evans-Pritchard (1965) discusses culture in the ambit of Australian aboriginals and their religious concept of totemism. He opined that culture is a part of each member of the society which is a social order. Culture makes a man, person, a social being... It is the personality as distinct from the individual organism. Man is a rational and moral animal, but the rational and moral aspect of him is what the society has superimposed on his organic part. John Mbiti (1969) suggests that African culture is the rhythm of his life.

Kilani and Iheanacho (2013) suggest that culture is a very common issue of human concern and existence. Moreover, human beings cannot live without culture nor can culture emerge without human being. Therefore, culture could be understood in two prisms, namely; substantive and functional cultures. Substantive culture describes meaning of something, a gesture or an action, values of things and the way of life of a group of people. Culture also can be the understanding of the aim of living. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) avers that every culture must add value to the life of man for it to be meaningful. Thus, what makes meaning to human beings is their culture.

The functionality of culture addresses the social practice that is meaningful to the society. This aspect of culture places more emphasis on symbolism, rituals and reality. Since the structure of the society is based on the foundation of human and superhuman interaction, culture is used to explain the meaning of actions to the society. This is why most practices of an indigenous people are gestured in symbolic structures of social relationship.

Owete and Iheanacho (2013) further stress that culture is one of the universal basic facts of existence which is a part of humanity. Citing Haviland (2002:55), they suggested that culture evolved with the early Hominides who started making tools for butchering animals for meat. This is traced back to about 2.5million years ago which coincides with the appearance of Homo at that time. Similarly, major importance is placed on the way of life and success of humans which are inevitable, considering their insatiable need and interaction.

Robert Bocock (1992), viewing culture from the agricultural perspective, opine that culture was developed from the ability of man to cultivate his environment to meet his need of food in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The early effort was regarded as the cultivation of human mind as well the field and plant.

As this activity progressed, culture was understood as the following: share (culture can be shared among people), learnt, not biological inheritance (culture can also be studied), symbolic (culture is symbolic through the use of language), integration (culture can be broken down into parts and functions), continuity (culture can be passed from one generation to another generation), dynamic (culture can be influenced by changes as a result development), and the element of culture includes: i) language ii) religion iii) norms iv) values v) organization vi) historical

Schultz and Lavenda (2012) assert that culture can be a set of learned behaviour and ideas that human beings acquire as members of the society. This agrees with the assumption of Owete and Iheanacho which suggests that human beings use culture to adapt to and transform the world which they live in.

Hence, culture is unique to humans; since dependence for survival through interaction is inevitable, humans use their instinctive knowledge to protect themselves and look for food and shelter.

Iheanacho (2009) asserts that world civilization has passed through three phases and relationships till about 1990. But given the collapse of communism, the main contentions and controversies in the world now revolve around religion and culture – a fundamental aspect of living in which cultural globalization has brought significant alteration to African societies, like Nigeria. Cultural globalization is currently challenging, bringing about rapid and radical religious changes and societal transformation in different aspects of our social system. Such a phenomenon has induced changes in human perception. [1]

Uzorka and Ebisi (2014) support the argument of Owete and Iheanacho as they state that culture, in their view, is dynamic, in terms of human language, morals, technology and skills which are elements of culture that can change with the passage of time. Our culture can be learnt through social interactions and relationship beginning with families, through participation in cultural institutions, like schools and religious affiliations. Thus, culture enhances the sharing of resources for thinking. Culture is indispensible of time and the environment.

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[1] Iheanacho, Ngozi N. (2009) Globalization Challenges and Change Factors in the Religions of Africa: The
     Nigerian Experience Bassey Andah Journal Vol2 p 81

In summary, Idang asserts:

> African culture is the ideal to have a bird's eye view of the ontology… which is the science that investigates everything. African culture exist in the spiritual and physical realm inseparably and linked together… viewing the world as a complex reality in which living things seen and experience spiritual dimension (G. E Idang P144)

## Conceptualization of Hospitality in Ikwerre Culture

The Ikwerre people's ethno-historical origin has not been completely determined.[2] This has given rise to the various explanations of the Ikwerre origin by various groups and individuals. Hence, most of the historical descriptions of the Ikwerre people may not be completely reliable. The focus of this paper is to shed light on the practice of hospitality in the Ikwerre culture during the pre-modern era and in this contemporary time. The people of Ikwerre ethnic nationality can be described as loving and accommodating, following their cultural tenets.

The Evo division of the Ikwerre people sees caring for other people and accommodating them likewise as a duty that their deities use as merit for blessing during the pre-modern era. It was not common to eat alone, farm alone, live separately or worship separately in Ikwerre culture. The people practised communal living; this knitted the love bond that they shared which was carried out by showing concern for kits and kinsmen in their diverse communities.

They lived in knits of family unit called *Oro and Mgbu* where the whole family gathered momentarily to discuss and solve the problem of their relatives. The families were customarily governed by the

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[2] Wotogbe-Weneka .O W (2020) *Owumini* beliefs and practices of the aquatic spirit among the Ikwerre people of the Niger Delta , Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.

Edited by: Ikechukwu Anthony KANU,
Kanayo Louis NWADIALOR  & Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI          117

eldest male member who was called *Ojiowhor*. He was considered the closest to the ancestors who oversee the affairs of the family in the spirit world.

Their patches of thatch homes enclosed with large farmlands and surrounding shrines where they practised their indigenous religion were the thrust of their love and unity in the families, communities and clans in general. During the farming season, each family assisted other families' members to cultivate their farmland which was a favour that was returned to other kinsmen without grudges or a show of indifference. This is why before colonization, Ikwerre people were self-sufficient in food production. Notwithstanding that they practised subsistence farming, their food production was enough to feed the population. The people of Ikwerre engaged in crop farming, hunting, fishing and trading in towns and villages around them. Hoes and cutlasses were their common and primary farming and hunting implement. Their trading prowess which was borne out of their culture of hospitality engaged them in transacting businesses with the Igbo, Kalabari, Etche, Okirika and Ogoni people.

Hence, visiting a kinsman without partaking in meals prepared in his house was seriously frowned at. Such a person was considered evil or has an evil intention. It was customary to visit and spend time with kits and kinsmen without entertaining fear of being harmed or poisoned. Visitors were not allowed to visit and leave without being taken care of through partaking in a welcome kola nut shared with drinks, and a well-prepared sumptuous meal to relax their nerves after a long day's work or journey.

This culture of hospitality among the people of Ikwerre gave rise to the confidence non-indigenes had which made them flood Port Harcourt and its environs since they were received and well taken care of.

## Conceptualization of Dressing in Africa

Dressing in the African context goes beyond the ordinary covering of cloth on the body; it is enshrined in three main components: the material, the dressing style and the event or activities, which are the socio-cultural meanings of the dress.[3] For the Africans, every dressing must be meaningful and applicable to status in an event.

Dressing is the act of covering the body. Dressing, for the African, is relative to the identity of an individual as a socio-cultural heritage. People dress according to their culture. Dressing identifies status; the manner a single individual dresses is completely different from the way those that are married are expected to dress. The African dressing is built from the socio-cultural framework of the people. The dressing of Africans incorporates the physiological differences in gender; the dress of a man is completely different from that of a woman. With the dressing identities royalty can be distinguished from a commoner in the society.

The occasion also determines the type of dress an individual is expected to wear; there is a specific type of clothing used for farm work, as compared to the quality of dress people wear during ceremonies like marriage, worship and parties. The activity a person is engaged in determines the type of dress he or she may wear.

Dress is a cultural phenomenon in Africa, as language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, roles, knowledge, skills and all other things. "Cloth and dress have been described as a mirror of the culture of the people in any society. Dress symbolizes the practices of the society, bounded by the same geographical location, sharing the same cultural

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[3] Otto, Charles T. & Joanes Bubolz E.  African dress: Action, form and meaning, *African Journal  p115*

values."[4] For the Africans, the type of dress you put on determines your personal worth in the society. You are addressed the way you dress.

As was mentioned above, people dress according to their occupation. As hunters dress in their hunting clothings, warriors and traditional rulers are adorned separately in the regalia that befit their statuses. In the indigenous religious tradition, there are dresses that are worn by diviners and other religious adherents which are believed to be fortified with spiritual potency capable of warding off evil attacks. Such a dress is a repository of supernatural powers made through divination. Such a dress for the African is a measure of relationship between human beings and supernatural forces.

Akinbileje (2014) further explains that "the African life is wrapped in religion" (Hackett et al, 1998). This explains why the whole community faithfully carries out all rites and rituals connected with rites of passage, such as in birth, puberty, marriage, death and life-after-death. These ceremonies symbolize religious values which govern the family and society (Idowu, 1991; Ejizu, 2013).[5]

The type of dress people wear in Nigeria is a simple way of identifying their distinct and unique cultural background. It is a special feature for defining self and cultural diversity. Dressing is not just a covering of the body; it speaks volume about the person wearing it. Therefore, the indigenous religion of Evo people places a high premium on dressing as a highly prized cultural value and identity.

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[4] Akinbileje, Thessy Yemisi (2014) Symbolic values of clothing and textiles art in traditional
    and contemporary Africa; *International Journal of Development and Sustainability vol3 number 4*

[5] Ibid

## Dressing in Evo Culture

In the pre-modern era in Evo, dressing style among females and males was a matter of concern. Every individual was expected to dress appropriately in a way that befits their status, religious affiliation and the occasion. Indecent dressing was seriously frowned at, as people who were caught with dresses that expose their private parts were severely punished. The dress worn by the people determined their cultural status.

Unmarried individuals, especially girls, appeared beautifully endowed in ceremonies and festivals to showcase themselves as ripe for marriage. They often covered themselves properly with long gowns and skirts, as they stayed at home to help their mothers with home chores.

The married women dressed appropriately with two-piece wrappers and a full blouse with a head tie to showcase their status of respect and honour which was accorded them in the community. Thus, it was a serious offence to look down on or molest a married woman with no consideration of her age. Once a lady was married, she was given the respect every mother was given in the community. The issue of physical assault and sexual molestation was not common. It was a taboo for a woman or man to dress inappropriately, exposing their private parts in an attempt to seduce or lure an opposite sex. The value of chastity was demonstrated in decent dressing. A man that was mature and married dressed in an attire fitting to his status; this was also the case with a woman. In this wise, the problem of rape was minimal. The cultural and religious ethos of the indigenous people of Evo gave rise to order that they enjoyed within the time. This was a consciousness the people had, that the deities and divinities in anger would punish offenders of taboo.

**Trends of Hospitality and Dressing in Evo**
The trend of sexual molestation, harassment and rape in the society is a phenomenon that is truncating the peace, unity and stability of the Nigerian society, especially in Evo, Rivers State. The changing trend in hospitality and dressing in Evo is as a result of the challenges of globalization. "Globalization and its effect on the Nigerian culture have always worn a controversial mask."[6]

The major aim of globalization is to achieve homogeneity of cultures by fusing different cultures together to benefit the entire world. Following the above objective, Nigerian cultural ethos are suffering from a decline of dominance  being affected by other invading Western cultures. Although globalization is a double-edged sword, having both positive and negative effects on the cultures of the Nigerian people, especially Evo people, it has succeeded in destroying the value of communal relationship of kits and kin as well as engendering the taboo of rape and sexual molestation in the Nigerian society.

As far as this foot is not handled, crisis that is capable of forestalling the peace and unity, and enhancing continuous inter-communal/tribal conflicts will be on the rise. Observing the causes of molestation in recent times, this paper sees sexual molestation and rape as "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic women's sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work."[7]

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[6] Ugbam, et.al (2014) The Effects of Globalization on African Culture: The Nigerian Perspective IOSR Journal of Business and Management Volume 16, Issue 4.

[7] WHO: Sexual violence: prevalence, dynamics and consequences (online document accessed 6/04/2021)

More often, the perpetrators of these acts of societal abnormality have alluded to the manner their victims dress seductively as their motivation. The trend of dressing in short skimpy clothes, like body hugs and spaghetti clothes, that expose the private and sensitive parts of the body is prevalent. Immodest and indecent dressing among male and female members of the society is plunging the society into a community of irrational people.

The trending fashion today is common with attire worn by women that is so transparent that all their sensitive body parts are exposed through a popular cloth called "see through". "The tight fitting eg. Jeans, skirt, hip star, petra, lactra that reveals the contours of the body"[8] is the fashionable cloth in recent times. For the men, an unkempt appearance of bushy hairs, beards, tattered jeans with holes makes them suspects of societal nuisance. These acts often times have generated conflict between the growing teenage group and security agencies that attribute such types of dressing to criminals.

It is important to note that globalization and modern forces of change in cultural practices in Evo have set up conflict as it pertains decline in hospitality. The advent of modernization, globalization and commercialization came with the challenges of family independence in which each member of the family strives to make ends meet and sustain their immediate family members, against the practice of communalism. This disintintegration of family unity is a major factor that necessitates conflicts in the communities. A lot of family members can no longer seek for the well-being of members of kin. There is a continuous strive for the greatest achiever than for the maintenance of peace and unity of the family for the greater good of the society at large. This is the fueling foundation for the cry of

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[8] Special Bulletin(2019) Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria vol 10, public affairs directorate the
office of the vice chancellor

disintegration of the Nigerian nation. If this trend of lack of teeming hospitality and decency in dressing in the society continues, the nation will continue to suffer from the problem of conflict, rape and sexual molestation/harassment.

**The future**
Hence, after considering the challenges the trend of decline of hospitality and decent dressing is having on the peace and stability of Evo and the Nigerian nation at large, it will be appropriate for the indigenous religious ethos that kept the society in order to be re-enacted. This value system kept the society in check as ordained by the deities. The rules that guided the society were basically for the peace and unity of the people. People cared for their kith and kin and strangers as well. Communal festivals and ceremonies that will ignite the inter/intra-communal relationship should be encouraged.

Carnivals that show the rich cultural values of the people in decent dressing and hospitality can be promoted regularly using the instrument of globalization known as the social media. Thus, when these recommendations have been applied, the modern people will have intimacy for the value of the rich African culture, and a deep benefit from the ethos of the indigenous religion will help to curtail the widespread conflict, rape and sexual molestation that is trending in the societies.

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# ANCESTRAL CULTS IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION: THEIR RELEVANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETY

**[1]Ifeyinwa Cordelia Isidienu and [2]Ann Chinazo Onyekelu**
Department of Igbo African and Asian Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
[1]E-mail: ifyisidienu@gmail.com; Phone: 08033027892
[2]E-mail: ann.onyekelu@gmail.com; Phone: 08099455071

## Abstract

*Africans had a strong belief in ancestors. The ancestors once lived in the physical world with their kinsmen, but now they reside in the underworld and still influence the lives of the living. They are moral regulators and were known as the living dead. It is a strong belief that they have the power to bring prosperity or misfortune to the members of their families, depending on the relationship that exists between them. The living venerates them in a bid to maintain a good and favourable relationship with them. However, this relationship is no longer as strong as it used to be in the past. Most people are negating the role which the ancestors can play in their lives and that of their families because of the influence of Western culture and modernity. This has caused far-reaching problems, especially in marriage-related matters. It is necessary, therefore, to evaluate the roles of the ancestors in maintaining the family ties and norms, and to identify their relevance in this global era. The study was descriptive in nature. Data collection was through observation and library sources. It was gathered that in the past, the ancestors were the moral regulators of their various families. People were afraid to commit evil and other*

*¹Ifeyinwa Cordelia Isidienu and ²Ann Chinazo Onyekelu*

*immoral acts for fear of punishment by the ancestors. But recently the reverse has been the case. It is, however, necessary for the younger generation not to neglect their ancestral lineage. They should follow the legacy preserved by their ancestors. Moral uprightness is the foundation of any given society; Africans should, therefore, as a matter of fact re-awaken the norms handed over to them by their ancestors for posterity.*

**Keywords**: Ancestral cults, African Traditional Religion, contemporary African society

## Introduction

Africans believe in the existence of the Supreme Being. There are also other beings that rank lower than God. Etuk (2002: 162), referring to Idowu (1973), states that, "in reality there are five component elements that go into the making of African traditional religion, and he lists them as: belief in God, belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in the ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine". Among African societies, religion is at the very heart of their cultures. It controls much of their social, moral and political systems. Religion is their main source of power, and it regulates matters relating to the land and the weather on which most Africans depend for their survival. Igbo (2012: 166-167), while referring to Igbo people of Nigeria, states that, "Igbo people's world view is divided into four sections: *"Uwa"* the visible world that inhibited human beings, animals and forest. *"Mmuo"* the dead ancestors and the forefathers of the present generation. *"Alusi"* which he referred to as the supernatural forces that have attributes of men and finally *"okike"* the Supreme Being who is the creator". It is a clear indication that the Africans, especially the Igbo, have belief in the ancestors. It is deep-rooted in their belief system and manifests in all aspects of their lives. Africans show great respect to their ancestors, hold them in a very high esteem and always try to maintain a good relationship with them. There is a strong belief that a sour relationship brings punishment and

suffering to the living. Onwuejeogwu (2007: 236) asserts that, "The ancestors are regarded as the mystical custodian of the living minimal lineage. The punishments and rewards of the living members are meted out through the lineage head". Families are blessed, punished or protected by the ancestors. It is a general belief that the ancestors perform great roles among the living members of their families; however, in recent times, these roles have ceased. It is on this note that this paper explores the functions of the ancestors, admittance into the ancestral cult and the notion of ancestral cult in African society, with reference to the modern society.

**Meaning of Death**
Death is very painful. In all African societies, it is believed that death is not the end of life. There is life hereafter, yet people are afraid of death.  Many words are used all over African societies concerning the actual act of dying. People refer to dying as  returning home, going away, departing, ceasing to eat, ceasing to breathe, refusing food, sleeping, being snatched away, being taken  away , being called away, joining the forefathers, and so on  (Mbiti, 1981:112). From the foregoing, "it is actually a general belief among  Africans  that death is not a total destruction, although the dead is separated physically with the living, there is hope that they will continue to live in the spirit world and still communion with the living".
 Ogbalu (n. d : 54) affirms that;

> It is believed that life on earth is not the end of man and that a person on dying    returns to the dead where his ancestors dwell. This under-world is inside rather than above the   earth. There, the dead live in families, umunnas, villages and towns as they lived on earth.

Death is a necessary end that awaits every man. Africans abhor death at a very young age. Although Africans would not like any of their relations to die, however, death is most welcomed at a very ripe age. Premature death is very irritating and hard to bear. Africans strongly believe that children should bury their parents, not otherwise.

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Death can be seen as good or bad. Bad deaths are the deaths of people known to be very wicked in the society. Wicked people include those who poison people or those that harm or kill others through different means. Death of witches and evil doers is also regarded as bad death. Other groups of people which their death is referred as bad include those who died of dreadful diseases and those who commit suicide. It is a general belief among African societies that anyone who died a bad death can never reach the spirit world where the ancestors occupy, rather they wander about. They are called "akalogoli" among the Igbo people of Nigeria. They are not given befitting burial, and some of them, such as those who commit suicide and those who died of dreadful diseases, are dumped in the evil forests. Since these groups of people do not have a place of rest after their death, they become malignant spirits that go about causing havoc to the living. They wander about, bringing misfortune to those in the land of the living. According to Temples (1959:99), referring to the Dukuwa people of Bantu, the Dukuwa believe in the future, *alise* place they call *Andakka*. There, the wicked are isolated for a term of two years, where they have neither food nor shelter. Ezenweke (2012:124) also affirms that "the soul of the living dead wanders about as a wandering ghost when not admitted in the ancestral cult on the basis of the failure of their physical part to live up to moral expectations while on earth". Igbo (2012: 166), referring to the dead, says that, "If he was bad, he becomes a mischievous spirit of akalogoli or ajo mmuo."

However, people whose death is regarded as good are those who died at a very old age. They must have been married, had children of their own, and must not have committed any crime that would prevent their burial. This group, after their burial, will join the ancestors in the underworld to continue to live. Temples (1959) asserts that, "the good are met by their predeceased friends, who bring them cloth, food and wine". He, however, states that the ancestors are people who have died but who continue to live in the community and communicate with their families.

**The Ancestral Cult**

Africans have great regard for their ancestors. It is a general belief that they have a prominent role in their lives. The belief that death is not the end of life and that the dead continue to exit in the underworld and they have an overwhelming influence on the living, and will eventually reincarnate, is the major idea behind the remembrance of the departed ones in Africa. Parrinder (1976:57) indicates the knowledge of ancestors in some parts of Africa when he affirms that;

> In South Africa, "the ancestor spirits are the most intimate gods of the Bantu: they are part of the family or tribe, and are considered and consulted on all important occasions". In Zambia, "the family divinities are the ghosts of one's grandfathers, grandmothers, father and mother, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters'. In Nigeria, all Igbo believe that their lives are profoundly influenced by their ancestors… In southern Ghana, "in the everyday life of the Ga the dead are very present…

The ancestors are perceived to be ever-present and aware of the happenings among the members of the family they left, and also oversee the happenings in the physical world.  For this reason, they are buried in the homestead of their families, because it is believed that they are their guardians. When they were alive, they used to protect and provide for their families. They are, therefore, buried in their homestead for them to be closer home to continue with their work. According to Orobator (2008:107), "An ancestor is a blood relative of a living community". Kingship is basic on the notion behind the veneration of ancestors among Africans. An ancestor must belong to a particular kin, and veneration must be directed to a particular ancestor.  Belief in ancestor indicates that the Africans believe that man is made up of body and soul. The physical body will eventually die, be buried and decay, but the soul which is the spirit is

immortal. The spirit will be transformed and continue to live. The dead is also seen as one who is on a journey. This could be noticed among the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria, through some of the words/messages they usually give to the dead to deliver for them, such as: have a safe journey; when you reach, greet my father, mother, and so on.

Africans believe in spiritual beings and in God as the Supreme Being. They believe that God created the universe and everything in it, including the spirits. There are major divinities such as Anyanwu (sun god), Amadioha (god of thunder), etc. Earth goddess inhabits the earth; man and other minor gods also live on the earth. The inhabitants of the underworld are the ancestors and other malignant spirits. Mbiti (1975:36) declares that, "Every African recognizes God according to some cosmologies. However, there are beside Him, other divinities and spiritual beings, some of which are closely associated with Him".

It is a general belief that man has limited powers; the spirits have powers that are above human powers. The activities of these spiritual powers influence to a great extent every aspect of man's life. Man, in order to successfully cope in the physical world, must maintain a good relationship with the spiritual world. According to Edeh (1985:22-23), "There is a strong indication that for the Igbo there are communications between the visible world and the invisible world, there is a relationship between the living and the dead." It is a strong belief that since those in the spirit world are more powerful than man, they also have an overwhelming influence over man and are able to protect or mar their activities. With this in mind, the reason for worship of these spirits among Africans will not be far-fetched. According to Metuh (1981:134), "The belief in many deities and the ancestral cults has been observed and has overshadowed the worship of God". Metuh was correct, but when critically viewed, it was observed that Africans believe that God is the Supreme Being, and that other spirits are His messengers. In other words, all sacrifices and worships are directed to God through His spiritual messengers.

It is on this note that the ancestral cult and ancestral worship are found in most parts of Africa. However, Ukaegbu (2005: 60), writing about the Igbo people of Nigeria, disagrees with the idea that the Igbo people worship ancestors. He states that, "It is not true that the Igbo people worship ancestors    but they honor the customs of their ancestors".  Idowu (1973: 178-179) poses a question whether the term 'ancestor worship' is correct. He states that certainly, the irrational fear of the dead is not uncommon and is still with us in every culture. He affirms that people relate their dreams and experiences to the movements or doings of the deceased. He further states that communion is possible between those who are alive on earth and the deceased, and that the latter have the power to influence or molest the former.

Ancestral presence is seen in the roles they play in the lives of the living. They manifest specifically among their kin groups. According to Parrinder (1976: 58), "The ancestors are believed to have survived death and to be living in a spiritual world, but still taking a lively interest in the affairs of their families". He also states that "the departed are not far away and that they are believed to be watching over their families". The ancestors manifest themselves in various ways to the members of their families. Ancestors continue to interact with the living through dreams, appearances, visions, sounds and incarnations, through animals such as: birds, butterflies, bees,  snakes, lions, etc. Sometimes, messages are received from them through diviners, mediums, medicine persons or priest (Fabella & Sugirtharajah, 2000: 1).

Ancestors are the living dead; they understand the problems of the living. They continue to have their interest in mind and manifest in different ways. Ogbalu (nd. 54) affirms that, "The dead have supernatural powers. They can appear before men and vanish at will in broad daylight as ghosts or in dreams or vision". The appearances to their kin group could be for good or for bad. Ogbalu, referring to the

[1]*Ifeyinwa Cordelia Isidienu and* [2]*Ann Chinazo Onyekelu*

Igbo people of Nigeria, notes that the dead live in families, umunnas, villages and towns, as they lived on earth, for they can bring fortune or misfortune on them, and protect them against ndi akalaogoli and other dangers. Ancestral cult is paramount in most African societies. They venerate their ancestors so as to continue to receive favours and protection from them. In traditional Igbo society, water is not thrown outside in the night or sand swept outside from the house at night for the avoidance of pouring them on the ancestors who are believed to have come to protect the family members. On this, therefore, Igbo (2012:167) points out that;

> the powers and extent of intrusion of Alusi, Ekwensu and Akalaogoli on the living human are contingent upon the pleasure and disposition of the dead members of Ndi ichie . Hence a special relationship has to be maintained by theliving one,offeringsacrificies to the ancestors. Dead ones are never worshiped, but worthy ndi ichie and ancestors are venerated.

Ezenweke (2012:176) affirms that, "The phenomenon of ancestral cult seems to be a central Phenomenon since it is upheld in virtually every community. The name and pattern may vary but the substance; the kernel and the concept are similar". Africans do not neglect their ancestors; they respect and honour them, bearing in mind the work they do for the living.

However, the issue of worship of ancestral cult does not arise, since the Africans do not disturb themselves about it. Rather, they are interested in how to protect and preserve life, which is the highest and greatest thing created by God. Life is regarded as sacred and no one has the right to take it. Parrinder (1976:66) avers that,

> … Of worship or veneration Africans do not bother unduly about this. They are concerned with life, and how to protect and augment it. Their philosophy of forces serves as sufficient guide. They go upwards in the hierarchy of forces, from men to ancestors, to gods,

to the ultimate God, convinced that if one fails, and another will help.

**Admittance**

Admittance into the ancestral cult is not automatic. Certain obligations must be met before one is admitted into the group. Isidienu (2015:111) indicates that, "the ancestors are our grandparents and relations who are already dead.  During their lives time on earth, they had wife/wives, progeny and were able to maintain their families. They are known for their hard work and so accumulated large barns of yams, livestock and so forth. They are great achievers". They have good moral standards and have lived exemplary lives. They are not known for any abominable act in the society. She also states that when they die at a very ripe age, a befitting burial is given to them. However, those who do not achieve much in life but had families and also lived a good moral life are those who would join their ancestors in the spirit world.  A source in Saint Leo indicates that to attain ancestor-hood, one must have led a morally sound life as understood in the particular African cultural setting one lives within.  For instance, among the Igbo people of Nigeria, children, evil doers, witches and wizards, thieves, armed robbers, murderers and so on, are not admitted into the ancestral cult.

Another group of people that are not fit to be admitted into the ancestral cult are those who died of dreadful diseases such as small pox, leprosy, and so on.  Added to these are those who committed suicide. In Igbo traditional society, these groups of people are thrown into the evil forest. Ezenweke (2012:177) states that to be considered an ancestor in Akan religion in Ghana, "One must have lived an exemplary life, and must have done much to enhance the prestige of the family, clan, or tribe as in other African areas". Flora and Fauna regarded the ancestors as "The model or exemplar conduct in community."

*[1] Ifeyinwa Cordelia Isidienu and [2] Ann Chinazo Onyekelu*

## Functions of the Ancestors

The ancestors perform lots of roles in the life of the living. They serve as a means of social control and check on moral behaviours of the living. In African society, the ancestors are those who lived a righteous life. Evil doers have no place in the spiritual abode of the ancestors.  For this reason, in traditional African society, everyone tries to live a moral and upright life, since everyone aspires to become an ancestor at the end of one's life. According to Onwuejeogwu (2007:125), "The ancestor cult is a common feature of many west African religions. Through it also the doctrine of lineage continuity is expressed and upheld. It has become a means by which social control is maintained by the older people over the younger generation, and it is manipulated to perpetuate and sustain the social order in time and space".

Africans believe in reincarnation; it is through reincarnation that lineage continuity is assured. It is a powerful motivation to the living, since no family member will want their family lineage to go into extinction. The only way is to live an exemplary life so that one would be able to join the ancestors and later reincarnate. Family norms and societal norms are passed from generation to generation. Bad traits are discouraged extensively so as not to be inherited in the family lineage. Because of this, a lot of inquiries are made during marriages. Onwuejeogwu also affirms that the continuity and perpetuity of the lineage are paramount.

The ancestors as symbol of sanctity, punish any member of the family that perpetuates an evil act. Nyamiti (nd: 66) asserts that the ancestors "Manifests their anger by sending to their descendants bodily or spiritual calamities". On the same note, Ezenweke (2012:182) opines that it is believed that "Calamity is often allowed by the ancestors to discipline the defaulting living members of their families". She goes on to state that each time there is  a calamity, there is usually an inquiry to find out the cause, which in most cases ends up with a sacrifice to appease the ancestors and to correct the violated social

norms. Parrinder (1976:60) also states that, "Any evil may be attributed to the ancestors." He further states that the ancestors may be annoyed at the neglect of their descendants, and special diseases are put down on them. Childlessness as one of the greatest curse to an African may also be ascribed to the anger of the ancestors. The ancestors may become angry when relationships are not the way they are supposed to be; it could be an atrocity by the members of the family or a neglect of the role of the living towards the ancestors. The ancestors, therefore, inflict on the living all sorts of misfortunes. Ogbalu (nd.55) puts it that, "The dead are believed to exercise tremendous influence over the living whom they can harm, or cause their death if they become offended or if they are not remembered through sacrifices and worship". The ancestors are seen as retaining their roles in the affairs of their kin-group and only of their kin-group. They are appropriated with 'sacrifice.' They are seen as dispensing both favours and misfortune (Ezenweke, 2008). Because of the above, family members always work hard to maintain good relationships with the ancestors to avoid anything that might bring calamity on them. Nwosu (2000:19) states that the "Key point injunction in the existence of the African moral code is that, it is built from the injunction of the earth goddess through the ancestors".

As the defaulted members of the families are punished, uprightness is rewarded. A saying among the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria is *mkpụrụ onye kụrụ ka ọ ga –aghọ*; meaning that whatever someone sows, that he/she shall reap. Family members are blessed with children, prosperity, and good health for their good life. Onwuejeogwu (2007:244), while referring to LoDagaa of Northern Ghana, affirms that, "Every new acquisition of wealth and success need to be followed by a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the ancestors". This means that every progress comes from the ancestors, and must be recognized. This is the act of respect shown by the living through sacrifices to the ancestors, which helps to maintain a mutual relationship between the living and the dead. The relationship between the living and the dead is that of give-and-take, as Saint Leo puts it

[1]*Ifeyinwa Cordelia Isidienu* and [2]*Ann Chinazo Onyekelu*

that the ancestor can only survive only if he is remembered by his descendants through prayer, incantation, and rituals. On their part, ancestors are expected to procure for their kins benign effects such as: good health, wealth, high birth rate, good harvest, rains for planting, among others. Ilogu (1974:23), in Igbo (2012:65-66), emphasizing about the Igbo people of Nigeria, states that, "The ancestors exercise influence over almost every aspect of Igbo man's life; including the production of staple foods such as yam and the provision of efficacious medicine". In support of this, Bujo (1992: 23) declares that,

> The dead can only be happy if they live in the affectionate remembrance of the living, nevertheless they are stronger than the living on whom they exercise a decisive influence, since the living cannot hope to survive unless they render due honour to their dead and continue faithfully along the tract laid down by them.

Ancestors also serve as mediators between the living and other major and minor divinities. They were once alive with the living on earth; they knew their needs and shortcomings. Now they are dead, they are closer to spiritual beings and can mediate for the living. Ezenweke (2012:182) affirms that the "Ancestors are intermediaries between the gods and the living". This function could be in the form of attracting fortunes for the living or preventing misfortune for the family members.

Ancestors unify their family members. Most Africans up till today acknowledge their ancestral lineage. People from the same ancestry are blood relatives; they therefore avoid any form of harmful act against one another. They cannot intermarry. Any such act attracts calamity from the ancestors. Ezenweke (2012:181) declares that ancestors perform unifying roles to ensure the unity of all the members of the family. She also states that the link that ties each person with his 'brother' must be maintained so as not to incur the anger of the ancestors. It is, however, on this note that the Africans see

themselves as their brother's keeper. There is a general belief that as far as family members live in unity, the ancestors will be happy in protecting them. Mbiti (1978:91) affirms that, "There are defied ancestors who are regarded as being protectors of their families".

**Relevance of Ancestral Cult in the Contemporary African Society**

The influence of the Western culture has affected almost all aspects of African peoples' culture. In most African societies, belief in ancestral cult has gone to the lowest ebb as a result of the foreign culture, to the extent that most Africans no longer believe that the souls of the dead go to live with the ancestors in the underworld or wander as evil spirits; rather, the Westerners who brought Christianity taught that those who do good while on earth will inherit the kingdom of God at their demise, while the evil doers will suffer eternally in hell fire. The gospel of Mathew chapter 25, verses 33, 34 and 41, on Jesus' teaching on the final judgment, states that:

> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world… then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

From the forgoing, those on the right are the righteous, those who lived a good life while on earth, while those on the left are the evil doers, they lived a bad life when they were alive on earth. Generally, in many parts of Africa, especially Igbo land, the belief in reincarnation is no longer acceptable. Most Africans are Christians, and they strongly believe that the dead will either go to heaven or hell fire.

Marriage among Africans is a communal affair; inquires are made to ascertain the ancestral background of a prospective couple. However, in recent times, some of the younger generations enter into a marital relationship without inquiring about the ancestral lineage of their

spouse, and this has brought unwanted traits in some families. It has also caused far-reaching problems in some families and has also affected the bond that holds the family. It is obvious that the neglect of ancestral cult has caused more harm than good in this era of globalization, especially in the areas of choice of partner and in the maintenance of family bond.

The role of the ancestors as mediators is declining in the contemporary African society. Evidences collected show that recently, most Africans are Christians and, as a result, they believe that Jesus Christ is the only one who mediates between them and God; although the Catholics who are Africans venerate the saints and Mary the mother of Jesus in place of the ancestors and also ask for their intercession. In view of the above, many Africans, especially the Igbo, do not go through the ancestors to seek their protection and intercession. Prayers, kola nut, wine, slaughtering of animals, among others, are no longer offered to the ancestors by most Africans, as it is done in the past. Ezenweke (2008) cited Anderson (1992a: 77) who revealed the opinion of a well-informed member of the Apostolic Faith Mission and a sincere Christian that:

> I personally do not venerate the ancestors, but I believe that ancestors are there. Ancestors do exist; they are people who have fallen asleep. Before I was saved I used to venerate them; and I know what they can do in the life of a person. You really can become a slave of the ancestors. Even the Bible acknowledges that there are 'gods' and that we should not worship any other gods but our father in heaven. They do have the power to help or harm- that I saw when I was not yet saved… when I did what I was instructed, such as slaughtering a goat, then I saw things definitely improving. They have the power to harm you if you do not follow their instructions; and they have the power to help you if you follow them…. I believe that if people knew the power of the gospel they would not have anything to do with

the ancestors. But because they are bound by the devil they are still in darkness. They go up and down buying goats, slaughtering cows- and nothing seems to come right. So if people could know the power of the gospel and believe in Jesus Christ, they could be set free… now that they are still in darkness they must do as the devil commands them.

Generally speaking, contemporary African societies, especially Christians, perceive veneration of ancestral cult as  contrary to their Christian faith. Most of them abhor anything about their ancestral lineage.

Furthermore, in this era of Westernization, family ties are getting loose. It was observed that the family ties among African nations have been affected drastically. Speaking about the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria, Isidienu (2015) affirms that, "Influence of western culture has affected the Igbo family that the ties and bonds that bind the family are negatively affected."  In some parts of Africa, most people are no longer their brother's keepers. There are indications of life of self-centeredness as against communal living which the Africans were known for in the past.  Individualism has become the order of the day. Most individuals are virtually lonely, as some individuals live without hope. There are incessant cases of suicide which are traceable to a life of individualism. Also, most families are having serious challenges which  are traceable to the neglect of their ancestral lineage. There are instances of ancestral curse in most families which are as a result of the neglect of family norms and good moral standard left behind by the ancestors.

It is worthy to note that ancestors are those who lived exemplary lives while on earth; therefore, Africans, especially the Igbo, should emulate them. Christians, while adhering strictly to their Christian faith, should not neglect the rich family norms and good moral legacies left behind by their ancestors. They should accord respect to

their ancestors by exhibiting a life of good moral standard and also being their brother's keepers.

## Conclusion

The existence of the ancestral cult in most African societies cannot be denied. The ancestors are the dead members of families who lived exemplary lives when they were alive. They now reside in the underworld where the living cannot reach. They serve as moral regulators. They have acquired greater powers and can influence the living in various ways. They can bring fortune or misfortune, depending on the activities of the living. They perform various roles and serve as intermediaries between the living and the dead. It is the ancestral lineage that binds people together, and once this tie is broken, the family norms will be affected drastically.

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# ENGAGING THE AFRICAN DEITIES IN THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL THEATRE: TOWARDS FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Nenman Danjuma Wapwera**
Department of Religion and Philosophy University of Jos
wapweran@unijos.edu.ng
&
**Nakam Nanpan Kangpe**
Department of Religion and Philosophy University of Jos
nakamkangpe@gmail.com

## Abstract

*The role of religion in national development in African in continent is something to be reckoned with. Religion in Nigeria has played a very significant role in governance, even in the selection of leaders. Nigeria is referred to as a nation of high religious tenets with the clear presence of three dominant religions; Christianity, Islam and traditional religions. With its religious presence in almost every aspects of governance, one would have expected greater developmental strides as most of the leaders of the nation profess one form of the religions (Christianity or Islam) or the other and also because of the teachings of these faiths, but reverse seems to be the case. Most public officeholders take oaths using either the Holy Bible or the Holy Quran before the commencement of their service to the nation, but it seems they quickly forget the implication of that vow. This paper aims at x-raying the reasons behind the non-commitment to the vows by the public officers and also to propose the engagement of African deities in oath-taking which comes with immediate repercussions to defaulters. This study was carried out*

*through a careful study of the African deities, their functions and responses to oaths taken before them. Sources of this study were basically the submissions of African scholars on African deities in books and journal articles. Results from the study revealed that active involvement of the deities in the political theatre will propel conscious commitment to stewardship from the political officeholders, as the judgment of the deities is claimed to be instant, thereby keeping the political officeholders always in check.*

## Introduction

Politicking has been part and parcel of virtually every community, globally. Selection of leaders, whether by electioneering process or by appointment, usually undergo political processes. Most nations of the world adopt the democratic process of governance because it allows them to select the leaders of their choice, those they feel can lead them to achieve the desired development in the community and the society at large. Many who aspire to be leaders (especially in Nigeria) always align themselves with one religion or the other, and most often with the most popular ones within the community they are aspiring to lead. When the leaders are either elected or appointed, they usually take what is referred to as the 'oath of office' before the commencement of their stewardship. At the point of the oath taking, the leaders are made to take the oath using either the Holy Bible or the Holy Quran, vowing to do their best while in office, with the help of the God they profess. The general notion is that the Bible or the Quran they swore with will keep them in check, but it seems they no longer have regard for or even remember the oath or its sacred object afterwards.

Oath-taking can be viewed as a statement or declaration made under penalty of divine retribution for deliberate falsity. Oaths are taken to ensure the establishment of truth, maintenance of good human relationship, maintenance of the confidentiality of an institution, and sometimes when criminals are being sorted out (Nana 208-209). In the African societies, most especially in the religious aspects, oath-taking is never taken for granted when the need arises. The people are always conscious of the repercussion of engaging in such with filthy hands or hearts.

Lawrence-Heart observed that the hunger for political offices in recent times is overwhelming. The reason for such, according to her submission, is as a result of believing that such offices are accompanied with plenty financial benefits which are capable of catapulting a person from poverty to a life of wealth and recognition (1). And because such is the mindset of the politicians, they seem to pay less attention to any other business of governance, even with the oath they have taken when they are in office.

It is obvious that traditional oath is being denied during swearing-in ceremonies by political officeholders. Lawrence-Heart opined that the denial has made the phenomenon lose its potency. She insisted that people's religion should be scrutinized before they are allowed to take the conventional oath. If the politicians are found to be those who patronize the African deities, even if they claim to be either Christians or Muslims, traditional oath-taking should be enforced on them (5). Furthermore, Chinua Achebe observed that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with Nigerian climate or water, air or any other thing else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility to the challenge of personal example, which is the feature of true leadership (2). This scenario depicts the true picture of Nigerian leadership which is characterized by greed and selfishness. Honest, visionary and dedicated leaders are

lacking in Nigeria since independence in 1960 to the present democratic dispensation.

It is imperative to understand that religion in Nigeria has become a veritable means in the hands 'political gladiators', both the active and inactive ones, for the 'psychic and emotional manipulations of adherents' (Ajayi and Oluwafemi 105). Ajayi and Oluwafemi also maintained that religion through its teachings has positively affected the Nigerian people (107). The effect is felt everywhere, as one cannot succeed in most ventures without some religious elements attached to the success. They also observed that out of the three religions in Nigeria, traditional religion is the least politically active (108). The point, which they actually raised, is vital, but one should also note that their (traditional religious adherents) involvement is mostly underground, as some of the adherents also profess the other religions, but in practice they belong to the traditional religion.

This study aims at investigating the reasons behind the non-commitment to the oath of office by political officeholders despite using either the Holy Bible or Holy Quran for such oath and also to propose the introduction of oaths using African divinities, since it looks as if the leaders are scared of the wraths of the African deities rather than those of either Christianity or Islam. This will be carried out through a careful study of the nature of the Nigerian politics, African deities or divinities and the reasons for the non-commitment to the oath taken.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
This section deals with the clarification of some concepts as used in this work. The concepts discussed are; 'politics in Nigeria', 'African deities', and 'religion and national development'.

**Politics in Nigeria**

Politics in Nigeria has had a long history. Before and after colonization, Nigeria has undergone various stages and forms of leadership, ways of ascending to power and different patterns of governance. The population of Nigeria, as it is today, consists of diversity of ethnic groups living in their own territories with different languages, traditions, social and political structure as well as way of life and other cultural traits and having their own separate histories (Stokke 9). As the nation experiences growth in diverse ways and the citizens are becoming more enlightened, there is competition at the elite level among a growing number of qualified people for a limited number of positions and these competitions usually have tones of ethnic and sometimes religious overtones (Stokke 15). This competition in its way contributed in bringing religion into politics. The first pointer of every politician who ventures into politics in Nigeria is 'which religion does s/he belong to'.

Administratively, Nigeria became one entity in 1914 under the leadership of the then Governor General Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard. This was the year the Northern and the Southern Protectorates, which were formally independent of each other, were formally amalgamated. With constitutional development from one colonial administration to the other, the pattern of the country's politics has been taking different forms and shapes to befit the constitution at hand. This has been the practice even up to the stage the country got her independence.

Nigerian political history, as observed by Ajayi and Ojo, is filled with failed electoral processes and the condition is described as a cyclical failure that returns the country to the scratch (116). Ajayi and Ojo also viewed socio-political inequality as being prominent and permanent features of democracy, particularly in Nigeria, which has widened the gap between those who have access to power and public funds and those who do not (110). This created democratic gap does not speak well of the leadership of the country which is mostly

occupied by strong adherents of religions with God who watches over and is believed to be concerned about the affairs of humankind.

The stage of the Nigerian politics seems to be very competitive between adherents of the two major religions - Christianity and Islam (Wapwera 107). Most of the actions taken by the other, stems from the reaction on the action from the other end. Tar and Shettima noted thus:

> …throughout Nigeria's postcolonial history, the tides of Pentecostalism and Christian Revivalism have often been strengthened by specific national political event and factors- for instance, the adoption of Shari'a by some Northern states since 1999 and the admonition by two former "Muslim" Presidents (General Buhari and Shehu Shagari) that Muslims not vote for non-Muslims. Presently, Pentecostalism has become an entrenched part of Nigeria's social and political landscape. Obasanjo only tapped into his bourgeoning religio-political movements by using his personal and political circumstances to identify with, and garner support from the Pentecostal community (17).

It is expected that those who benefit from the scoffers of religion to get into political offices and leadership should be able to put in their best not to disappoint their faith and the God they serve. This is supposed to be the normal but most often reverse is the case and as such, the people that the office holders are representing are always disappointed.

**African Deities (Divinities)**
It is very important for one to understand that Africans believe in the existence of two worlds- the visible and the invisible. The visible world is inhabited by God's creatures, while the invisible world is inhabited by the Supreme Being and other spiritual agents (Spirits and

deities). The position occupied by these spiritual agents is very significant to the Africans.

The belief in the existence of deities or divinities in African traditional religion is not questionable among the Africans. African deities have the attributes of the Supreme Being. They are sometimes referred to as His direct offspring. They are "variously described as sons, servants, manifestation, refractions of the Supreme Being" (Metuh 54). Mbiti also added that they are associated with the Supreme Being and often stand for His activities either as personifications or as the spiritual beings in charge of these major objects or phenomena of nature (75). Concerning their origin, Idowu argued that it will not be correct for one to say that the divinities were created, instead he opines that it is correct to say that they were brought into being, or that they came into being in the nature of things with regard to the divine ordering of the universe (169). The researchers felt that is just a matter of semantics or language usage as 'brought into being' or 'created' could mean the same thing. It is believed that they were brought into existence for some specific functions, as each of the deities is saddled with a particular responsibility. Each of them, according to Ugwu and Ugwueye, has its own territory or jurisdiction (38). The deities are dependent on the Supreme Being - the source of their existence. They take directives from him, and as such, they are considered to be a means to an end and not an end in themselves. Despite the fact that the deities owe their existence to the Supreme Being, the Africans believed that the deities are also powerful, and if man is to avoid any misfortune, he has to be in constant rightness with them. The deities can be good and at the same time bad. They can be used to inflict sickness or other misfortunes, even death, on the innocent. Such is also their weaknesses, as the general belief is that only the Supreme Being is perfect. The function of the divinities is to ensure that God is not bothered with petty problems from the earth ((Awolalu and Dopamu 77; Kanu 102).

Awolalu and Dopamu categorize the African deities into three major groups. The first category is the divinities of heaven. They are believed to be with the Supreme Being from the creation of the universe. The second category is the deified ancestors. These are human beings who had lived extraordinary and mysterious lives on earth so that when they were dead, they were deified or canonized as gods. When an ancestor is deified, he is no longer an ancestor, but has become a deity. A good example is *Sango* the fourth king of Oyo who, after his death, was deified as thunder deity of Yoruba land. The third category of the divinities is the personification of natural forces and phenomena. Such myriad forces are associated with hills, mountains, rivers, rock, caves, and trees, etc (74).

The deities are many in number and they vary from one African locality to another. Their number may range between 201, 401, 600 and 1700 in Yoruba land. Some communities even have less number (Awolalu and Dopamu 74). Few among the deities shall be discussed in this study.

i.  **Ogun**

    *Ogun* is a divinity of Yoruba land. *Ogun* is a god of war, iron and chase. Invariably, one can say he is the god of warriors, blacksmiths, hunters and all who deal in iron and steel. This deity is believed to be very fierce and warlike. He is an instrument of God's wrath. Any oath sealed before *Ogun* must be fulfilled. When one is suspected of evil intention, the person is made to swear before *Ogun*. Calamity always befalls any person who swears falsely, for the deity demands justice and fair play. The deity is also benevolent in some aspects, as hunters believe that he protects them from dangerous animals.

ii. **Songo**

    Songo, who happens to be the fourth king of Oyo empire, is the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning. When he was king, he could kill by spitting fire from his mouth. He became

deified after his death and he took on the attributes of Jakuta, the original thunder divinity of the Yoruba land. He represents divine wrath upon the children of disobedience. He is more dreaded than any other divinity for its malevolence. He hates and punishes lying, stealing and poisoning. In the flashing of the lightning and thunder, the Yoruba are constantly reminded of the presence of the God of judgment. Those who commit crime live in fear when there is lightning or thunder.

### iii. *Amadioha*

Amadioha is the Igbo thunder divinity. People believe that his position is second only to that of *Ala*. This divinity or deity is also a manifestation of the wrath of God. Amadioha descends on moral offenders like witches, sorcerers, those who poison thieves and those who break his laws. His punishment is royal punishment just like that of *Songo* of the Yoruba. He does not only specialize in punishing moral offenders, he is also believed to be the sender of rain and the giver of fertility.

### iv. *Ojukwu*

This is Igbo god of smallpox. He is much dreaded. This deity also is an expression of the wrath of God. He hates evil people and keeps back his help from them. His punishment is also a royal punishment as the victim does not receive normal burial.

### v. *Ogiuwu*

Ogiuwu is the thunder divinity of Edo land. Through thunder and lightning, he brings death on the children of disobedience. He is also regarded as an expression of divine judgment. The Edo people believe that it was Ogiuwu who brought them into the world, despite being the son of Osanobwa (Supreme Being). It is believed that he has the power to bring into existence and can also terminate life. Those who fear his anger

and do not want to be summoned prematurely from the world usually pray to him.

There are many deities in different African communities or nations which the people believe in their capabilities to do and undo and who also help in overseeing the actions of men with the intention of blessing those whose actions are right and punishing those who are evil. In their summary on the divinities in West African traditional religion, Awolalu and Dopamu made a rough categorization of divinities into their various departments to include;

i.      Arch Divinity: Orisa-nla or Obatala (Yoruba); Ala, Ana or Ani (Igbo); Olokun (Edo); Egbesu (Ijo); Obumo (Ibibio); Gunnu (Nupe); Mawu-Lisa (Ewe Fon); Tano (Akan and Ga); Dugbo (Kono).

ii.     Oracle Divinity: Orunmila or Ifa (Yoruba); Fa (Ewe-Fon); Agwu (Igbo); Ibinokpabi (Igbo).

iii.    Earth Divinity: Sopono (Yoruba); Sagbata (Ewe and Fon); Ojukwu (Igbo); Amakiri (Ijo); Isong (Ibibio); Asase Yaa (Akan); Oto (Edo).

iv.     Divinity of Iron: Ogun (Yoruba); Gu (Ewe-Fon); Ta Yao (Ashanti).

v.      Thunder Divinity: Songo (Yoruba); Hevioso (Ewe-Fon); Gua (Akan); Sokogba (Nupe); Amadioha (Igbo); Ogiuwu (Edo).

vi.     Divine Messenger (trickster): Esu (Yoruba; Legba (Ewe-Fon); Agwu (Igbo).

vii.    Water Divinity: Osun, Oya, Olokun (Yoruba); Bosomtwe (Akan); Binabu (Ijo).
            (72-115).


## Religion and National Development

The term 'National Development' is all-encompassing. Its facets cover virtually every aspect of the individual and the nation. The development of a nation has to be holistic in nature. It includes full growth and expansion of industries, agriculture, education, social,

religious and cultural institutions. When such an experience is felt, one can confidently say that there is national development.

The United Nations Decade Report, as shared by Bawu, defined national development as "a growth plus change. Change in turn is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative". Some of the parameters for measuring national development include; development through a planned national economy, increase in agricultural production through application of modern technical know-how, harnessing industrial production, development of human resource and application of science and technology in the production sector (np).

Pat Williams observed that without the close collaboration of religion and development in the past, Nigeria would have experienced slow pace in terms of development. He opined that Nigeria's national development had had the assistance of religion and still does (32). The implication of this submission is that the contribution of religion to development is positive.

Ikechi-Ekpendu et al opined that religion is an interactive force in the society because it has power to shape collective beliefs. According to them, religion provides a cohesive social order by promoting a sense of belonging in collective enterprises. They, therefore, came to the conclusion that religion and development have a meeting point (82-83). Religion provides a platform for mutual and harmonious living amongst individuals in the society. It promotes growth as it teaches people to be honest, disciplined, hard working and not to be involved in harmful activities (Ikechi-Ekpendu et al 85). Development will definitely be experienced where people practice the teachings of religion truthfully.

It is true that a greater percentage of the key actors in the Nigerian political arena claim to be people of religious affiliations. This is typical of Nigeria, as the nation is adjudged to be one of the most

religious countries in the world. According to Onapaja, Nigeria is confirmed to be the ninth most religious country in the world (112). The level of religiosity in the nation is supposed to propel fairness and commitment to leadership which will in turn bring about national development, but it is far from being visible in sight. People tend to forget the oath they take to lead the people in fairness and love for the country as contained in the oath. The researchers feel their actions and inactions are as a result of the slow pace of judgment by the God in whose name the oaths are taken. It is true that both the Christian and the Muslim God's judgment is full of grace and mercy, through which an erring person has the time to amend his/her ways and might possibly be forgiven. This delay in judgment, which is generally a good one, might not suit the Nigerian state now, as the country is in need of drastic and radical response to the issue of corruption and bad leadership. This work can be done by the African deities if they are engaged in the political theatre.

## THE DEITIES IN THE THEATRE OF POLITICS

The Seventh Schedule of the 1999 Constitution Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides for Public Office Oath Taking using various open religious beliefs to protect and uphold the Constitution and the interest of Nigerians whose resources they are to manage on their behalf. In most occasions, as mentioned earlier, only the two major religions (Christianity and Islam) are considered in the Public Office Oath Taking, as most of the politicians seem to align only with them publicly, even if their loyalty is to the traditional religion or others. Oath-taking is a situation where absolute loyalty or adherence to certain agreements and conditionality is prescribed and administered to the beneficiaries of the agreement (Oviasuyi et al 1940).

Oviasuyi et al argued that godfatherism and fetish oath-taking through the use of juju, witchcraft and voodooism have negatively affected development in Nigeria (193). They might be arguing from the point

of manipulation by selected few who administered the oath to them and who hide under the oath to cart away the resources of the people. In our opinion, it is the lack of public acceptability of the traditional method of oath-taking to be part of the political process that pushes the people whose loyalty is to the traditional religion to hide and secretly take the oath to avoid public embarrassment. And anything that is done in secret will surely follow secret means of operation and development which will make a physical thing to be lacking.

The well-known indigenous way of swearing an oath of office in Nigeria, as observed by Ogunleye, is entering into a covenant by both leaders and followers. The main reason for engaging in such agreement is to enhance adequate socio-political and ethical relations in the society. The religious concept, according to his submission, was brought or introduced in form of oath of office to involve pledging loyalty to perform the duties associated with the office one is to serve in faithfully (83). Ogunleye further explains that the oaths taken which are mostly either the Christian or Islamic ways usually seem ineffective maybe because the Christian or the Muslim God postpones judgment till the judgment day. His suggestion of the inclusion of the African traditional method of oath-taking is that the African gods are capable and known for instant justice (84). If the gods' justice system is truly instant, which may mean the possible way of constantly keeping the leaders on check, it should be encouraged.

In traditional African societies, deities and ancestors are called to be witnesses to the agreements between the subject and the object of the oath. This is because oaths in Africa have religious undertones and there is always a call to a deity to witness the proceedings of the oath-taking in which the oath takers are very much aware of the presence of the deity(ies). During the rituals of oath-taking, words signifying misfortune and death are used in the pledge-making, stating that a person will keep to his/her part of the covenant (Nana 201; Lawrence-Heart 2). The Africans believe that any deviation from the grund

norms of the society attracts severe consequences or immediate punishment. The Africans in a true sense fear greatly anything that has to do with traditional oath-taking.

The African deities are greatly feared by the Nigerian politicians. The politicians are not only afraid of the deities but even their shrines. The judgment of the deities is quick and instantaneous for any erring followers. The deities execute the assignment given to them by the Supreme Being. Some of the greatly feared deities include; Songo, Amadioha, Ogun, and Ojukwu. Most of these deities are expressions of God's divine judgment. When their wrath is individual(s), it is seen as royal punishment and such individuals are not given proper burial rites.

The departmentalization of African deities according to people's activities, experiences and socio-political structure is to allow them carry out the task without stress, as each deity or divinity faces only that which concerns him. Example of such departments of divinities are; of war, iron, smallpox, earth, thunder, health, weather, water and the likes (Awolalu and Dopamu 114; Mbiti 75).

Engaging the deities in oath-taking will definitely make the politicians who take their oaths before them to be faithful to the oath, as failure to abide by them attracts their wrath which sometimes is deadly. With the knowledge of their deadly wrath in view, the politicians will sit up and carry out their responsibilities as stipulated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to avoid possible action. Imagine engaging a Yoruba divinity - *Orunmila* who, according to the submission of Mbiti, is "reputed to be omnilinguist divinity who understands every language on earth and who represents God's omniscience and knowledge" (75). The politicians, knowing well that they have no hiding place from his wrath, will watch their steps as it concerns service and management of people's resources.

## Conclusion

It is crystal clear that the present-day Nigerian politicians do not keep to their oath of office - service to the people. Greater percentages of those in leadership are corrupt, dishonest, greedy and visionless. Even those that seem to be good before being called for service usually become corrupt when they get to offices. Many institutions are put in place to check the excesses of the politicians and to call them to order for better service, but it looks as if these institutions are not doing the expected, rather they are used as tools in fighting oppositions or political rivals by those in power. Leaders do not seem to abide by the oaths of office; maybe because they look at the oaths as normal rituals and have forgotten about the repercussion of not abiding by the tenets of the oaths. This might be possible because they do not see anybody being punished for going against the oath by the Supreme Deity they took the oath before.

The drift from the traditional form of oath-taking is mostly as a result of the consequences in the event of failure to conform to the tenets of the traditional oath of office. If the potency of such oaths is assured, the society or nation could give it a trial; maybe positive result of good leadership could be achieved.

Engaging the service of the African deities might be a viable solution, as defaulters of any oath are dealt with instantaneously. Even if their judgment is not instant, the politician will still be on their toes because of the fear of the unknown.

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# TRENDS IN THE SHATTERED MICROCOSM OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN AFRICA

**Nnoruga James, PhD**
Department of Religion and Human Relations
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
jn.nnoruga@unizik.edu.ng

## Abstract

*The religious change in Africa, which is movement from African traditional religion to Christianity and Islam, has been explained by many scholars through pointing out one factor or the other as responsible for the change of faith or religion. Some argued on the side of non-religious factors as the cause of the religious change found in Africa, while some argued on the religious factors as the main cause of the change. The shattered microcosm of Trimingham attributed the movement of religious change to the collapse of traditional structures and African world views. The African structures that originally are based on rural or tribal structures and thrive on rural subsistence economies were shattered with the sudden but steady impact of Western civilization which came in form of colonial subjugation, technological advancement, industrial economies and education. This precipitated the massive change or movement from African traditional religion to the two world religions that invaded the African soil. In this write up, we are going to trace the trends and the implications found in this theory of religious change as explained by Trimingham and what has become of religious change today in Africa whether the change is real change in terms of conversion or change of cults.*

## Introduction

After the invasion of Africa by the colonial masters with their own world view, technology advancement, culture and religion, so many changes began to take place in the lives of the Africans, their world view started changing, and this of course changed their attitudes to life in general. The structures of African society began to undergo a foundational change by responding to the new structures coming into contact with it. This contact with the incoming religions/cultures produced a lot of changes in all spheres of African structures. The religious change that took place in Africa permeates every aspect of their lives, for Africans are by nature religious. Religion, again, defines everything Africans do or perform, that is why the maxim "to be an Africa is to be religious" holds true. Just like other world views, African world view has adaptive potentials which respond to the impulses of change and yet retain strongly and loosely its culture and vitality, as case may be (Metuh, 1985).

The tide of religious change in the last years in Africa assumed a form of phenomenal change or dimension without much change in the content of the African world view. Hence, we found out that many Africans are reversing back to their original religion, though with new structures and world view added to it. This is against the backdrop of the view that African gods are on retreat and the collapse of pagandom is imminent. The wind of change in the religious sphere in Africa was so great that many predicted its collapse in a matter of time. But the tide of change now is completely opposite of what took place years back; the gods are coming back with great force and in various ways and means. This necessitated the search for new terms or explanation suitable among the scholars in describing the new religion found in Africa which will accommodate the ingredients of African religion and ingredients of new religions (Christianity and Islam) and still remain the true African religion, with its culture embedded in it tightly and loosely, as the case may be.

Triminigham (1955) x-rayed the cause of religious change in Africa which is the main focus of this write-up. The views or notions of Trimingham on religious change many years ago will be discussed in relation to the religious change that is taking place today in the African society. Obviously, time and tide have changed greatly and structures in the society have become strong and complex. One discovers that the process of religious change examined or discussed by scholars in various fora tend to emphasize either the continuity or discontinuity of religious and cultural elements. Triminigham's theoretical assumption is based on socio-structural factors which emphasize more of non-religious factors as the cause of religious change in Africa. According to Metuh (1985), Trimingham ascribed the large scale of religious changes during the colonial and post-colonial periods to the collapse of structures of traditional societies and traditional religious system to which they were closely knitted.

The collapse of traditional African society started crumbling in the face of the experience or contact with the macrocosmic society which is not for clan or tribal society. Hence, for microcosm of village to survive in the realm of bigger structural society, there must be some adaptation in itself for its continuous existence in the society. This necessitated change in the traditional society in the way things are being done and carried out for its survival. The way of worship, the habit of eating, agricultural production, economic change, informal education to formal education, manner of addressing and mode of dressing, means of transportation and so on, all changed. These changes took place with the level of macrocosm that existed in or influenced the tribal society of the African society.

This write-up again will focus more on the implications or trends being generated by Trimingham theory of religious change with regard to Igbo/ African world. Attempt will be made to see if the destroyed microcosmic structure was completely destroyed, or it is a question of continued survival in another form. The widely accepted

view from different quarters concerning African traditional religion is that its collapse is imminent and its gods are on retreat, either to come back in full force or remain incommunicado or remain as non-performing gods. This is attested to recently by the destruction of Indian gods by some Indian natives because of the inability of their gods to protect or care for the natives during the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.

## The Theory of Shattered Microcosm

The theory of shattered microcosm by Trimingham (1955) tried to explain the religious change that took place in Africa many years ago. According to Trimingham, the movement from traditional religion to Christianity and Islam resulted from the collapse of the structures of African traditional worldviews and African traditional societies. Ideally, the African traditional worldviews and its structures are bound up with their social, cultural and religious structures. None is separated from each other. This, without being told, led to the collapse of the entire system and structure, when attacked by external forces or influenced by macrocosmic culture. The theory of shattered microcosm dealt with the African world views as it was before or during its contact with the Christian and European cultures. Hence, there will be some gap or lacuna in applying the theory of shattered macrocosm while describing or explaining the religious change that is taking place in the African world today (Metuh, 1999).

Using the Igbo worldview for example, which is a microcosm in African worldview, the underlying mentality and philosophy of Igbo worldview is based on the principle that every effect must have a cause. According to Onuh (1992), one finds this principle operating in every system of life of people in Africa. Accidents have no place in the mentality of Africans because every effect is traceable to a cause. Metuh (1999) described the African universe as the one fluid, coherent unit which is in continuous interaction. On this continuous interaction found in African universe, Uchendu (1965) affirmed earlier that:

> … the Igbo world is a real one in every respect. There is the world of man, peopled by all created beings and things both animate and inanimate. The spirit world is the abode of the creator, the deities, the disembodied and malignant spirits, and the ancestral spirits. It is the future abode of the living after their death. There is a constant interaction between the world of man and the world of the dead; the visible and the invisible forces. (pp. 11-12).

The above African worldviews and their structures contained therein, enumerated by some scholars, were shattered with the coming of a higher and stronger culture, according to Trimingham (1999). According to him, the sudden impact of Western technological advancement and civilization, industrial economy and formal education dominated and upset the social structures of African societies. The African economy and structures originally were based on tribal structures and subsistence economies. According to Afigbo (1981), a detailed study reveals that the pre-colonial African society was strikingly variegated; this was so, not only in the area of language where almost every autonomous society evolved its own dialect, but also in the spheres of political, economic and social institutions. This implies that each society or village group has its own economy which they were known to thrive on. Hence, this economic activity by which each society or group is known played an important role in the survival of the Africans as a society and in determining the character and quality of their culture, religion and cosmology.

 But the Western industrial economy in its macrocosmic nature, with its structures, overturned the economic foundations of the Africans, which according to Afigbo (1981) has two sides of economic foundations. The first deals with the economic sub-structure on which the African society rested. The second economic foundation

determines the character of each African society and culture. These economic foundations dwindled suddenly and continuously in the face of the impact of Western civilization and globalization. This collapse certainly started taking place because African traditional religions, according to Metuh (1987), are so bound up with their social structures that the collapse of one institution necessitated the collapse of the other ones, even that of the religious life. Hence Trimingham (cited by Metuh, 1987) concludes that " the indigenous religions, being primarily local and ethnic , have no future in their organized forms, and the religious future of the African lies between Christianity and Islam, on the one hand, and secularism on the other"(p.12).

From the above, it is obvious that Triminigham (1955) regarded the African traditional religion as being ethnic and local in the sense that it is meant to service a section of African society or group of people. This view may negate the African spirit or view that Africans carry their religion wherever they go or in whatever they do. For Triminigham (1959) argued that:

> Village religion is serviceable only within the circumscribed bounds of village life. When horizons were widened, its limitations were felt, and this led many to adopt either Islam or Christianity parallel to those aspects of the old religions which are still serviceable. (p. 21).

Trimingham may have erred from the above quotation or argument, for religion is not something that is there as an object or machine used for production, as the case may be. Rather, traditional religion is a way of life of Africans which has been with them for generations wherever they go, or whatever they do, they go with it, and in it they have lived and solved their existential problems from time immemorial. Again, Horton (1971), in his explanation of religious change in Africa, was able to cast or equate African traditional religion as one of the world religions. Recent statistics shows that

adherents of African traditional religion are growing and deepening since the beginning of 20th century. The influence of African traditional religion continues consciously and unconsciously among many Christians, Muslims and other religions of the world. Even new religious movements have taken over African traditional religious beliefs and moral values (Kanu, 2015).

On the issue of proliferation of churches (that is Afro-Christian churches) in the African soil, Trimingham (cited by Metuh, 1987) was of the opinion that it was caused by two major factors, namely; firstly due to intolerance of missionary Christianity, and secondly, the tendency of new converts to introduce the elements of their own traditional religion into Christianity, while the Islamic religion was more tolerant than Christianity in its syncretic tendencies or practices. The refusal of Christianity to tolerate mixing with other religions led to the formation of breakaway groups or sects in Christianity. Horton (1971), just like Trimingham, explained that the proliferation of independent churches in Africa can be seen in the roles the world religions played in Africa as catalysts. Though the Christian religion was reluctant to or never played the role of a catalyst, the Islamic religion accepted the role of a catalyst entirely. Horton argued that:

> The (intellectualist) theory enables us to understand the rather differential institutional histories of Islam and Christianity in Africa. As I have said, it casts the world religions the role of catalysts; and it seems to me that the fates of these religions and institutional bodies are very much determined by the extent of their willingness to accept this role. During the more recent part of its African career, Islam seems to have been fairly content with its catalytic role. It has been tolerant in allowing the individual to make his own particular selection from official doctrines. It has accepted that those who come to the mosque form a continnum rather than a band of total converts; and it does

not nag excessively at those who lie towards the pagan end of the continnum….Missionary Christianity, on the hand, has never been content to play catalyst. It has been rigid in its insistence on the individual's total acceptance official doctrines. Hence the orthodox churches find them continually discomfited within the walls of the churches. The result is the proliferation of dissenting breakaway sects that Peel and others have described so vividly. (pp. 104-105).

From the above argument, it shows that Trimingham (1955) is correct even in this age of globalization. For Christian religion has not come up on the term or the means to integrate African cultures or values into Christian values, hence one keeps hearing the terms like Christianization, adaptation, Africanization, inculturation and so on. But the Muslim religion accepted the African values.

For Trimingham, conversion in Africa was necessitated by the perceived condition of African traditional religion, having come in contact with the world religions and their widely advanced values. Hence, according to Metuh (1985), the adherents of African traditional religion turned to Islam and Christianity as a convenient means of coping and surviving the widely changed situation in and outside the African soil. However, the shattered microcosm theory underscored and admitted the fact that the average African converts (if not all) retained their traditional beliefs and values, but in a changed form or condition. It is not a doubting fact that religious change took place in Africa, but the real and disturbing question or situation remains: whether that can be called a conversion. From the above analysis, one can infer that Trimingham took conversion to mean a religious change that involved African traditionalists moving from traditional religion to any of the world religions.

Certainly, nobody can dispute the fact that the rapid social, economic, political and religious change that took place in Africa was

tremendous, and it shattered the microcosmic structures of African traditional society, upon which it has been surviving for years. Hence, the different explanations or theories of religious change tend to emphasize or portray the continuity or discontinuity of traditional values or beliefs, depending on theoretical assumptions. On the normal parlance, some talk of routing of African gods and collapse of traditional beliefs or fall of pagandom (Metuh, 1985).

**The Shattered Microcosm: Its Trends and Implications**
Almost all the theories of religious change emphasize that religion as a system of beliefs does not really go into extinction. This implies that not all aspects of religion or culture are thrown away or shed out while undergoing a change or transformation. Certain aspects of culture or religion are lost or gained; some change significantly for better, while some others slide into extinction because of their negative impacts in the society like human sacrifice. African worldviews, on the other hand, have adaptive potentials which respond to the impulses of change and yet hold reasonably some aspects of their own culture or religion. However, religious change, like conversion, according to Metuh (1985), is a continuous process and complex in nature, which cannot be explained or happen in a straight way. The causes of religious change vary greatly from one factor to many factors, though many theories of conversion tend to point or claim that one factor can be the cause of religious change.

Fisher (1973) made different explanations on the term "conversion" and went ahead to differentiate it with adhesion, which is normally taken as conversion itself. For him "conversion is the deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right"(p.33). And he described adhesion as people who stood with one foot on either side of the fence, adopting the new worships as useful supplements. This seems to be agreeable with Horton's (1971) explanation on conversion to be

responses given by members of different socio-economic categories confronted with Islam or Christianity at a particular time or space. Explaining further, Metuh (1985) gave the different senses in which the term "conversion" can be used. Its meaning may range from mere change of membership (affiliation) to change of conviction. This religious change could be a change of affiliation from traditional religion to a mission church, or from a mission church to an independent African church, or going back again to African traditional religion, which is what is happening in the religious circle of African people.

One may ask: what are the possible implications of this religious change as explained by Trimingham in the African society? And the trends seen in the society are because of religious change or combining of cults being carried out by different religions in the Africa. For example, with the collapse of African worldviews and their structures in the face of Western advancement and colonial domination, which according to Trimingham (1955) resulted in the mass movement of traditional votaries from African traditional religion to world religions, has this movement affected the life of Africans positively or negatively? Or has it resulted in the collapse of African religion, as many scholars predicted? It is obvious that Trimingham may have pointed out what happened to African traditional religion through his theory, but Metuh (1999) pointed out that world views of people change from time to time, so it is imperative to look at what has changed from the African worldviews from the time of colonial masters to post-colonial masters till the present age (globalization age) in Africa with regard to religious change.

African traditional religion did not collapse, but some changes took place for its sustainability and development. One of the negative effects of religious change that took place in Africa is the proliferation of churches among the Africans. Worshipping places (churches) are seen everywhere, yet morality is very low in the society. However,

Trimingham (1955) attributed this phenomenon to the intolerance of missionary Christianity, and the tendency of new converts to introduce the elements of their own traditional religion into Christianity. Obviously, things have gone weird in this regard. Opening of churches now is a way of making money for oneself and not for building up of morality among the people and avoidance of taboo, which African traditional religion propagated and maintained initially. This scramble or zeal for opening of churches dealt a death blow on the African religion and values, which is originally introduced or caused by early missionaries. Kalu (1980) observed that even the early missionaries themselves considered the competition by the various evangelical bodies to be undignified and wasteful. Kalu (1980) observed that:

> …there was a cut- throat competition between Anglicans, Methodist and the African Independent Churches. The last two bodies contained men who had broken away from the Anglicans to protest against the shabby treatment they had received from the younger generation of white missionaries who had succeeded Bishop Crowther. Thus, in the west both African and missionary Church leaders sometimes paid lip service to the need for cooperation and unity, but never tried to implement it. (p. 341).

This is one of the disadvantages of missionary work in Africa; the missionaries, while scrambling for members or new converts, planted a seed of discord or disunity in the African soil and structure which were once stable for the Africans. This has led to all sources of atrocities with regard to low level of morality and building of a just society among the Africans. From the destruction of the structures and worldviews of African people, it is obvious that a new type of God has

been introduced in Africa which is strange to the Africans. Idowu (cited by Kalu, 1980) argued that:

> It is now obvious that by a misguided purpose, a completely new God who had had nothing to do with the past of African was introduced to her peoples. Thus, there was no proper foundation laid for the bridge built between the old and the new; the church has in consequence been speaking to Africans in strange tongues because there was no adequate communication. (p. 333).

Here again, we see the predicament in which the churches in Africa found themselves, for the missionaries introduced to us a church that is not coordinated, without theology that will suit the Africans, without its own liturgy, without policy, and without any background. It is a serious problem, considering the effort that is being made today by African theologians to Africanize, indigenize or acculturate African values and religions with new ones that came in contact with it. It is true and certain that Christian and Muslim religions have spread enormously in Africa, yet the resultant effect is religion that is weak, money-oriented preachers and morally deficient preaching. Hence, in many quarters, there is call for moratorium so that the churches in Africa can organize themselves and stamp their feet in the African soil. Concerning the above view, Kalu (1975) observed that:

> Recently the cry has become more strident. Some are suggesting a drastic surgical operation, such as a complete moratorium. Others are advocating a range of ecumenical programmes including organic unity. It is imperative that Christians learn to understand again the culture of Africa before they can succeed. This does not imply advocating the romanticisation of the African tradition, as Camera Laye did in African child. But it does imply that Christianity must be traditionalized in African culture in such a way that

> the dead wood in both will be destroyed, thereby
> enabling a new form to emerge. (p. 24).

Again, the African traditional religion, which is known not to proselytize, has today changed from that culture to membership drive. Describing the nature of African traditional religion, Awolalu (1976) said that:

> It is largely written in the people's myths and folktales, in their songs and dances, in their liturgies and shrines and in their proverbs and pithy sayings. It is a religion whose historical founder is neither known nor worshipped. It is a religion that has no zeal for membership drive, yet it offers persistent fascination for Africans, young and old. (p. 26)

This has largely influenced the African society morally, as we mentioned earlier, for the pastors or overseers of a particular church or domination find it hard to preach the gospel as their master did in the scriptures. Many of the pastors or founders are afraid to lose their congregation who probably are seen to finance the church projects or that enrich their personal pockets through offering or paying of tithes. Hence, this accounts for many religious houses seen everywhere in the African society, yet morally the society is full of kidnapping, banditry, scamming, and corruption of different types abound in the governmental and private offices. This was not the case in African traditional religion before the coming of Europeans and their religion. The Africans have moral codes and they were afraid of going against these moral codes, for the African gods or spirits will descend heavily on the defaulters. Even when the defaulters are not seen immediately, the ancestors will indicate through evil events that are bound to take place in the community concerned.

Still on the proliferation of churches in every nook and cranny of the African societies, the identity of the person who proclaimed himself or herself as a prophet or pastor is not known, unlike in the traditional religion of Africa where one knows and confirms who is a *dibia aja*. But today everyone calls himself or herself a priest because he/she founded a church. Obiora (1998), in describing the above issue or crisis, listed some of these names which they call themselves or they are known for, as thus:

> …self-appointed super priests, hanky-panky pastors, arch-deacons, spurious prophets, obnoxious and nefarious prophetesses, self-called senior apostles, ragtag supreme Evangelists, unschooled rabbis, mercenary and sham preachers, self-proclaimed messiahs, self-declared archbishops, self-ordained patriarchs, self-consecrated men of God, overnight venerable and levites, …all invoking and claiming to be mandated and sent by Christ. (p. 14).

These proprietors of the spurious churches, according to Obiora, most times claim divine authenticity, divine mandate directly from God, and to be presenting a better and purified version of religion. One will immediately ask if all these prophets and self-made evangelists are factually and really sent by God? Certainly, the Jesus Christ they are preaching or claiming to represent came as an obedient and poor servant of God, which are virtues lacking in them.

Another trend found among these proprietors of churches is affluent or luxurious way of living which all the time questions whom they are representing. The richest pastors in the world came mostly from Africa; many of them are richer than kings and queens, politicians, and some of them own the most expensive private jets, houses, cars, with chains of businesses around the world. This again negates the real priesthood in African traditional religion, whereby most of their

functions as priests of deities do not give them so much wealth, and in some cases most of their functions are done to serve rather than to gain wealth. The Jesus Christ of Christianity equally had nothing while on earth; even the common ass, that beast of burden on which he sat on that memorable day He entered Jerusalem in style, belonged to whom nobody knows, but certainly not to Him (Obiora, 1998).

Onyeachonam (2021) listed top ten richest pastors in Africa as of January, 2021, the jets, cars they drive, and their net worth. The first among them is Alph Luka, with an estimated net worth of $1 Billon. He is the founder and pastor of Alleluia Ministries International in South Africa which he founded in 2002. For now, he is believed to be the richest pastor in Africa. Bishop David Oyedepo, with an estimated net worth of $150 Million, is the founder and lead pastor of the Living Faith Church, popularly known as Winners Chapel. Shepherd Bushiri is another top African pastor from Malawi, with an estimated net worth of $150 million. He is a prophet and convener of the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG), with its headquarters in South Africa. Bishop Ayo Ortisejafor followed the list with an estimated net worth of $120 million. He is the leader and founder of the Word of Life Bible Church, with headquarters in Warri, Nigeria. Pastor E. A. Adeboye is among the richest pastors in Africa. A mathematician turned preacher, with an estimated net worth of $65 million. He ascended the throne as the lead man of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, after the death of his predecessor. Uebert Angel, another top pastor in Africa, with estimated net worth of $60 Million, is a founder and senior pastor of the Good News Church, formerly Spirit Embassy, with headquarters in the United Kingdom. He founded the church in 2007. Chris Oyakhilome, with an estimated net worth of $50 million, is another top-ranking pastor in Africa. He founded his ministry, Love World Incorporated, popularly called Christ Embassy, as an undergraduate with a healing school. There are other pastors that made up the list, but there is serious contention

about who is greater than the other in terms of Christian followers and their net worth.

Another brand of trend being generated by the proliferation of churches in Africa is the culture of superstition and witchcraft allegations. These have been among the African traditional religion, but they have taken another dimension these days when the structures of African traditional religion have collapsed considerably. There are many reasons to the above situation which can range from social to economic failures in the life of the African people. The modern day-to-day pastors in African soil hide under these difficult conditions to manipulate people in the name of religion or that witches are after them. This, of course, heightened the travails of the people or individuals concerned. Agazue (2015) clearly states that:

> Belief in witchcraft is endemic. The common believe that people can become witches and then take the form of animals so that they can confront their enemies (or whoever they feel like attacking) is not new; it is as old as African indigenous religion itself. Further, the belief is not restricted to Africa, if one considers the witchcraft eras in early modern Europe and America. However unlike in Western society where civilization, modernization, academia and science have largely eroded superstition such beliefs are currently being reinforced in Africa by the exorcism merchants prophesying that witches are responsible for illness, accidents, poverty, infertility, relationship problems and many more. (p. 24).

Almost everything happening to someone in the African society is termed to be ill-will of his or her enemies. Even when it is obvious that the event or condition is purely accident of some nature, the new African money-making preachers will call it something else to deceive their followers. Through this way, the preacher knows that Africans

are to their worldviews. Instead of teaching them properly, he continues to propagate the culture of superstition and witchcraft to his congregation.  With the allegations of being termed a witch, what follows is the persecution by the people or sometimes by the community concerned. This can be in form of ex-communication and beating till death, unless the person agreed to the allegations leveled against him or her. Sometimes, one is compelled to take an oath in a famous deity or shrine of the accuser's choice. One notable lesson to be learned is that witch-hunting arises from a culture of superstition being propagated by the modern-day self-acclaimed preachers.

The pastoring job pays greatly in Africa, hence many men and women abandon their jobs or occupations to become pastors or healers. Going further, another trend that is coming with a great force is making money through money rituals.  Some religio-commercial pastors, through their tactic or magic, have convinced most Africans that they can be rich overnight through performing some rituals with animals or sometimes with human body parts. This led to missing body parts of people in the African society where it is taboo to kill somebody. The sacrifice is sometimes done near the rivers or high mountains where no one can find them, with blood as means of cleaning the age-long poverty that has been blocking the clients from enjoying their lives. This superstitious or widespread paranoiac belief in ritual killings enables the fake pastors to be wealthy every day, because they are having clients who want to be rich overnight, in a culture where hard work is known to be a virtue.

There are many ugly situations or trends being generated by this proliferation of churches in the modern African society; the worst of it all is that any attempt to intervene in the situation by enlightened persons or groups in the society to caution those who are being captivated or exploited is met with strong opposition or resistance by adherents whose absolute trust is in these pastors. This situation is

growing every day in different ways and forms which means that the end is not in sight.

**Suggestions and Conclusion**

Trimingham has analyzed to some extent the religious change that took place in Africa, in which he explained, among other things, that the African society was invaded by two world religions with their technological advancements. This led to mass exodus of African people to another religion. For the African religion was only serviceable for a tribal or ethnic society, where it worked efficiently but collapsed when faced by a wider society. Hence, there comes the need to adopt or reinforce its worldview in order to continue in existence. Again, Trimingham pointed out the reason for the proliferation of Afro-churches in the African soil, which is common and keeps multiplying daily, yet its values or morals are not felt in the African society. Rather, what everyone is seeing is the adverse effect, as the society is full of disorder and polluted with all kinds of evil. The issue at hand is how we can curb this menace going on in the society in the form of religion.

Proliferation of churches more than anything else (not even political or economic problems in Africa) has done a great harm to the African worldviews and African traditional structures and continues to erode and destroy the values in traditional African settings. This is also highlighted by Anyaegbu (2020) who noted that Pentecostalism as practiced in Africa has continued to erode solid traditional Christian values. The more traditional Christian authorities look on, the more they apparently felt dumb-founded about the situation at hand. Going further, Anyaegbu stated that one of the major reasons why proliferation of churches is going on with their false messages of hope and prosperity gospel is because there is failure of elementary services by the government. He states that:

> If majority of Nigerians (Africans) are properly educated, they would resist anybody

who would try to intellectually deceive them
into the state of non-resistance. Unfortunately,
it would take a long way before our
educational institution becomes what it should
be. Yes all the other areas of service should be
upgraded if we are to successfully pull
ourselves from the clutches of Bible-carrying
ravenous wolves. (p. 157).

The solution offered above is good for a start, since knowledge is
power, though one still runs into the danger of being deceived again
by the over-craftiness of these money-making preachers; because we
are aware of people being duped every day in doing business and
signing of contracts and so on, yet they are highly educated people.
For the same people that brought us the new religion or gospel came
back again to dupe us again through another means.

Metuh (1999) was of the view that most scholars make the mistake of
judging the Africans with the worldviews they had before the colonial
and post-colonial masters. This of course cannot work, for things keep
changing as the world around them keep changing on its own. For any
meaningful solution to be given on the current situation of
proliferation churches, the mind-set or worldview of the African
people needs to be looked into or studied again, for what they know
now or the values they hold now are considerably different from the
values they held in the time of the colonial and post-colonial masters.
The mind-set of the Africans, therefore, needs to be looked into or
enlightened, for many things have taken place since the time of their
forefathers. Hence, Anyaegbu (2020) remarked that enlightenment is a
factor that we hear in histories, yet it seems as if Africa is never part
of the changes that are taking place in the world.

Poverty has been the bane of the African continent; hence,
commercialization of the gospel becomes an easy occupation or

access to make money for daily living. Many countries of the world believe that religion thrives in Africa because of the economic hardship in the African continent. Whatever this standing may mean or point to, one may have to agree to some extent because the identity of the founders of the churches in Africa is questionable. Most of them were not successful in their economic life before joining the business of being preachers. Again, most of the wealthy people or politicians hardly attend church services unless there is an occasion taking place in the church, or they will be recognized and installed as high members of a particular church. There is need for government of the day to improve the welfare of the common people through education, creation of jobs, improvement of medicare, paying just wages, and provision of basic amenities and so on. This certainly will reduce the proliferation of churches in Africa, especially by those who engage in it for monetary dividends.

For sanity in the religious circle, there is need to curtail the proliferation of churches by the government, when it starts issuing certificates to pastors who are founders. This entails that they must have some basic educational qualifications and training before being founders of any religious group. And the license or authority to operate will be taken away from the founder when he or she misbehaves.  This may not stop the proliferation of churches entirely, but the quacks and unqualified religious founders can be eliminated reasonably. It is on record that the Rwandan government had formerly closed down 5000 churches for lack of authentic theological certificates from a recognized theological institute (Anyaegbu, 2020). Through that way government has definitely closed down a major source of propagating ignorance and superstition among  Africans. Though many will kick against such a move by government, but it is a good venture, since companies operating in any place or coming into any foreign country are given license to operate before they resume operation.

At this age of globalization and technological advancement, there is need to advance a model of religious change in Africa to curtail the continuous shattering of African worldviews and African religious structures. Having gained the knowledge of other world religions, there is need for a kind of moratorium, which will help the Africans to worship God without being deceived or absorbing in a forced way the ingredients of another culture, either by force or by superiority. That was the case in the time of the colonial masters, when they practically forced everything on Africans and forced them even to throw away some values without consultation or knowing what it meant for Africans. At this point, the Africans can voluntarily choose what they want and when they want it. Since the indigenization, traditionalisation and inculturation processes employed have failed to produce an authentic African people. There should be a new kind of strategy that will reformulate our understanding of the encounter between the traditional religion and other world religions to discover the creative forces within each religion and trigger a good religious change.

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# PRESURE, SPACE AND IDENTITY IN THE PRACTICE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN OGBA, GOKANA, DEGEMA AND IKWERRE TRADITIONS

**Obodoegbulam, Agi Otto (Ph. D)**
&
**Rev. Fr. Cletus Monday Ngbara**
&
**Stephen Egwuatu Amadi, (Ph. D)**
&
**Kpe, Emmanuel Lionel**
Religious and Cultural Studies Department
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt

## Abstract

*Over the years, the practice of traditional medicine in Africa has undergone many stages. Until recently, this was a form of community assistance. The shaman and herbalists were duly part and parcel of the communal system where everyone was his brother's keeper. No service provider ordinarily made money from another. To an extent, the knowledge of plants roots and herbs and their medicinal potencies were for the use of community members. In the course of time, specialists emerged in the practice and some individuals started specializing in and making the practice a means of livelihood. This paper focuses on the pressure, space and identity crises which confronted the practice of traditional medicine in Ogba, Gokana Ikwerre and Degema traditions. It observed that following the upgrading of traditional medicine from a community service to a professional calling, practitioners now commercialise their service; thus, they are faced with*

*Obodoegbulam, Agi Otto (Ph. D), Rev. Fr. Cletus Monday Ngbara, Stephen Egwuatu Amadi, (Ph. D) & Kpe, Emmanuel Lionel*

*the challenge of space and identity. This article adopted the complementary alternative medicine theory of sickness and healing as the lens of study. It employed the historical phenomenological approach in the discussion. The work observes that the competition for space and identity has exacted enormous pressure on the practice. It concludes that the guild of traditional medicine practitioners in Ogba, Gokana Degema and Ikwerre, in conjunction with their counterparts in other parts of Africa, should convoke a conference to discuss the issues and the challenges in their field.*

## Introduction

Every serious medical practice which aims at bringing wellness to an infirmity begins with the why and how question. There can be no effect without a cause. In traditional medicine, the cause of illness is always seen to have a spiritual and material dimension, since it is perceived to be because of a breakdown in filial relationship that exists between humans, their ancestors, and the divinities. In his explication of the causations, using the etiological theory, Ejizu (cited in Lawrence-Hart, 2014) maintains that sicknesses and diseases can be placed under three categories to include the physical causation, the socio-moral causation, and the mystic-spiritual causation. It is no wonder that Ezeliora (1994) observed that African traditional medicine has baffled scholars because of its complete interpretation or magico-spiritual and rational elements. The practitioners use a combination of powers; the assistance from the gods and other unseen forces which are fundamental to the efficacy of trado-medicine. In any case, diagnosis and prescriptions from the practitioners could cure an indicated illness, not necessarily because the plant herb, root or other extracts may have all inherent and demonstrable pharmacological powers, but because there is life-giving potency in every given creature, especially in applying the right rituals.

Human life is challenged by myriads of problems that threaten its very existence in the universe. These forces are many and everywhere, visible and invisible, natural, and supernatural. Health is a basic human need which contributes to one's happiness and fulfilment, without which nothing else seems possible. It is no wonder then that illness, suffering and misfortunes are regarded as signs of disharmony and so detrimental to a person's fulfilment. Notably, the first law of nature is self-preservation. Therefore, it is man's determination to survive and bring these forces under control that has given rise to what is known today as traditional medicine. This paper focuses on the pressure, space and identity crises which confront the practice of traditional medicine in Ogba, Gokana Degema and Ikwerre traditions.

**Theoretical Overview:**
According to Eskinazi(2000), alternative medicine can be defined as a broad set of health care practices (available to the public) that are not readily integrated into the regular health care model, because they posed challenges to diverse societal beliefs and practices (cultural, scientific, medical and educational). This definition brings into focus factors that may play a major role in the prior acceptance or rejection of various alternative health care practices by any society. Unlike the current definitions, the proposed definitions would not be expected to change significantly without significant societal change.

Alternative medicine comprises a large and heterogeneous group of treatments, many of which are procedures that are not readily testable under double-blinded conditions. Furthermore, alternative medicine therapists may also possess a theoretical basis. Many stem from a cultural tradition that is singly antithetical to a quantitative, biomedical framework, or may possess little fundamental research on which to base a controlled evaluation. It is also argued that the different sets of axioms in diverse systems require a mode of evidence that the currently dominant chemical paradigm.

Traditional medicine teaches that energy flows from within, around and through all things in the universe. Energy cannot be destroyed, but can be affected negatively, leading to flow imbalance or disease. Traditional medicine does not view disease as an invasion or poisoning of the body by a foreign organism. Instead, it sees the disease as a condition in which the human body is out of balance with its milieu. Healing, therefore, is the act of manipulating the flow of energy to re-establish balance in the whole person, rather than just the area of complaint. Spiritually, unlike the allopathy, is an integral part of traditional medicine as a result, traditional medicine therapy, can be very individualised, with no two people receiving the same treatment, despite a similar complaint or the same disease. In contrast, Western medicine tends to divide the body into systems and compartments and measures functions by evaluating tissues and examining body fluid.

**The Concept of Traditional Medicine**

Traditional medicine is as old as human existence. In the quest to respond to the challenges of human sickness and sufferings, the practice started with the collection of medicinal plants which include, among others, roots, stems, leaves, bark, flowers, fruits, seeds, etc. Also, some extracts from animals and insects like snails, snakes, chameleons, tortoise, lizards, cats, bees are used to treat any ailment humans suffered from (Aquaowo, 2000). Traditional medicine, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), "is a sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental illness". Another scholar, Bolaji Idowu (1973), defines traditional medicine as "An art of restoring and preventing…which is applied not only to magical substances but also to medical herbs or drugs of any kind, native as well as Europeans whose properties are assessed essentially empirical". Idowu's assertion here incorporates the use of all medical

properties that can be assessed locally, and chemically manufactured drugs verified through the canons of sciences. Notably, this definition is broader, in the sense that it is not limited to traditional medicine but also the orthodox. However, knowledge is more than that which is empirically verifiable. The means (drugs) and the end or goal (cure or well-being) in both approaches are the same. Laguda (2003) argues that indigenous medicine practitioners, as in Ikwerre, are in themselves scientists, in that they seek to discover and use the law of the universe, not only of nature but also spiritual forces, believing there are hidden powers that can be tapped to meet various ailments. He further maintains that the operational technique of indigenous health practitioners in Africa is comparable to Western medical practices; they listen to case history of the patients, diagnose, and make prescriptions based on the experiences and directives given by spiritual elements, that is, the gods. Because of the envisaged holistic approach to prevention and care for the patients, the diagnosis often involved the consultation of the oracles which include magic, divination, and rituals to properly investigate for the purpose of ascertaining their causes. According to Owete (2013), indigenous medicine is the total combination of knowledge, ideas and practices, whether explicable or otherwise, used in diagnosing, treatment or eliminating a physical, mental, social, or social or even hereditary disease, the knowledge of which may be derived exclusively from past experiences and observation as transmitted from generations after generations.

## Ogba Philosophy of traditional Medicine

The Ogba people occupy the northern margin of the Niger Delta. Among the people, traditional medicine occupies a prominent position in their practice of health care. The understanding is that one has to be healthy before he can engage in any meaningful activity. As a result, there is this wise saying that: "Ä healthy person does not know what

those confined are going through". In this regard, an Ogba person will spend his last resources to procure good health.

In their search for good health, traditional medicine is highly regarded. In fact, every Ogba person has a knowledge of at least one medicinal plant. However, some persons professionalise in the practice of traditional medicine. As it were, this is a latter development.

In Ogba, sickness is identified to originate from two sources— etiological and symptomatic. While plants, roots and herbs are used to treat symptomatic ailments, etiological sickness which is not symptomatic requires divination and rituals to obtain treatment. Obodoegbulam (2019) holds that in Ogba world view, diviners and medicine men occupy an important position.

Etiological treatment, as earlier noted, involves a set of ritual where the diviner will have to consult and negotiate with the particular spirit force responsible for any sickness before treatment can be successful. In most cases, sending ritual items to the cross-road (mbaga-uzor), outsket (ishi-uzor)of the community or to the evil forest(ohiya-ojor) will be the only remedy. Where a ritual bath (Ihianmini-uzor) is prescribed, the sick person will have to be given a ritual bath at the road junction (mbaga-uzor) or outskirt (ishi-uzor) of the community (believed to be the abode of the spirits) in order to secure treatment. Here, it is believed that where the spirit receives a sacrifice, they pay with good health for the sufferer.

The rituals of traditional medicine operate on certain principles. These are;
(i)     That there are supernatural forces which govern the visible tangible world.

(ii)     That the spirits which inhabit the super natural world can be appeased so as to release their good will in order to provide cure for sick people.

(iii)    That herbs, roots and plants have spirits which under-pin their medicinal potency.

(iv)     That apart from the super natural forces which guide the practice of traditional medicine, specific spirits inhabit and guide the different plants, herbs and roots to make available their curative potencies for the benefit of humans.

(v)      That words of mouth rendered during prayers equally carry supernatural powers.

(vi)     That such prayers must be rendered with the use of appropriate words and the officer must, at the same time, be in a pure ritual state.

(vii)    That the sufferer of the ailment in question must be in a pure ritual state and not under any obstructive influence.

(viii)   That the medicine man or shaman is not under any entanglement which is likely or possibly to make the medicine not to work.

(ix)     That the client is willing and has provided the required sum of money charged or demanded by the shaman, the failure of which is likely to make the medicine not to work.

(x)      That the client, including his relatives, is prepared to obey all the rules or prohibitions associated with such medicine.

(xi)     That for the medicine to work, all the prescribed items have been provided or made available.

(xii)    That the medicine man will need to perform all the required activities which will make the medicine to work.

(xiii)   That the medicine man has adequately acknowledged the person who gave him the medicine during the ritual prayer, energising the potency of such medicinal object.

**Traditional Medicine in Ikwerre**

Traditional medicine in Ikwerre society, as is the case in Ogba and Gokana, is very holistic, as it focuses on the physical, mental, psychological, spiritual and general well-being of the individual and his cosmos. It is about personal fulfilment and cosmic harmony (Asiegbu, 2000). From the foregoing, it is no gain saying that traditional medicine goes beyond the treatment of symptoms of a disease as may be manifested physically, but also about the spiritual forces that could afflict humans with ill-health and other conditions of suffering. In this wise, most sicknesses, misfortunes and sufferings are believed to be because of some evil machinations of humans through witchcraft, spirits or angry ancestors and the gods. It is with this perception of realities and precarious nature of human existence that initial reaction to sickness and sufferings of any kind is to invoke the spirits, ancestors, diviners, and medicine men. In whichever way this human misery is manifested, it constitutes a cog in the well-being of the victims, with the intention to destroy the human's material and spiritual good. The desire to regain wholeness from these malignant forces brings to the fore the role and services of traditional medicine men and women vested with the knowledge that neither the body nor the mind suffers, but the whole person (Heston et al, cited in Asiegbu, 2000). The process is ultimately oriented towards seeking a spiritual solution which is more effective than ordinary human efforts.

Besides seeking relief from misfortunes, the search to preserve and protect life against one's spiritual and physical enemies, wicked men and women is overwhelming. There is the paranoia of becoming victims of envy and targets of harmful charms, especially if one is seen to be making progress and successful in his or her life's endeavours, and the nagging fear of one's neighbours or clans with whom one has land disputes. In the real sense of the Ikwerre and Gokana world view, most sicknesses, misfortunes and sufferings are believed to be linked to the forces of evil - human and spiritual. The

former could be in the form of witchcraft, and the latter from the spirits due to some infractions against the gods, ancestors, or through invocations and other forms of manipulation. In whichever way this is experienced, they bring so much discomfort and uneasiness to human existence and are regarded as anti-life, anti-progress, and anti-wholeness. There can be no happiness or fulfilment in the face of all these fears and uncertainties about life. The assistance of the diviners, medicine men and women are often sought after to bring relief in situations like these.

The traditional medicine in Ikwerre, as obtained in Ogba and Gokana, is diagnosed through divination, sorcery, magic, witchcraft and so on. Observable symptoms are treated successfully. In a case where the illness persists, recourse is made to the diviner's expertise to unravel the real cause of the disease or the affliction and to prescribe appropriate ritual/sacrifices.

## Traditional Medicine in Udekama (Degema)

In *Udekama*-Degema traditional setting, as part of Ogba, Gokana and Ikwerre societies, there was always an explanation as to why someone was suffering from a certain disease at a particular time. According to Ayodele (2002), diseases mostly revolve around witchcraft/sorcery, gods or ancestors, natural as well as heredity, which are similar to the Ogba, Gokana and Ikwerre experience. Illness in the *Udekama*-Degema/central Niger Delta cultures of Ogba, Gokana and Ikwerre is different from the allopathic Western medicine point of view. Illness is believed to be of natural, cultural or social origin (White, 2015).
Cultural or social illness is thought to be related to supernatural causes such as angered spirit, witchcraft or alien/evil spirits, even for conditions now known to be well understood in modern medicine such as hypertension, sickle-cell anaemia and diabetes. The *Udekama*-Degema, as part of central Niger Delta society, considers the human being (*owei*) as being made up of the physical, spiritual, moral and

social aspect; the functioning of these three aspects in harmony signifies good health, while if any aspect should be out of balance it signifies sickness.

Thus, the treatment of an ill person or medication of a sick person (*owei mokpoma*) among the *Udekama*-Degema people involves not only aiding his/her physical being, but may also involve the spiritual being and social components of being as well.

The traditional *Udekama*-Degema before the advent of agent of change sees treatment of an ailment or a sick person to be holistic, and therefore uses every avenue such as psychotherapy, proficiency in faith healing (spiritual healing), therapeutic method, circumcision of the male and female, treatment of snake bite, treatment of whitlow, cutting the umbilical cord, piercing ear lobes, reducing of tooth ache, midwifery and so.

**Sources of Traditional Medicine**
Before the advent of change, the traditional *Udekama*-Degema people, as part of the African society, engaged in different sources of health care such as herbal medicine, divination, appeasing of the gods, exorcism, libation, orthopaedic (bone setting) is another prominent area the traditional *Udekama*-Degema (*owei*) man uses to treat or heal people in the past even today. Here, the traditional healer, known as herbalist (*obu itain*), specializes in the use of herbs to treat various ailments (*ikpom*). Their role is very remarkable, since it arises from a thorough knowledge of medicinal properties of indigenous plants and pharmaceutical steps necessary in turning such plants into drugs, such as the selection, compounding dosage, efficacy and toxicity (Tabuti, 2006).

The *Udekama*-Degema "*O*bu-itain", after collection of herbs from the forest such as "*Ubusaoliri; abi-egberin* (mango leaves, abisatu-scent

leaves, etc.), prepares it and administers it to the sick person. The "obu itain" herbalist uses methods like oral, rectal and nasal. Other methods include the use of steaming from the boiling plant materials or covering oneself around the fire to absorb the heat from the boiling concoction. These treatments are used to cure malaria, congestion, pulmonary problems, etc (Otekinomo, oral interview 2021).

**Divination -** is another means the Udekama-Degema people use to treat ailments before the advent of the modern medicine. It is a means of consulting the spirit world. It is a method by which information concerning an individual or circumstance of illness is obtained through the use randomly arranged symbols in order to gain healing knowledge. It is also viewed as a way to access information that is normally beyond the reach of the rational mind. It is a transpersonal technique in which the diviners base their knowledge on communicating with the spirit forces such as the ancestors, spirits and deities (Olupona, 2004).

This is another Udekama-Degema way of diagnosing disease. Here, the spirit world is consulted by the chief priest (Udede izu) to identify the cause of the diseases or to discover whether there was a violation of an established order from the side of the sick person. This is established through the use of cowries (ekoba), leaves (abi erurum) and other objects which are believed to be of spiritual help by the diviner. This, to the Udekama-Degema traditional voteers, is the first step in the treatment and medicine because of the revealing powers of the divination. It can be considered in modern science or medicine as consultation of the specialist (doctor).

**Appeasing the gods -** the Udekama-Degema people, with the belief system that nothing happens on earth, mostly when it comes to sickness or death, without a cause, always appease the gods. It is believed that a disease is caused by an invocation of a curse or

violation of taboos, making the ancestors or gods to be angry, therefore the need to appease them to avert the curse (s). The diviner (obu) appeases the ancestors, spirits or the gods according to the severity of the case.

To appease the gods, the individual is often required to provide certain items for sacrifice, such as spotless animals (dogs - abua, goat - ebui, ram - ushumas) local dry gin - akambere, and sometimes white or black cloth, eggs (fresh), etc. The use of these items is to appease the gods and avert their anger from the sick patients. After being used, the items are thrown into the river, left to rot, carried away or placed at strategies places usually at crossroads at the outskirt of the community. The traditional Udekama-Degema (owei) man believes that when this is done, the cause of the person's sickness is taken away.

**Libation**- libation is another way the Udekama-Degema people employ to treat the sick. According to Adjaye (2021), libation involves the pouring of some liquid (local dry gin) on the ground, followed by chanting of some words. It is regarded as prayers. The essence of the ritual is to invoke and offer supplication to the gods. In the invocation, the presence of the gods and ancestors is invited. In supplication, a request is made for mercy and forgiveness, and finally, the gods and ancestors are thanked for their help.

The traditional Udekama-Degema people use libation as a means to invite the gods and plead for mercy anytime one is sick and also to thank the gods for their help. In doing this, the diviner pours the drink on the ground, calling the names of the ancestors or the shrines to ward off the powers that are believed to have caused the sickness. When the person is healed from the sickness, the sick person or families, through the diviners, carried out some sacrifices to thank the diviner and the gods.

**Exorcism-** This is a practice of expelling demons or evil spirits from people or places that are possessed or are in danger of being possessed by them (Avorgbedor, 2000). The traditional Udekama-Degema people, as part of the African society, believed that illness, especially mental illness, is mostly caused by evil spirits and to cure it is by exorcism. The Udekama-Degema diviner (obu), in curing of this sickness in any patient, offers sacrifices which are carried out around the person's house or on the patient in question. Sometimes, the sacrifice will be used to circle the person's head or the house seven times before it will be thrown away to the ebbing tide. The essence of these sacrifices is to cleanse the person and heal him/her of the disease which is believed to be caused by the gods (Newton, oral interview 2021).

**Conclusion**
The traditional Ogba, Gokana, Ikwerre and Udekama-Degema people see sickness as not ordinary but a curse from the ancestors, spirits or gods, which, therefore, must be treated with every source of power available to them. In other words, treatment must be holistic. Thus, they employ every avenue, both physical and spiritual, to treat any ailment in the society. Similarly, despite the presence and potency of modern medicine, the people still value traditional herbal treatment to be natural, with the strong belief that it comes from the supernatural.
Prior to the introduction of orthodox medicine, the health care condition of the Africans was not in the best of standards, which affected the mortality rate, as there was no known cure for some deadly diseases, like chicken pox, small pox, measles, leprosy, which went wild and rapidly caused a heavy death toll among the people. These diseases were either attributed to some evil possessions or the consequences of one form of infraction or the other against the deities and the ancestors. Besides, there were still many other diseases that were attended to using traditional herbs and methods. What is obvious today is that even with all the advancement in science and technology,

some diseases are still said to be incurable. Christianity was averse to the traditional methods of dealing with diseases, misfortune and suffering. Christians were opposed to almost all the methods which the traditionalists used when they were ill, or when they experienced a misfortune and suffering. Before the advent of Christianity, the herbalists and medicine men acted as counsellors. Some of them acted not only as doctors but as listeners to people's multifarious problems (Okeke et al., 2017). They also acted as priests and prayed for their communities. But Christian doctors are unlike medicine men of the African traditional society. This has resulted in some form of identity crisis and choice on which way to go. Many have accepted the supposed orthodox drugs, while in some health centres people are referred to go for the traditional medicines as the most potent remedies for some ailments. Admittedly, the orthodox medical practice is more developed in terms equipment and research than the traditional medicine, but what is significant about the traditional medicine is that it is more accessible and affordable and wider in its scope of services. The importance of this area of medicine cannot be overemphasized, as it is established that the recognition and demand for alternative medicine (traditional medicine) is in global demand.

Recommendations: In view of the arguments in this paper for the quest for space and identity of African traditional medicine, the research makes the following recommendations.

 (i) Alternative and complementary medicine should be incorporated into the government health care policy.
 (ii) Complementry and alternative medicine should be taught in our universities and health institutions.
 (iii) Practitioners of complementary medicine should evolve a standardized mechanism of transferring the skill to the younger generation.
 (iv) Practitioners of the two systems of health care should collaborate in their activities, as experience has shown that both are really complementary.

(v)  Governments at all levels should set up training facilities for officers of traditional medicine, as is the case with orthodox medicine.

*Obodoegbulam, Agi Otto (Ph. D), Rev. Fr. Cletus Monday Ngbara, Stephen Egwuatu Amadi, (Ph. D) & Kpe, Emmanuel Lionel*

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| S/N | NAME | SEX | AGE | STATUS | PLACE OF INTERVIEW | DATE |
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| 2 | Otekinomo Fred | M | 50 | Civil servant | Okaw compound | 19/5/2021 |

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