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DIALOGUE ON AFRICAN RELIGION, CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT:

*Proceedings of the 2022 International Conference of the
Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)*



Editors

Ikechukwu Anthony KANU

Gabriel ASUQUO

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Dedication

DEDICATION

*In Memory of African Migrants,
Dead and alive*

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INTRODUCTION

Culture, religion, and development is at the root of how society form, function and evolve. Culture is said to be the totality of a people's way of life which are both manifest and latent. The manifest dimension of culture includes arts, foods, dressing, technology, and patterns of sociopolitical and economic arrangement, etc., which are tangible. The latent dimension of culture includes the beliefs, ethics, norms, philosophies, ideologies, and spirituality which are basically intangible but they control the life, behaviour, and destiny of a people. The primary aim of this book is to demonstrate the fact that African culture in dialogue with other cultures can guarantee Africa's development in the 21st century.

No doubt, contemporary Africa is facing what we may be called a cultural crisis, which is evidently seen in the loss of identity, misplacement of values, socioeconomic backwardness, political instability, brain drain syndrome, insecurity, moral decadence, corruption, and maladministration. In a bid to address these challenges, many African countries have either blindly pursued the path of cultural dependence on alien cultures from the western world or cultural isolationism. Both cultural dependence and cultural isolationism have been tried in Africa after the political independence of the various African countries but the situation still remains the same in the form of cultural inauthenticity. Africans are currently at the crossroad of either being westernized or remaining African. Many books have been written to address the challenge of African cultural inauthenticity. Some authors have taken a puritan stand which implies that Africans should return to their precolonial arrangement before the colonialists and imperialists came in contact with Africa. While some have argued that since precolonial African cultural values cannot stand the superior culture of the west, Africans should totally imbibe the culture of the west and follow the developmental route of the west. The problem with these positions is that no culture can exist alone without mutual influences from the other. Therefore, the central argument of this book is that in dialogue with the other (western or Oriental traditions), Africans can revive, criticize and invigorate their traditional culture and

Introduction

religion for sustainable development. This is what all the contributors have demonstrated in their various chapters based on their areas of research competence.

Furthermore, the various contributors have identified areas in which African traditional cultural values and religious beliefs present better alternatives to the existing colonial legacies. Chapter One presents how the African traditional marriage rites can help in the promotion of marital stability in Africa. This is done from the backdrop that contemporary marriages are becoming increasingly unstable due to the prevalent rate of divorce and domestic violence. More so, Chapter Two discusses the epistemological importance of African culture and religion in knowledge production in Africa. Knowledge production is universal and contextual. African culture and religion will provide the context for a new kind of epistemology if rigorously pursued by Africans. Similarly, Chapter Three discusses the metaphysical foundation on which such kind of epistemology should be based. This foundation is identified as African Religio-Cultural Spirituality which is different from the monistic and dualistic metaphysical outlook that is predominate in the west.

In addition, chapter four discuss the aesthetic experience of The 2021 National Festival of Arts and Culture (Nafest), Ekiti State, Nigeria. This annual art festival showcase in a practical manner the African idea of unity in diversities which resonates with African Religio-Cultural Spirituality of interconnectedness and interdependence. The practical implication is that even though we are different in terms of cultural varieties, we are essentially the same in our 'beingness' as humans and Africans. Chapter Five discusses how this sense of interdependence and interconnectivity is helping Africans in the diaspora to form a community of belonging that is making life meaningful for them in a strange land. Nonetheless, drawing from the Idoma ethnic group, chapter six discusses the need for the reinvigoration of the African Musical Culture of Moral Impartation. This is pivotal because the kinds of music played in contemporary Africa are bankrupt of moral content. They glorify vanities, materialism, crime, and immoralities, which can

Introduction

be made better if we incorporate the moral imperatives in the rhythms and songs of the African Musical Culture of Moral Impartation.

Chapter Seven discusses the cultural dimension of peacebuilding in the process of conflict resolution. Conflict is at the heart of every society, however, what makes it escalate is the nature of the conflict resolution mechanism put in place. This chapter sees culture in terms of ethics and spirituality as means for conflict resolution. Talking about spirituality, chapter eight discuss the problem of naming the Ultimate Reality in African traditional religious experience. This is because many imperialistic-minded scholars have argued wrongly that Africans do not have the idea of the Ultimate Being within their religious experience. This chapter debunks those claims. More so, Chapter Nine takes a critical look at African traditional obnoxious practices that are against women. Drawing from the literal works of Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* & Izuchukwu Emeam's *Wife of the God*, the chapter exposes some of the marginalization, subjugation, and oppression women face in African tradition because women are seen essentially as possession. The chapter recommends ways we can correct these practices based on justice and fairness. While Chapter Ten discusses how the Igbo is serving as a unifier of the Igbo people and the prospect of developing the language. Language is not just a means of communication within a language community, it is also a unifier of a people and the Igbo language can unify the Igbo people, not minding the space they are living or interacting in.

Having given a cursory look at the ideas that resonate in this book. The book adopts a multidisciplinary approach in the engagement of the issues that bother African Culture, Religion, and development. This approach is expedient due to the multidimensional nature of the issues under investigation. The beauty of this approach is that it gives expression to all identified voices and methods within the African intellectual geography. As such the book will serve the interest of all scholars who are genuinely interested in the revival, critique, and invigoration of African traditional culture and religion as one of the bases for engendering sustainable development in Africa.

**THE ROLE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITES ON
MARITAL STABILITY: A CASE OF THE ABAGUSII PEOPLE,
KENYA**

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&

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Executive Summary

The major purpose of this study was to explore the role of African traditional marriage rites on marital stability; in a case study of the Abagusii ethnic community from Kisii and Nyamira counties, Kenya. The study was based on the Symbolic Interactionism (SI) theory of Social Psychology and adopted the use of narrative qualitative research methods. The study facilitated the gathering of data of narratives related to culture and the rituals with regard to the marriage of the Abagusii ethnic community. The qualitative study used a focus group of 12 elderly people from the Gusii community who were selected through purposeful and snowball sampling. Research instruments included interview schedules, the data was then analysed using qualitative within the purview of the research questions and the marriage rites themes. Focus group discussions were used to identify issues and interpretations. A discussion guide was used to ask general questions. The qualitative study findings indicated that various Kisii traditional marriage rites were practised to sustain marital stability. These include initiation and mentorship into adulthood, courtship, aided partner search, in-laws' visitations, introduction ceremonies, payment of bridal wealth, wrestling matches, weddings and post-wedding marriage rituals. Finally, the qualitative study found out that traditional marriage rites are believed to circumvent divorce and contribute to marital stability. Marriage sustainability was through celebrations and communal support. The study recommends that there is a need to revive the African traditional marriage practices

and marriage therapists can incorporate this perspective during marital counselling sessions.

Keywords: Marriage, marriage rites, marital stability, bridal wealth

Background

Marital instability has increased tremendously in western developed countries since the mid-1960s. Despite the lack of consistent data, it seems that the same trend has been noted in Iran recently (Vakili et al 2015). Marital instability reveals affective and cognitive states in the company, with related actions, which are foreseen to terminate a relationship (Kreager et al 2014). Meyer Fortes purports that many first unions may be terminated after some time. To capture the flexible character of these marriages Fortes classifies them as 'experimental marriages' (Fortes1949).

Kihombo (2018) asserts that in spite the marital conflicts being a worldwide phenomenon, the United States is the leading country in the world in terms of marital conflicts that lead to divorces.

Existing research suggests that different types of violence often coexist: physical IPV is often accompanied by sexual IPV, and is usually accompanied by emotional abuse. For example, in the WHO multi-country study, 23–56% of women who reported ever experiencing physical or sexual IPV had experienced both (3). A comparative analysis of DHS data from 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries found that the majority (61–93%) of women who reported physical IPV in the past 12 months also reported experiencing emotional abuse (Bott S. et al. 2012). A study was conducted on how individual characteristics, family backgrounds, homogamous/heterogamous marriages, and dyadic interactions are linked with marital conflict and marital satisfaction among married Chinese participants. Multivariate statistical analyses based on the China General Social Survey 2006 data (CGSS 2006) indicate that marital duration, rural origin, egalitarian decision-making, and frequent dyadic communication decrease marital conflict, whereas personal income, egalitarian gender ideologies, social class standing, and double-earner status elevate marital conflict (Xiaohe Xu and Donna Miller 2017).

Karimi et al (2019) explain that the extracted protective factors associated with marital stability in long-term marriage were classified as interpersonal and intrapersonal. It remains unclear exactly what role culture plays in race-ethnic differences in marital behaviour.

Accounting for the traditional culture among Mexican Americans does not explain the earlier age at marriage for Mexican Americans as compared to Whites (Raley et al., 2004). However, Raley et al. (2004) suggest that culture may be significant to ethnic differences in marriage patterns and emphasize the need for future research to focus on specific aspects of culture. We examine several cultural factors, including social support, religion, and attitudes about marriage and gender. According to Kihombo (2018) socialization is one of the factors that are responsible for marriage divorce in Africa and around the globe generally.

Recent evidence has shown that Africa has witnessed a high rate of marital conflict as a result of westernization, globalization, urbanization and industrialization periods triggered by a monetary industrial economy that have affected the extended families that had the responsibility to solve any conflict between the couples (Adeniran, 2015). According to Vida (2013), available information, on Sub-Saharan Africa including Tanzania has depicted an increasing rate of marriage breakdowns, even though statistics on marriage breakdowns in the region are limited and unreliable. This is due to some studies conducted in the area of marital dissolution and the little coverage on registration of marriages and divorces. Though limited, the UN (2006) as cited in Vida (2013) has indicated that more than one-third of women in this region experience marital dissolution before they reach ages forty and sixty in their first marriages.

A study conducted on South African people in rural KwaZulu-Natal between 2000 and 2006 on marriages, focused on the distribution of marital status by age and sex, purports that some adults are reported as divorced or separated, the proportion not rising above five per cent in any age group. The low rate of divorce in The Africa Centre Demographic Information System (ACDIS) population likely reflects the high proportion of marriages contracted through customary rites. Prior to 1998, marriages contracted under the Customary Marriage Act could be dissolved by a tribal court. However, in reality, this was rarely done given the complexity of the marriage process and attendant payments between families, barriers to litigation by women, and traditional customs that allowed men to take additional wives. A large number of couples continue to embark upon the process of “ilobolo” or become engaged, going on to marry in both traditional and civil ceremonies. There could also be under-reporting of divorce, particularly in families whose faith tradition does not permit divorce (Hosegood et al 2006).

Marital instability is an emerging and increasing phenomenon in Kenyan societies. A study by (Musau et al 2015) examined, the nature of marital instability among women in the rural areas, the major causes, and its impact on the female-headed household livelihoods. The study adopted a cross-sectional case study design and it involved women of the 15-49 age interval years who were separated, divorced or deserted by their husbands. Most of the separated mothers are faced with challenges of achieving and maintaining their livelihood due to financial hardships. Okeno (2012) conducted research in Kenya among the Abagusii community which assessed the influence of Christianity on Kisii traditional marriage with particular reference to bridewealth in Gucha District, Kisii county Kenya. The church on the same note will be able to adopt important aspects from the traditional view of bridewealth of the Abagusii purposely to enrich the payment of bride price in the Christian church. The study found out that both Christian and traditional marriages agree in one way or another. Both share a system of 'bridewealth negotiation, the ceremonies binding the payment of bridewealth, which assists in countering divorce. Further, the respondents on variables agreed that both bride price systems are interlinked. The study, therefore, recommended that there should be a common system of bridewealth in both Christian and traditional marriages and a common form of bridewealth negotiation and terms of payment among all groups.

In the past, most studies have been conducted worldwide but few studies have been carried out in Africa. More so, other studies have been focusing on other factors that contribute to marital but few studies have focused on culture and especially the contribution of the African traditions on marital stability. Hardly any studies have specifically focused on the role of marriage rites in marital stability within the Abagusii community.

Methods

The study was conducted in Kisii and Nyamira counties by the members of the Abagusii community. The use of qualitative methods for this study was to facilitate the gathering of narratives and lived experiences related to culture and the rituals of the Abagusii, and more so, with regard to and as manifested in marriage. The use of qualitative methods for this study facilitated the gathering of data of narratives related to culture and the rituals with regard to the marriage of the Abagusii ethnic community. The qualitative study used a focus group of 12 elderly people as a representative group of the Gusii community who were selected through purposeful and snowball sampling.

Research instruments included interview schedules, the data was then analysed using qualitative design within the purview of the research questions and the marriage rites themes. Focus group discussions were used to identify issues and interpretations. A discussion guide was used to ask general questions.

Results

Questions that were used in facilitating the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were drawn from the interview guide prepared for the study. The principal aim of these discussions was to explore the marriage rites practised by the Abagusii people and examine the influence of marriage rites on marital stability. The thematic analysis resulted in the exhaustive descriptions of Kisii Marriage rites and the effects on marital stability. The responses from the participants were recorded in video and field notes were captured. Thereafter, the results were coded and significant statements formed at aided in generating categories and themes from the focus group discussions.

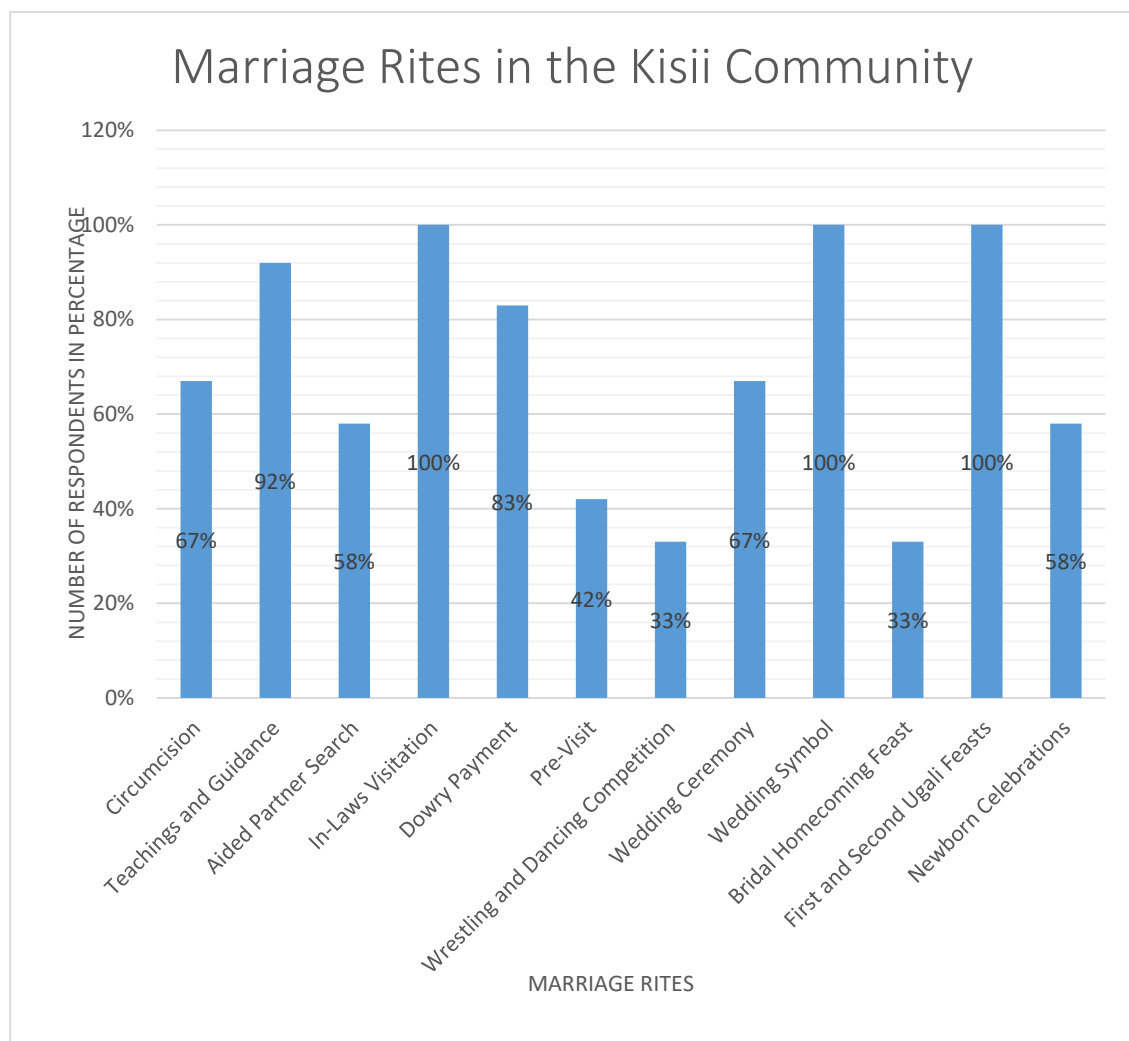


Fig 1 Themes on which marriage rites are significant

3.1 The African Traditional Marriage Rites Practised by the Abagusii People

3.1.1 Initiation and Adulthood

The participants reported that one of these customs is the initiation rite. This entailed circumcision and receiving various teachings on the transition into adulthood. Among the Abagusii, no one could get into marriage without being initiated by circumcision. Since marriage was thought of as the most important thing it was believed to be the beginning of life. The bearing of children was regarded as the fruit of marriage. Marriage among the Abagusii is intrinsically connected to initiation. Interviews showed that it was widely believed that circumcision reduces sexual urges in women and would sustain a marriage. In continuing with the practice, the Kisii seek to ensure that their women do not become promiscuous.

The participant emphasized that the circumcision exercise was highly regarded and more rituals were performed and vow taken that would help in sustaining their marriages later in life. The study established that upholding cultural traditions were the main reason why initiation was practised. Female circumcision was considered an integral part of the Kisii people's way of life and culture as the study found out during the interview. As one respondent pointed out,

“Boys and girls were circumcised at puberty which symbolised endurance and a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Preserving sexual morality was a reason given why female circumcision was undertaken. Circumcision was also important for men since after circumcision they join adulthood and take new roles in the community like fending for the family, offering defence during tribal war and attack from wild animals and cattle rustlers.” (Participant 2, focus group discussion, March 2022)

According to Mayer (1953), both boys and girls went through marital counselling on what was expected of them in transition into adulthood and how to handle their relationships once they got married. The pain that they underwent during circumcision without sedation was to train and prepare them to learn to endure as they transit into adulthood. One of the participants had a view that;

“They were taught various traditions and how to step into adulthood. They were taught about sexuality, adult roles, hard work, protection and fending for the family among other roles.

They underwent marriage counselling from aunts and uncles, on a commitment to marriage by being faithful, in order to escape curses and harsh punishment including death that resulted from breaking the marital taboos “amasangi”. (Participant 1, focus group discussion, March 2022)

Courtship

The participants reported that the courtship period did not last for a long time because they entirely depended on the information gathered from the go-between (*esigani*) This is the time between bride and groom identification and wedding. During this short period, the two main steps entailed partner search and groom and also bride identification and introductions (*ekerorano*). There were certain rituals that were practised including visitations, introductions, feasting, further spying and investigations of the two families.

Ago-between(*esigani*) would be identified by the parents of the boy. The go between (*esigan*) maybe of either gender and maybe a neighbour or a relative. He or she is sent by the boy’s parents to assist in searching for a suitable girl for marriage. A go-between who could be a distant relative or friend was sent to identify a good, hardworking girl with a good sexual reputation (not sexually promiscuous), not short-tempered and whose parents are not witches (*abarogi*).The go-between is to first give a detailed report to both sides (*ogosigana*); this was his first task. (Nyaruri, 2014). The final task of the go-between was to find out whether the girl has any disfiguring marks on her body which are not visible when dressed, that is, beauty and health check. (Okeno, D. 2012). One of the respondents pointed out that;

“Emissaries and spying and mediation “Esigani” could try to inquire about bridal virginity test, “ogwekunga” and grooms’ sexual ability assessments. They checked if the families were witches or thieves or if it was a lazy girl or if they had scars on their body. The existence of such scars particularly those resulting from burns was sometimes seen as parenting carelessness or lower the bride price.” (Participant 4, focus group discussion, March 2022)

In-laws visitations and introduction ceremonies (*Ekerorano*) were done where a feast that was called ‘*Ekeri-boko*’ (eating and drinking with in-laws). Usually, this was done in the evening followed by much dancing,

drinking and festivity. A goat and some chicken were slaughtered and served. The participants narrated that,

“The visitors felt more honoured with the goat meat due to its bigger size as compared to chicken. It was taboo for the groom to eat chicken at the in-laws since due to its smaller size, it’s believed to be like despise or disrespect to the son-in-law. However again when the chicken was served, it was a test conducted to see if the groom is trained to abhor traditions and taboos since in case, he ate, then the in-law’s relationship (oboko) may be broken. (Participant 8, focus group discussion, March 2022)

Bride wealth

a) Payment of bride price involves the two groups of elders that meet at the groom’s home for bride price negotiations known as “*okomanachiombe*” (scrutiny and selection of cattle) which constituted the first important step in the bride price transfer. A participant explained that;

“More animals were given as bride price for girls that were virgins and sometimes if not, the girls were sent back to be married later as second wives. The girl had to report privately to the aunts later if the man was competent in sexuality. Bride price payment was always accompanied by eating and bride price was paid the bride price in instalments for the two families to ensure that they keep standards for the marriage not to break and for bride price debt to be eventually cleared.” (Participant 7, focus group discussion, March 2022)

In the process of selection, the elders portrayed a business-like spirit of hard bargaining and arguments between the giving elders and the receiving elders. If the animals offered at the view were accepted, the bride’s father declared his final satisfaction. He could not afterwards ask for more. This means that if he was not satisfied with the offered bride’s wealth, he rejected the proposal there and then. The element of finality in the agreement was outwardly symbolized by an intensive celebration which took place immediately after acceptance (Obegi, 1920).

Post bride price bride’s new home pre-visit entailed a test after the bride’s arrival on the sexual performance of both the bride and the groom. This was a handle that led to a big trial for the two because the

impotence of the groom would cause the bride to break off the marriage. A girl could also be sent away!

“The bride was supposed to be taken to her new home a few days later after bride price payment for orientation. Once she arrived at the groom’s home, she was welcomed with lots of feasting and celebrations.” (Participant 3, focus group discussion, March 2022)

Wedding Ceremonies and Rituals

A wrestling match (“enyameni”) and the bridegroom’s final visit was organized between the men of the girl’s party and the groom’s men. The *obokano* (harp) is the main musical instrument of the Abagusii people and was played. The wrestling winning team was given a bull for slaughter. The focus group discussion panellists reported that;

“After the prewedding feasts, the bridegroom visits the bride home some days later smartly dressed and highly decorated with, skin wristband (*ebitwanga*), anklets (*chinchigiri*) and a crown on his head (*ekiore*) and on the following day the two groups meet for a wrestling match “enyameni” and the winning team takes home a whole slaughtered bull.”. (Participant 5, focus group discussion, March 2022)

A prewedding ceremony “*ekeragerio*” precedes the real wedding day and it’s a big celebration that is organised at the groom’s and brides’ homes but on different days. The bride will have gone back to her home to participate in the prewedding ceremony. On this day, a bull is slaughtered and the main aim is to just make merry and give speeches and advice to the bride or groom. The wedding (*enyangi*) itself was performed by the wedding officiant who acted as a priest, ‘*omokundekane*’ to join the couple.

“Somewhere in the middle of the way, the group of relatives and villagers from the girl home met the other group of bridegrooms’ sides and handed over their daughter and went back. When the party reached the boy’s home, more rituals are performed” (Participant 11, focus group discussion, March 2022).

The wedding symbols (*ebitwanga*, *ebitinge*, *ebete*) where the newly wedded were marked by putting on some bracelets and anklets or even rings to show that they are married and they could only be removed in case of death or divorce.

Post-Wedding Rituals

After the wedding, it meant that the relationship had been cemented. The parent's in-law from the two groups would start calling each other by a special and respectable name, that is, "the nurturer" (korera). The bride and groom also started referring to the parents' in-laws as their own parents, that is, mum and dad (mama and tata). The bridal homecoming feast (kwarigania *omoriakari*) was very significant.

The meal sharing "ugali" feast was performed where ugali, 'obokima' is brought with a ready slaughtered goat meat from the bride's home by her sisters, cousins and girlfriends (young maidens carrying on their heads) a few days after the main wedding or customary marriage rites. The main agenda of the visitation was for the young maidens to find out about the welfare of their sister and confirm if their sister arrived safely on wedding day and if she's being treated well. (Participant 6, focus group discussion, March 2022)

"Within the first week after the bride has come to the bridegroom's home, 'obokima' ugali in a nicely made basket and raw meat is brought by women from the bride's home. The reason for this is to check how their daughter arrived and how she was welcomed. They also took this opportunity to inquire about her husband's 'fitness'. This bringing of ugali and slaughtered goat could be done again later on two or more occasions."

Newborn celebrations "*Ekerero*" were highly regarded if the couple has a child, after a year or so, several rites are performed, beer and food are brought from the girl's home. The boy's home also slaughters a goat and prepares a feast to welcome the newborn. The villager could also offer to work for the new mum and bring various gifts to celebrate the new born. This occasion is called '*ogwasimoria omwana*', calling the child by name. (Participant 12, focus group discussion, March 2022)

"Newborns were highly celebrated; there were other marital ceremonies that were carried out all along throughout the lifetime of the married couples to ensure sustainability of the marriage"

If the married couples live together for about two years without offspring, people begin to suspect both of them. In most cases, the parents of the boy contact some magicians and traditional healers to treat or to give guidance or advice on the steps to be taken. On the other hand, a close relation of the groom may be identified and then

asked to come privately relate sexually with the bride. If it is the man's fault, the girl is allowed to stay and somebody takes the opportunity to give birth with her and the off springs were counted to belong to the wedded husband. However, if the woman is at fault, the man has full responsibility to divorce her!

Discussions

The analysis supposes the Symbolic interactionists theory that explores the changing meanings attached to family. They argue that shared activities help to build emotional bonds among family members, and that marriage and family relationships are based on negotiated meanings. The interactionist perspective emphasizes that families reinforce and rejuvenate bonds through symbolic mechanism rituals such as family meals and holidays. Marriage breakdown is rare for those who practice traditional marriage rites. According to Musau (2015), Kenya is still faced with the problem of an increase in marital instabilities and there is little information available about the causes of this trend, its effect on the family institution and the effectiveness and appropriateness of the existing policies and programmes in curbing the problem. The research participants also noted that of late, very many marriages are breaking. Yakubu (1998) opined that in marriage, there are lots of stresses, bitterness, failures and successes. Other factors that threaten marital stability include the age of marriage, educational level of spouse, religion, income, type of marriage, fertility status, kind of family background of spouses, communication, culture, etc. The results indicate that since marriage was thought of as the most important thing it was believed to be the beginning of life. The bearing of children was regarded as the fruit of marriage.

The most significant finding was that marriage was a community affair and it could only be strengthened through participation in various marriage rites. In line with the expected results, the Kisii community actively engaged in various marriage ceremonies just like all other African communities. This is in line with marriage is a major transforming ceremony in African Religion. It is viewed as a community activity that involves all members, those who are currently physically

living in the community, the ancestors and those yet to be born. This point comes out clearly in Mbiti's explanation of the nature of Bahemuka, (1992). The study established that upholding cultural traditions were the main reason why initiation was practised. The participants reported that respect for culture was highly regarded

among the Abagusii people, especially in matters of marriage relationships. Contrary to this, within the Americans, the most prominent aspects of couples' relationships linked to marital stability consisted of religion, sexual relationship, commitment, intimacy, and congruence in values and beliefs. In Asian countries, the most prominent factors included communication, religion, children, conflict resolution, emotional issues and love, and in European countries, the key factors included a sexual relationship, commitment, relationship satisfaction, and support from one's mate (Karimi et al 2019).

Female circumcision was considered an integral part of the Kisii people's way of life and culture as the study found out during the interview. Male Adulthood At about age twelve, boys have to undergo circumcision in order to become junior warriors. In order for a female member of the Maasai community to be considered socially adult, she has to undergo clitoridectomy (emorata). On the circumcision day, according to Hughes (2006), "her father sacrificed a ram and brought honey-beer, to ensure that she would bear children" (p. 20). Her head is shaved and she wears a special chain of tiny metal discs on her head to show that she is now ready to be a bride. Circumcision is, according to Spencer (1988), the "immediate and most significant step..., which places her in a ritual limbo between girlhood and wifhood (Okiya 2016).

Initiation brings each individual into the maturity of adulthood. It thus ushers one into marriage, itself a rite of passage. Bridewealth as a "legitimation of children" is an essential component of marriage because it has a social and religious value. It is the foundation for which families are built and a communication channel with the ancestors. Magesa brings in the theme of polygyny when he discusses "the value behind different forms of marriage" (Magesa 1997). He concludes his discussion of marriage in the context of kinship by discussing moral maturity in death. "Longevity is a prized aspect of life ... it is seen as a consequence and proof of having lived morally" (Magesa 1997). In his discussion of marriage, he clearly illustrates how several themes are manifested in marriage (Magesa 1997). The role of the community includes the ancestors as the senior-most members of the community, family or lineage. When a dead African individual is considered an ancestor, he or she does not cease to be a member of the community, family or lineage of origin. And the role of the ancestors in marriage is underlined within the community, family or lineage of origin of the said individual. The central role of procreation in marriage further

underlines the importance of the community because procreation facilitates the growth of the community (Magesa 1997).

Based on the findings, the study found out that teachings and guidance, payment of bride price, wedding ceremony and meal sharing feasts were among the most significant rituals for marital stability. bride price was very significant, this is in agreement with Adams and Mburugu (1994) in their work on the Kikuyu in Kenya, who write that bridewealth (another term for bride price) is the primary indicator of marriage, with one respondent saying: 'There was no ceremony, but traditionally I am married because I paid the bride wealth.' With regard to the Sebei of Uganda, anthropologist Goldschmidt (1974) notes that without the transfer of bride price there is no marriage and any children will not belong to the father's lineage. Similar to this, a study conducted by Siwan A., Lori B., and Jean-Philippe P., (2018) where respondents were presented with emotions of frowning and smiling faces to visualize the scale. Based on the respondents' answers, on their self-reported happiness. The findings appear to suggest that a higher bride price is associated with a better marriage, where the wife is happier.

The results agree with the existing literature of Conflict Theory by German philosopher and sociologist Karl Marx (1818–1883) who looks at society as a competition for limited resources. Polish-Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909) expanded on Marx's ideas by arguing that war and conquest are the basis of civilizations and believed that cultural and ethnic conflicts led to states being identified and defined by a dominant group that had power over other groups (Irving 2007). Consequently, these results built on the existing evidence of this theory that suggests that the results should be taken into account when considering a step-by-step process of how to perform customs of the process of their marriage union. The data contributes a clear understanding of the various marriage rites that existed or still exist within the Abagusii people. On the other hand, it was interesting to note that, unlike conflict theorists that argue that family is not necessarily a group characterized by consensus. It might be held together by constraint or coercion. On the other hand, conflict theorists argue that harmony is not necessary for the continuation of order in the family. This means that misunderstanding might even build strong relationships, making them rewarding in the final analysis (Stark (2007).

Unexpected results were a bit contrary is that still within the Kisii community, there were slight differences through which the rites were performed since some could take a longer period than others and in

some clans, the series of rituals were intertwined yet within some clans, some rituals were performed in a different way or skipped. However, all the rituals were geared towards a common agenda. However, based on the findings of similar studies, a more plausible explanation is that all the rites practised aimed at a common agenda of stabilizing marriages and ensuring sustainability. Interestingly, the study found out that marriage sustainability was a community affair. This is in agreement with the communitarian aspect of Maasai culture and religion that accords the community a special place in the selection of the bride, proposal for marriage and negotiation of bride wealth. It was indicated by 115/163 (71%) respondents that the community or family members had a major role to investigate the family backgrounds of the partners (Okiya 2016).

The generalizability of the research is limited by the fact that a small representative sample size was used to identify the participants for the focus group discussion. Problems encountered during data collection included language barriers that made it difficult to interpret and find the right words to describe some rituals or the exact rite that was involved. Or analyzed. The results presented are a qualitative part of the major research design that's an exploratory sequential design which is likely to contain richer and more comprehensive findings as compared to the first part. In conclusion, the results are valid despite the limitations because the focus group participants were carefully selected from the two counties occupied by the Abagusii community and most of them were over the age of seventy and have a vast knowledge of culture.

However, it's important to note that some shortcomings related to the traditional rituals were noted. For instance, if the girl was not a virgin, she was the only one victimised and sent back to her home or married as a second or subsequent wife. Secondly, in the case of barrenness, the woman was despised and sent away but for a man, another man in the clan was identified to sire children for him. Gender imbalance aspect is related to the findings of Vakili et al. (2014) showing that overall women were more likely to have dissatisfaction with their marriage and were more likely to complain. It might be related to patriarchy. In a patriarchal society like Iran, power is primarily held by adult men. Males predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property; and, in the domain of the family, fathers or father-figures hold authority over women and children similar to Thompson, Linda and Alexis J Walker (1989) who

claim that emotional differences between men and women might be another related factor to marital challenges.

Conclusion

It should be noted that this study identified fundamental cultural aspects that are still relevant in modern society for marriage stability. Marriage sustainability was a community affair. The two families nurtured it with the support of the clan members. The originality of this study lies in its strength-focused perspective on the deeper investigation into the traditional marriage rites and the impact on marital stability and the fact that its results can be applied to family establishments and for counsellors and therapists to take the initiative of stabilizing marriages.

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CULTURE AND RELIGION IN AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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Executive Summary

A common ground between religion and knowledge production is that both subsist within cultural experience. There is an underlining epistemic value that forms an intrinsic connection between religion, culture and knowledge production. This unique interconnectedness has contributed to the appreciation and shaping of human understanding about reality. The argument of this paper was premised on the claim that since knowledge is concerned with the everyday construction of reality, and that African knowledge production avails Africans the tools of survival, adaptation and improvement of their conception of reality. In this endeavour, religion was purported to be instrumental in providing meaning to certain aspects of reality, both at the individual and community levels. In this sense, religion transcends being just a form of knowledge for some people to being an institutional context of knowledge production. Consequently, this revealed why the domain of religion is usually considered to possess the status of being an institutional guardian of knowledge. In other words, with other subsystems within a culture, religion contributes to the process of knowledge production. Through a historical and critical analytic method, the paper examined how religion within the large spectrum of culture remains a valid source of knowledge production in Africa, demonstrating how culture and religion have pragmatic imports in African epistemic enterprise, and thus contribute to the reliability of African epistemic venture.

Keywords: Culture, Epistemology, Knowledge Production, Ontology, Religion

Introduction

It could be agreed without much argument that almost every sphere of human experience is an avenue of knowledge. This suggests that

knowledge enterprises are not always formal settings as knowing occurs in every situation that presents such opportunity. The argument in this paper is that both cultural and religious experiences are important avenues of epistemic activities. This is evident from the conceptual analysis of the notions of culture and religion. There is a conscious effort to present a conceptual clarification of culture as a concept of interest to different fields of study. While this paper does not claim an exhaustive discussion on issues boarding on defining religion, nonetheless, it pays deeper attention to the concept of religion with a view of exposing the depth of meanings that the concept evokes for different scholars. It also devotes a section to explanation of the nature of African Traditional Religion as a unique experience of a people with peculiar historical background. Furthermore, the paper explains how knowledge is produced within both contexts and identifies the unique forms of epistemic products of each as a subsystem and system respective. It also shows how culture and religion are interconnected contexts of knowledge production, that is, knowledge is part of a cultural experience.

Culture

The Latin word for culture is *cultura* which is a derivative of the verb *colo* (infinitive *colere*), meaning “to tend,” “to cultivate,” and “to till.” Culture is the perceptible end of series of activities that define the identity of a people who share common background and experience. Kluckhohn (1951) defines culture as patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. He also adds that the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. This reveals that culture is an all-encompassing outlook of a people. Those who participate in a culture are somehow configured into the worldview of the group. This is evident in definition of culture by Hofstede (2001) as shared mental software, “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. Within each culture there come into being characteristic purposes not necessarily shared by other types of society. This shows that culture defines the identity of a people.

Taylor sees culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs or any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. This exposes a kind of procedural nature that underline culture. At the end of such process

comes the identifiable series of activities that define the identity of a people. This is evident in Kluckhohn's (1951) definition of culture as that which consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. This considers culture as an all-encompassing outlook of a people. Those who participate in a culture are somehow configured into the worldview of the group, and people who share in this outlook tend to perceive reality in that light. Hofstede defines culture as shared mental software, "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". This shared outlook is what Ruth Benedict (2006) pointed out in her postulation that a culture, like an individual, is a consistent pattern of thought and action. Every culture has characteristic purposes that are unique to it and such characteristics are not necessarily shared by other types of society. Culture distinguishes a people from others, it is passed on from generation to generation through the process of socialization. It will be apt to state that there can be no culture without a society.

It can also be said that culture is uniquely human and shared with other people in a society and is to be understood as the way of life of a people. For Bello (1991), culture is "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours". Otite and Ogoinwo (1979) define culture as the complex whole of man's acquisitions of knowledge, morals, beliefs, art, custom, technology, etc. which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation. This shows that culture is the sum total of a people's identity. Culture is a viable clue to knowing a people's identity. Culture is therefore everything that is socially learned and shared by members of a society.

Again, the suitable definition by Otite and Ogoinwo offers an inkling that there is a definite connection between culture and knowledge. This is succinctly explained in Edward Tylor's claim that culture amounts to 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired... as a member of society'. From this allusion, it is evident that knowledge is part of culture. From the normative account of culture as that which aims as

the transformation of man's crude nature into refined state, it could easily be alluded that culture performs function which are similar to knowledge. The process of knowledge cumulates in refinement not just of individuals but the society as whole. The quality of knowledge acquired by members of a social group is a determinant of its outlook, since has the ability to transform a culture through its adaptation a cultural experience. According to Akper (2002):

Every culture is distinct, with its own history and dynamics. Because of this it can only be evaluated in its own terms hence the term cultural relativity. In its dynamic yet distinct form, culture functions as a mechanism of adaptation to a particular environment be it social or physical. It is because of this adaptation that a people and their culture can survive in a particular environment.

The transformative ability is basically due to the fact that culture is not a personal element and thus transcends an individual and existence. In other words, culture usually refers to a society or a group of societies. It is a group that preserves the material (tangible) and non-material (nontangible) aspects of culture. Such group can modify elements of a culture.

Religion

As a concept, religion usually invokes an idea of belief in a supernatural Being popularly referred as God or other extraterrestrial beings. However, this concept is not that simple even from the etymology of the concept. Defining the notion of religion is a problematic for scholars who are interested in either the concept or associating notions. This implication of this is that religion cannot be easily defined. It would have been a plausible view that issues around defining religion would have been resolved, as it were, when considered from its etymology. This is because, it is almost a unanimous view among scholars that tracing the root word of a concept is crucial in its definition and understanding. Nonetheless, this is not as easy as portrayed in the case of the concept of religion.

There are three different views on the etymology of the concept of religion. The first group traced the concept to the Latin words *religare* and *religio* which means "to tie or bind". The connotes that religion binds humanity and the divine together, and binds humans into a community that is bound with the divine. A second view claims that religion is from two Latin words - *re* and *lig-* meaning to "join" or "connect". The combination of these words shows that religion means

“to join again” or “to reconnect.” This view based its claim on humanity purported need to reconnect its original unity with the divine, or reconnect the human world and the sacred world. Those who proposed a third view hold that the word religion stems from the Latin word *relegare* meaning “to tread carefully” and it indicates “respect and care for both the natural and supernatural worlds”. This perspective holds that a key concern of religion is to provide guidance on how humans ought to live. What is common to the three perspective is the idea that religion pertains to believing in a divine being or supreme Being, identifies as Divine Being or Spiritual Being. Thus, the idea of ‘God’ as the Supreme or Absolute Being in relation to the enigmatic side of man’s experience manifests a religious belief (Elcomblus, 2020). This is why, in the opinion of Lawal (2021) the practice of religion obliges the unity of men, as it is an important aspect of society.

The three perspectives offer insights to why the concept of religion belongs to the class of words that do not have a univocal definition. Consequently, religion is continuously considered from different perspectives. Such perspectives may be philosophical, sociological, psychological or theological. Evidently, religion constitutes a matter of interest for a wide range of individuals and fields of study. Patrick J. Casey (2021) captures this succinctly in his claim that the definition of the concept “religion” cuts across disciplinary lines, among them: anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, religious studies, sociology, and most recently, cognitive science. Due to the number of fields taking part in the conversation, it behooves scholars to take a balanced, multidisciplinary approach to the definition of religion. Furthermore, this perspectival consideration of religion could also be consequent to the culture that is the focus of a research or that which caught the fancy of the researcher. Scholars tend to define religion in line with their particular interest in religion and “a scholar's definition of religion tends to reveal their theoretical commitments.”

Casey further made a distinction between monothetic definitions and polythetic definitions. According to him, monothetic definitions of religion analyse an aspect or a group of features each of which is considered vital, and taken together, jointly sufficient for calling something a religion. On the other hand, polythetic definitions, do not view any particular feature as being necessary for calling something a religion. Rather, they view a combination of some set of features as being jointly sufficient for calling something a religion.

He further identified two subdivisions within the monothetic definitions as substantive and functional definitions. Substantive definitions attempt to pick out the properties, attributes, or features that are characteristic of religion. They delineate religion through a distinctive content or substance. While functional definitions delineate religion through the distinctive work it performs. Definitions in the last category are concerned about the functions religion performs for society and the individual, and how it operates in terms of its place in the social/psychological system. An example in the case of the former is Max Weber who considered religion as a belief in a supernatural power that is unable to be scientifically explained. Émile Durkheim's sociological definition of religion as a system of beliefs and practices that functions as a cohesive force to bind individuals together into a societal unit is an example of functional definitions of religion. There are other forms of definitional consideration of religion which this paper cannot accommodate for the want of space. Pertinent to note also is that this paper focuses on a qualified type of religion, namely African Traditional religion and this is discussed below.

African Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religion refers to the original religious activities of Africans before the advent of the Abrahamic faiths in Africa. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) posit that:

When we speak of African traditional religion, we mean the indigenous religion of the Africans. It is the religion that has been handed down from generation to generation by the forebears of the present generation of Africans. It is not a fossil religion (a thing of the past) but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practicing it. This is a religion that has no written literature yet it is "written" everywhere for those who care to see and read. 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 or old.

African Traditional Religion is a complex and distinctive set indigenous religious beliefs and practices found in various ethnic groups in Africa. Despite the diversity in cultural practices due to different ethnic groups in Africa, their religious beliefs and practices share basic characteristics in common. This is what Mbiti (1990) expressed in his claim that

although the religious expressions in Africa are multiple, the philosophy underlying religious life is singular.

According to Turaki (1999) Fundamental to Africans is the belief in the Supreme Deity who is considered the creator of the universe, and believed to dwell in the skies. He exercises control over the universe and as such the universe's continuance depends on him. This Supreme Deity is seen as 'the Father of not only humanity in general (individuals) but also of the religions and cultures of all peoples in the world'. Africans also express belief in lesser deity or divinities who are believed to have emanated from the Supreme-Being and considered to be over-seers of different aspects of the universe. According to Omotoye (2011), they also believe in the existence of some invisible beings whose abode could either be in the spiritual or physical realm depending on the nature of their domain and of their responsibility. They are brought into being for a definite purpose which is to serve the will of God in the theocratic government of the World. They serve as ministers or overseers of different aspects of the universe and awaken in humans a consciousness to a responsible attitude toward nature. Such attitude is expressed in a deep sense of morality.

Megasa (2002) opines that traditional Religion is based on morality. Morality originates with God and flows into the ancestors. God is the 'Giver of Life, the Power' behind everything. The way of human life (tradition) originates from God. Tradition contains the moral code and prescriptions for an ethical life. Moral behaviour maintains and enhances life force, but disobedience and disloyal behaviour towards the tradition passed on by the ancestors will weaken life force and cooperate existence of the society. The whole purpose of African life is to ensure the capacity of this life force. A close relationship with God, the ancestors and other humans will ensure life force. African Traditional Religion, according to Magesa, is based on maintaining the balance between the two spheres of the universe (the visible and invisible worlds). The maintenance of this balance and harmony is humanity's greatest ethical obligation and determines the quality of life. Human beings live through the connectedness with the life force which God, the Supreme Being, provides.

As a key feature of culture, people practice religion within a cultural setting. Religious ceremonies, rites and ritual are done within a cultural background. According to Godwin Akper et al (2002), "every religious practice, value or norm is based on the cultural background of a people. Every religious ceremony practiced among the people of a community

is traceable to earlier cultural practices.” Historical records reveal that religion has always been considered as an important source of knowledge in different cultures. Indeed, many people resort to religion to make sense of the world at the instance of certain events; they seek to derive meaning by making recourse to the supernatural.

Key in the concern of knowledge production is the provision of answers to puzzles around human existence. It is evident that religion has always played a significant role aiding man to arrive at meaning about certain human experiences. Furthermore, religion offers explanations for fundamental issues such as; questions about man’s origin, his existence and explanation of the natural world. As Gulinck (2022) opines, it seems that religions can offer us a huge amount of knowledge. And that exactly, can explain their attraction. The scope of the knowledge they offer seems to be quite encompassing at first sight. Religious knowledge may even offer purpose to our lives. Some Africans do believe that religions can offer answers to almost everything, that religions are the one and only "knowledge map" one should possess.

African Knowledge

Despite its viability, African knowledge has only recently received recognition as an enterprise in the academic circle. Sequel to the structure that Western imperialism and colonialism bequeathed to Africa during and after their exploits in Africa, epistemic activities in Africa have been predominately western in orientation. Western imperialism and colonialism are premised on the bias ideology couched in the mindset that Africans do not have a distinguished identity equivalent to that of Europeans. Such conclusion underscored an assumption in the formation of educational system and in setting paradigms for what is authentically epistemic, since the imperialist system suppressed or outrightly denied native thought system in the constitution of social systems in their colonies. However, a trend became quite popular at independence to salvage African heritage and values. This move was a commitment to reconstruct experiential knowledge of African heritage into a body of critical and rational corpus.

African knowledge, in simple terms, is the body of epistemic activities that is indigenous to Africans. It is also referred to as African indigenous knowledge or African indigenous epistemology. In Fabidun and Olatunji (2021) Indigenous knowledge is referred to as the peoples’ cognitive and wise legacy as a result of their interaction with nature in a

common territory. Indigenous knowledge is the established defined knowledge of indigenous nations, their worldviews, and the customs and traditions that direct them. In each instance, it is the system of knowledge processes and practices done in African categories and concepts. According to Jimoh, this structure includes epistemic enquiry, appreciation, articulation, and a designation of African conception of reality that is uniquely African and philosophical. It is about how Africans make meaning of their knowledge claim concerning reality. Such knowledge claims are basically connected to, and often, situated within the African conception of reality and informed by the African worldview. African Knowledge, therefore, is the indigenous knowledge in Africa that goes back to the history of humankind in the continent. It has been contrasted with global dominant western knowledge systems produced in research and academic institutions.

African knowledge is a conscious, self-directed tradition of research based on knowledge sourced from the deposit of wisdom in African traditions for the purpose of addressing problems and issues of African reality. This is very much in line with Hountondji's (2009) Africa-based tradition of knowledge. It is a body of knowledge from an African-based experience of reality. This is what Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2022) describe as an experiential knowledge based on African worldview. This worldview includes wholeness, community and harmony which are deeply embedded in cultural values.

While it is a consideration of knowledge activities from a cultural perspective, African knowledge is not an attempt to relativise epistemic activities less we end up priding ethnocentrism, relativism, isolationism and self-refutation. According to Baghrarian (2022), the relativists claim that standards of truth, rationality, and ethical right and wrong vary greatly between cultures and historical epochs and that there are no universal criteria for adjudicating between them, has been accused of inconsistency by philosophers of different era. Conscious of this, the attempt here is rather a form of reconstructive complementarity of epistemics, with an emphasis that African mode of knowing is potent enough to contribute to the universal body of knowledge.

To achieve this, it is important that such activity is conducted in a way that it is not caught in the web of ethno-philosophy which consists of Africans describing or reconstructing ancient African worldview and collective assumptions of their communities. Instead, it needs to portray an outlook that clearly shows African consciousness of their own

philosophy, not relying on Western analysts observing them from without to be responsible for giving a systematic explanation of their wisdom (Hountondji, 2009) This is important for thorough appreciation of an endeavour in knowledge production in Africa.

African Knowledge Production

African knowledge production pertains to the web of how Africans make meaning out of reality employing the tool of rationality as inhabitants of a geographical area that is unique to them in every regard. Tanyanyiwa and Chikwanha (2001) argue that before the advent of Western methods of scientific inquiry African knowledge and methods have successfully guided its peoples in all spheres of functioning, including the spiritual, social, educational, agricultural, political and economic. In African parlance, knowledge production encompasses the creative, innovative and discovery initiatives geared towards adaptation and survival in the African world. The initiatives also include the identification, articulation and utilization of the modes of production of materials which are essential to transcend the satisfaction of biological their needs.

According to Kaya and Seleti (2013), different African communities find different means of production and different means of subsistence in their natural environment. Africans sourced productive initiatives are from various aspects of their initiation schools, indigenous games, agricultural systems, dances and songs, storytelling, proverbs, et cetera. Owoahene-Acheampong and Gordon (2015) further add that:

Indeed, the sources of knowledge production in African Studies are multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary; they include archaeology, agronomy, anthropology, history, the arts, languages, philosophy, religion, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, music, sociology, geography, literature (written and oral), biology, agriculture etc. Equally important are factors that define the construction of African knowledge such as wisdom, the ancestors, traditional healers, land use systems, traditional leadership and governance, funeral ceremonies, proverbs, experiences and observations, supernaturalism, calendar, concept and use of time, witchcraft theories and practices and so on.

These are avenue for understanding and interpreting the daily experiences of the African world. They are indigenous institutions of knowledge production, as well as modes of conservation and sharing of knowledge among Africans in all spheres of the industry like farming, fishing, economy, political and social institutions such as legal-political

system, system of security, system of healthcare and system of education.

Characteristically, African indigenous knowledge is premised on African communal conception of reality. Epistemic activities are embarked upon in this spirit of communal harmony between the individual and the community. The epistemic agent is not the Sophist Gorgias, or Descartes' solipsistic individual who depends solely on self-convinced conclusions while disparaging everything eternal to his own mind. In African setting, an individual (ditto an epistemic agent) receives his identity from that of the society from whose life he shares. What he knows is a participation in the commonwealth or heritage of the community. This is aptly expressed by Sarpong (2002) that "a person becomes human only in the midst of others and seeks both individual and collective harmony as the primary task in the process of becoming a true person." This consciousness guides epistemic endeavours in African; an epistemic agent is part of the whole and what he knows is part of the community epistemic common-wealth. For instance, a child grows in this approach, learning the social values and norms in company of his peers.

In addition to been collective and social, African knowledge production is practical in orientation and in solving experiential issues. It employs pragmatic measures in dealing with issues of daily living. Over time, these solutions build up to a body of knowledge in the various spheres of the society, and form a tradition among the people. According to Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013), African knowledge, and its method of acquisition, has a practical, collective and social or interpersonal slant.

As a traditional mode of acquiring knowledge, African Indigenous Knowledge is transmitted orally, and passed on from generation to generation through verbal medium, given the context of community living and activities. This does not suggest that it is totally common placed, as having a certain degree of wisdom is inevitable for anyone to unravel the depth of mystery entrenched in the narrative or metaphorical language such as; folktales, folklores, proverbs, citations, incantations, etc. These are avenue through which indigenous knowledge are transmitted from one generation to the next.

The process of passing on the indigenous knowledge to later generations is also a process of evaluation, refinement and adaption. In utilizing what is inherited from previous generation, every era finds an adaption that is suitable to their age without altering the core elements

of such values. This serves as a critic to the notion that unscientific African indigenous knowledge an unscientific accumulation of native wisdom, lacking in sophistication, logicity, coherence, and technicality. If these qualities are absent in any human endeavour, hardly would anyone find any value or attraction in it. The fact that African indigenous knowledge has these qualities account for its veracity in this age of highly sophisticated and technological advancement. Therefore, it continues to get relevance and acceptance in the contemporary African societies.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is manifest that culture and religion are viable contexts of knowledge production. Culture and religion help to understanding different aspects of human existence, and help to acquire, share and transfer this knowledge to others within the same experience. Such knowledge has practical utility for the individual who participates in the social life of the community. Africans acquire understanding of themselves and reality through their relationship with the divine and their interaction with one another. This is because epistemic activities are usually couched in a practical and flexible manner that facilitates easy acquisition in order to proffer solution to personal and social challenges. This grows into a body of knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to the next and forms a heritage that is unique to cultural experience. This is the sense in which knowledge production is considered as a natural product of human interactions in both traditional formal and informal settings. Events that take place in these settings are valid avenues for knowledge production, as they offer a people unique form of knowledge that is relevant for understanding of and adaption to their existential position.

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**AFRICAN RELIGIO-CULTURAL SPIRITUALITY OF
DEVELOPMENT: DEMYSTIFYING AFRICAN RELIGIO-
CULTURAL SPIRITUALTY**

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Executive Summary

This is an exploratory essay proposing a critical look at spirituality as a driver for contextualized development. Contextualization means that a person is aware of self-identity and group identity while, in the same vein, fully able to appreciate diversity. This empowers the individual to take diversity into account when contextualizing development through the eyes of spirituality. Development is to have awareness of oneself in relation to others, the universe and the spiritual. It is having the capacity to enter into personal relationships, the capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. The essay focuses on African religio-cultural spirituality as a springboard for authentic African development. It recognizes that African religio-cultural spirituality is facing challenges in the globalized world and needs to refocus through an authentic African education system, an education system that will aid an attitude of focusing on the real African identity present in African religio-cultural spirituality. Available literature and experience in learning institutions manifest a hanging on to colonial legacy through education and religion, contributing heavily to the African identity crisis. A large number of Africans are uprooted from African spirituality and left standing on quicksand. African religio-cultural spirituality emphasizes that Africans celebrate life and preserve it by hedging it with taboos. The African concept of life is essentially religious because the world is seen as a vast spiritual arena. Development is about abundant life through relationships. Abundant life in Africa has not been achieved through certain borrowed laid down rules from other cultures as is manifested in contemporary African society. The borrowed development plans have hindered rather than

promoted authentic development in Africa. Some spiritual principles and domains will be used as examples to illustrate approaches to the challenges of spirituality and development in Africa. The essay calls for an open discussion of these principles and domains. Two hypotheses serve as guides to the essay: Africans celebrate life and preserve life, and the African concept of life is essentially religious and relational.

Keywords: Africa, Spirituality, African Religio-culture, Spirituality, Development, Demystifying

Introduction

There is a resounding agreement that Africa is the place where all the conversation about abundant life began (Tisdale, 2013; Oden, 2007). This exploratory essay seeks to affirm this and postulate that there is a system that has been put in place over the centuries, a system that informs what has been termed “African religio-cultural spirituality.” This spirituality is not what it has been described to be: backward or barbaric. It is alive and well within lived structures of African cultural knowledge and domains. The consensus building about its nature can be articulated through an African home-grown education in order to make it the dominant identity shaper of the African.

This essay proposes a critical look at spirituality as a driver for contextualized development, and argues that Africa needs to hinge its development on African religio-cultural spirituality, as opposed to the current situation which has been muddied by spiritualities borrowed from different parts of the world and handed down to the African through colonialism, Christianity, Islam and Western education. This is a situation that has given birth to an uprooted African with no soil of her own to nurture an African identity (cf. Grillo, 2019:149). Many years ago, Nkrumah (1964) described the situation as follows: “Our attitude to the Western and the Islamic experience must be purposeful. If we (Africans) fail to do this our society will be racked by the most malignant schizophrenia” (p. 78).

The essay does not propose a rejection of colonialism, Christianity, Islam and Western Education. These are factors that cannot be erased from the African continental experience. They can only be embraced in a contextualized environment.

Contextualization means that a person is aware of self-identity and group identity while, in the same vein, fully able to appreciate global diversity. Kwasi Wiredu discusses identity in the context of “cultural universals and particulars”. He writes that peoples previously marginalized (by reason of colonialism and related adversities) find the need, in seeking to redefine their self-identity, to insist on particulars – their own previously neglected particularities – rather than universals” (Wiredu, 1996:1).

The redefinition of self-identity empowers the individual to take diversity into account when contextualizing development through the eyes of spirituality. Development is interpreted here to mean having awareness of oneself in relation to others and the universe in its material and spiritual manifestations; thus, building the capacity to enter into personal relationships, the capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships.

The essay focuses on African religio-cultural spirituality as a springboard for authentic African development. It recognizes that African religio-cultural spirituality is facing challenges in the globalized world and needs to refocus through an authentic African education system, an education system that will aid an attitude of focusing on the real African identity present in African religio-cultural spirituality. Available literature and experience in learning institutions manifest a hanging on to colonial legacy through education and religion, contributing heavily to the African identity crisis.

African religio-cultural spirituality is about celebration of life, and preservation of it by constantly using taboos as a protective cover and an ethical balance to insulate it from danger. The African concept of life is essentially religious and arises from the inner drive or inner energy which is African religio-cultural spirituality. The world is seen as a vast spiritual arena. This outlook conceptualizes development as abundant life through relationships. Abundant life in Africa has not been achieved through borrowed laid down rules. Contemporary Africa is replete with failures in politics, education, agriculture, medicine and other areas of life. The borrowed development plans have hindered rather than promoted authentic development in Africa. To reengineer development in Africa, certain African spiritual principles and domains need to be reemphasized and re-presented through a liberative process of education. The essay calls for an open discussion of these principles and domains from an Africanist point of view.

Africa

There have been “conflicting systems of knowledge” about Africa emanating from “various historical and geographical contexts” which have made it rather difficult to contextualize “the idea of Africa” (Mudimbe, 1994). This arises from the fact that Africa is the second largest of the seven continents and composed of multi-cultural societies with a wide variety of ethnic groups, possessing deep religious and cultural heritage that informs and governs the life and activities of its people. The role of African religio-culture is especially significant since it touches all aspects of African life. It is estimated that 70% of the population of Africa resides in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is the region that has significant similarities in cultural knowledge (Smithe, 2002, 2).

There are four main blocks of Sub-Saharan Africa. These are West, Central, East and South that share a religious worldview, except Somalia. For example, Kirwen (2011) argues that “it is this shared cultural knowledge that is the fundamental source of the cosmic and spiritual unity of more than half a billion African people” (p. ii). In the case of Somalia, according to the International Religious Freedom Report of 2013, “the Provisional Federal Constitution (PFC) enshrines Islam as the state religion, prohibits the propagation of any religion other than Islam, and stipulates all laws must comply with the general principles of sharia (Islamic law)” (p. 1). This law has succeeded to a large extent in suppressing traits of African religio-cultural spirituality.

Defining Spirituality

Spirituality involves the recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature (Okiya, 2016: 1).

Spirituality means knowing that our lives have significance in a context beyond a mundane everyday existence at the level of biological needs that drive selfishness and aggression. It means knowing that we are a significant part of a purposeful unfolding of Life in our universe. (Spencer 2012)

Defining African Religio-culture

African religion and culture, as Thorpe states, are “closely interwoven” (Thorpe 1994, 1) or interlaced. Thomas (2005) adds that: “Religion and culture are so intertwined that it is impossible to speak of one without the other” (p. 7). That is why African religion and culture can be

described as “African religio-culture” (cf. Oduyoye, 1995, 12 & 110). This idea of African religio-culture translates into an existence where religious and ‘non-religious’ aspects of African life are indistinguishable. This is why development cannot be seen to exist outside such a context.

This religio-culture arises from the idea that for Africans, spirituality is with you at all times in all situations, that one cannot draw a line of what is spiritual and what is not. What one could take for granted like giving someone a glass of water has a spiritual connotation to the African.

Yet, because of Africa’s vastness, the notion of a single African indigenous religion constitutes an oversimplification. However, as Stinton(2004) has argued, there is some consensus that indigenous African religions share numerous features in common to deserve being considered as one.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the expression of the religious worldview in terms of concrete rites and rituals varies from one region to the other, from country to country and from ethnic group to another. These religious expressions are described by Thomas (2005) as ‘religio-cultures’ (p. 7). Thomas (2005) further argues that “all religion is in part culturally constructed” (p. 7) and serves as a manifestation of the “uniqueness of each culture” (p. 7-11). This uniqueness of each culture is emphasized by Geertz (1973) when he writes that we are, in sum, incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture – and not through culture in general but, through highly particular forms of it” (p. 49) (Cf. Okiya 2016: 3).

Defining African Religio-cultural Spirituality

A people’s religion is their formal expression of a spirituality that they hold in consciousness and which is their expression of the concern with the ultimate reality. This concern with the ultimate reality arises when human beings come to terms with their own limitations and the limitations of the environment in which they live. This realization propels the human being to seek to relate with this ultimate reality because human beings naturally seek harmony. Religion is an attempt to foster relationships between humans as well as with the extraordinary forces believed to control personal life and community life (Okiya, 2016: 4).

African religio-cultural spirituality can be described as inner intelligence or inner power that dwells within the consciousness of Africans and expressed through African religio-culture. It then translates into a total lifestyle of a person expressed within the community, giving rise to Ubuntu and other African verbalization of African worldview (Cf. Magesa, 2013).

Development

Odera Oruka, a Kenyan philosopher, once observed that development as a term has for a long time become an honorific concept. And it has been so not only in Kenya but all over the world. A concept is honorific when it is universally desirable i.e., when everybody treats it as an ideal which must be attained, even through sweat and blood. In Kenya today, Oruka adds, the mainstream of people has a certain interesting conception of development. Development to them means catching up with the Europeans and white Americans. And this mostly means raising our economic and technological standard of living.

This view of development has led to modeling African development contexts on foreign spiritualities which have translated into failure of many enterprises began in Africa. Waliggo, in the Foreword to Magesa's book, rightly articulates this idea when he writes:

One of the root causes of the anti-life forces, systems, and problems in Black Africa has been our failure to embark on the movement of re-awakening our own moral and religious values and to construct the future on them. No sane society chooses to build its future on foreign cultures, values, or systems. Every society is obliged to search deep in its own history, culture, religion, and morality in order to discover the values upon which its development and liberation, its civilization, and its identity should be based. To do otherwise is nothing less than communal suicide. (Magesa 1997, 9; cf. Thomas 2005, 8-9)

This exploratory essay is based on the conviction that the fundamental elements of transforming an individual are still part and parcel of the African person South of the Sahara, whether educated or uneducated, urban or rural. And on the level of spirituality, African people continue to believe in and practice African religio-culture that flows from a profound and complex oral tradition. There is evidence of African religio-cultural spirituality in the practice of naming, initiation, death and healing. All these practices are part of the daily life of African peoples, whether in the city or in the village (Lugira 2009, 106).

Demystifying African Religio-cultural Spirituality

Africa has a well-developed religio-cultural system that has been in existence long before European exploration, Christianity, Islam and colonialism. However, over the centuries, it has been systematically described as barbaric.

It is a system that seeks answers to fundamental questions of life: the origin and meaning of life, the spiritual nature of life, how best to preserve human community, ways of keeping away forces undermining the welfare of the human community, the nature of evil and the transition from life into eternity. It seeks to answer these fundamental questions through major themes that encompass African religio-cultural knowledge.

In line with the religio-cultural themes, Morris (1994), in support of the argument advanced by Tempels, Mbiti and others, states "... that there is a corpus of beliefs and practices that are common throughout Africa, and that they form an essential, if unconscious unity, although specific aspects may not be shared by all African peoples" (p. 122; cf. Opoku, 1978, 8-13; Thorpe 1994, viii; Thomas 2005, 24; Mbiti 1969; Tempels 1959) (Okiya 2016: 1).

The approach of the religio-cultural themes to the study of culture sees culture as a knowledge system stored in the neo-cortex through a socialization process in a living community. The fact of situating cultural knowledge in the neo-cortex acknowledges a biological basis of culture. This approach to culture lies in the recognition that first of all, human life begins and develops within a biological nurturing community. What separates humans from other primates is the ability through a process of socialization to communicate within a complex communication system - a body of knowledge, which is referred to as culture.

The body of knowledge contains core values that cannot be wished away in the face of diversity and globalization. There is a move through new religious movements to rid Africa of its core values on the pretext that they are backward. However, these are core values that touch on the spirituality of an African and have been resilient.

Despite new religious movements and other external forces that have assuaged African religio-cultural spirituality, changes are at the peripheral level. African religio-cultural spirituality has the quality of

quickly recovering its original shape. The African seeks meaning, purpose, value and connectedness with self, the environment and spiritual world around them. The spirituality emanating from these values is lived out in African communities.

The values mold the spirituality of an African. Included in this spectrum of values is the idea of witches and witchcraft, diviners and divination, ancestral connection through ancestral land, taboos, nominal reincarnation i.e., naming after deceased ancestors and even just naming after those who are alive today but whose moral qualities are admired and desired to be emulated and preserved within the community.

The values are not only admired from afar but can be found in practice in African cities. For instance, today in Nairobi city alone, there is at least a diviner or two within the vicinity of people's abodes. Why is this so? It is because the people realize that these spiritual directors are impacting on their lives and thus a need to consult them. They are consulted by people of all walks and lives, from government ministers, members of parliament, religious (church) leaders, professors, scholars and the ordinary person. These people realize that these people play a major role in their lives and therefore a need to have them within the society.

African religio-cultural spirituality is given life by an African culture that is personal, communal and sacred. Reality is personal in the sense that people personally participate in life. One cannot be passive. It is communal in the sense that most relationships are expressed in a plural form and sacred in the sense that it is rooted and related to the power of a God that is in a fundamental sense immediate.

The articulation and objectification of African religio-cultural spirituality is called African Religion which is a fully developed, contemporary world-class religious system that reflects the primary spirituality of the majority of living Africans.

Education, African Identity, African Religio-cultural Spirituality

This section proposes an authentic African education system geared towards inculcating African religio-cultural spirituality as a means of promoting authentic African identity.

This approach has been made necessary because African societies face major challenges in keeping African religio-cultural spirituality alive.

The African moral and value system has been challenged by colonialism, globalization and education that propagate foreign value systems as the ideal.

These challenges, if addressed, will help African societies develop home-based approaches in tackling the myriad of challenges confronting Africa. This situation has been necessitated by colonial and neo-colonial influence that come, for example, with education systems (Drinkwater, 2010; Coles, 2008) that inculcate Western ideas through alien language media such as English, French and Portuguese. These factors ignore the fact that in Africa alone, there are about 2,080 cultural expressions as reflected in language groups which have not had a chance to articulate their cultural ideals in their own languages (www.africanlanguages.com).

For any group to develop its ideas, a language that captures the concepts of the particular locality is necessary. In this way, the group is able to develop concepts and ideas that are akin and friendly to their environment (Okiya, 2016); thus, the need to invest in indigenous knowledge systems or education.

Indigenous education places knowledge within the context of the learner. African indigenous education was guided by worldviews and value systems where spirituality became the guiding force for all human activities and development

The Study of African Religio-cultural Spiritual Knowledge

The study of culture has been done by several disciplines, including sociology and anthropology. Cultural knowledge is a body of knowledge that is gained from the experiences of a community through everyday life. It crystallizes into deep-seated values that inform the actions of individuals within a community as well as the community's view of life. This body of knowledge is held in consciousness by members of a community in an unreflected manner. However, it is a body of knowledge that has an underpinning system which can be systematically studied (Cf. Kirwen, 2011).

Proposed Content of Authentic African Education System

The content of an authentic African education system needs to consider:

1. That the growth of any community depends on four pillars - infrastructure, software or mental mind, social life and spirituality.

2. How do you deal with too much Eurocentric information?
3. Disjointed and off-planted African youth and African scholars
4. The challenge of reaching African spirituality via other systems, for example, Islam, Christianity and Western education.
5. Acknowledging the power of language by digging deep into the way African indigenous languages express African religio-cultural spirituality
6. Africans devising ways of getting out of believing in other people's version of our own story: relearning to listen to our ancestors, relearning to believe in ourselves.
7. Africans to learn to define what we are. A lot has been lost in translation. Are we interested in who we are as opposed to what Christianity or colonialism defines us to be?
8. Firmly dealing with both foreign and local colonialism

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**AESTHETICS OF COLOURS, SYMBOLS AND SPECTACLES IN
THE 2021 NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND CULTURE
(NAFEST), EKITI STATE, NIGERIA**

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Executive Summary

Nigeria as a multi-cultural nation boasts of many festivals, many of which are found in the six geo-political zones of the country. One of the major festivals that bring together the Nigerian citizens as one entity is the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST), organized by the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC). The festival is celebrated yearly in ways that are unique to Nigerians and culture enthusiasts locally and abroad. The festival has equally boosted the Nigerian economy through tourism promotion and culture preservation. This study adopts cultural identity theory. The theory used to examine the festival as a platform that showcases culture which represents the totality of the ways and lives of the Nigerian people. To achieve this, the researcher gathered data as a participant observer during the festival which featured elements such as costume, make-up, dance, drama, children theatre, fashion parade, local cuisines, local games, music, props, acrobatic displays, trade fair, among others. These elements are the cultural aesthetics of the festival, thereby creating spectacles and colours in unique styles by each of the 36 states of the federation and the FCT Abuja. The study particularly examines the 2021 edition of NAFEST hosted by the Ekiti State Government. The study reveals that the festival is a unique multi-ethnic event that brings together Nigerians and their kinsmen in the diaspora. NAFEST has equally provided a good opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Ekiti people and the economic values of their products and materials. The paper, therefore, concludes that the National Festival of Arts and Culture has over the years promoted national unity and social integration among Nigerians.

Keywords: Colours, Culture, Spectacle, NAFEST

Introduction

It has been observed that one of the attention seekers presently in Nigeria is festival events, be it traditional or contemporary. People engaged in these festival events as a way of coming together as one and sometimes as an avenue to welcome the New Year. To be more realistic on this, festival events are associated with culture, because culture is the way of life of the people in a given society which forms some kind of social understanding on social rights, behaviours, duties, language, taboos, and acts of their heroes.

Many of these festivals have existed for many years and have been passed from one generation to another. The only difference now is that the world is more civilized, thereby changing a lot of things to make things acceptable to the whole world. One major thing the festival has done to Nigeria as a country is that it has turned to economy booster and helped in tourism enlargement. It has also made many states to start researching into what seems to be the treasure in their local environment, thereby promoting the tourism sector of the state. There are many festivals and carnivals in Nigeria, some of which are: Abuja Carnival, Lagos Carnival, Argungu Festival, Calabar Carnival and Ekiti State Carnival (EKIFEST), to mention a few. The most important festival that unites the 36 states of the federation is the National Festival of Arts and Culture organized by the National Council for Arts and Culture. The 2021 edition, which was the 34th event, held in conjunction with the Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism.

There has been a clear observation that the lackadaisical attitude of youths in this generation towards culture is alarming. The youths no longer carry out researches into important factors that make them members of a particular ethnic group and may wrongfully represent an ideal celebration. Therefore, festivals are meant to be done regularly to keep the cultural heritage of the country to standing rather than allowing it to go into extinction.

The study is set to bring out the aesthetics, colours, symbols and spectacles as used in the National Festival of Arts and Culture during the Ekiti 2021 version of the event.

The main objectives of this study are to examine:

- Festivals as an important instrument in the promotion of national unity
- The originality in our cultures before we allow influences from the Western world to destroy them.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is foregrounded on cultural identity theory. This shall be used to appraise this study. The theory deals with people identifying themselves with a particular community. Lustig (133) states that cultural identity theory refers to a person's sense of belonging to a particular culture or group. This process involves learning about and accepting traditions, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, aesthetics, thinking patterns and social structures of a culture. The above-listed are what we could verify from the participation of contingents of each state, ranging from their costumes to their languages. Cultural identity deals with the following features:

- Rituals
- Holiday celebrations
- Communal activities
- Language

Brief History of NAFEST

The National Festival of Arts and Culture was established in 1970, after the end of Nigeria's civil war, to help promote national unity. The event is organized annually by the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC). NAFEST has developed into a major veritable celebration in Nigeria. The week-long festival is usually hosted by any of the 36 states of the federation. During the festival, Nigeria's cultural heritage is reflected through various competitive and non-competitive events, including music, dance, traditional wrestling, and moonlight game for children, local exhibitions like cuisines, herbs, arts and craft. Participants at NAFEST are traditionally drawn from the 36 states of the federation and the FCT, culture parastatals, government agencies and the academia.

Brief History of Ekiti State

Ekiti State was one of the states created on 1st October, 1996, alongside other five states, by the late General Sanni Abacha who was the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The name "Ekiti" was originally coined from the Yoruba word "Ile Olokiti", the land of hills. The "Okiti" was later renamed Ekiti. Ekiti State constitutes one of the largest Yoruba sub-groups in Nigeria. Their ancestor migrated from Ile-Ife, the ancient town which is believed by many as the spiritual home of the entire Yoruba race. Ekiti people are culturally homogeneous in nature and they speak a unique dialect of Yoruba language known as Ekiti. Ekiti State has 16 local government areas, and the people are rich in culture,

with their unique traditions of dressing, dancing and singing. The major food in Ekiti is pounded yam with isapa soup, vegetable or ila asepo (okro) soup, which are all complemented with bush meat and palmwine. Ekiti people are very hardworking and intelligent; the state has produced the highest number of professors in Nigeria, which is why the state is called “LAND OF HONOUR” - “ILE IYI, ILE EYE”. The state is equally blessed with fantastic sites for tourism. This makes it one of the reasons NAFEST 2021 was hosted in the state by the National Council of Arts and Culture. This would invariably expose the hidden treasures of Ekiti to the world, thereby improving the internally generated revenue of the state. Prominent sites in Ekiti are:

- Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort, Ikogosi Ekiti
- Arinta Water Falls, Ikole Iloro
- Fajuyi Memorial Park, Ado Ekiti
- Oke Abanijorin, Iyin Ekiti
- Motif Funland, Are Ekiti
- Orole/Olosunta Hills, Ikere Ekiti
- Agbonna Hills, Okemesi Ekiti
- Ogun Onire Groove, Ire Ekiti
- Ero Dam, Ikun Ekiti
- Erin Ayonigba Sacred Fish River, Erinjiyan Ekiti
- Oroke Ewo War Center, Ilupeju Ekiti
- Esa cave, Iyin Ekiti
- Joseph Ayo Babalola’s Tomb, Efon Alaaye Ekiti
- ABUAD Planetarium, Ado Ekiti
- Osun Osogbo Source, Igede Ekiti
- First Catholic Mass Centre, Usi Ekiti
- Kiriji War Field Resort/ Museum, Okemesi Ekiti.

NAFEST Ekiti 2021 at a Glance

The National Festival for Arts and Culture (NAFEST EKITI 2021) was a week-long event which opened on the 13th November, 2021 with a command performance by the Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism. The performance was a combination of dance, drama and local circus.

The opening ceremony commenced at Ekiti Parapo Pavillion, with one thousand dancers on the tarmac, led by the wife of the Executive Governor of Ekiti State, Her Excellency Erelu Bisi Fayemi. The first lady led the performance by reading lines about the biography of Ekiti people and how they rose to fame in all they do. The reading was titled THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE ROLLING HILLS a script

written by Prof. Bakare Ojo Rasaki, the Hon. Commissioner for Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism. The dancers blended their choreography with the lines read by her Excellency. The performance was colourful and spectacular in nature, showing the uniqueness of the traditional and contemporary lives of Ekiti people. Other spectacular events during the festival include:

- Traditional board game competition
- Drama competition
- Drum ensemble
- Indigenous fashion competition
- Children essay writing competition
- Children storytelling and puppetry competition
- Children hand craft competition
- Nigeria fabrics interior decoration competition
- Traditional cuisine competition.

Cultural Aesthetics, Symbols and Spectacles in NAFEST Ekiti 2021

One of the major areas that create symbols and spectacles in the festival is costumes. There is no festival or carnival that is complete without the use of costume. Costume stands as a major instrument when it comes to the display of culture from different parts of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Asigbo (6) asserts that: "Carnival is a costumed street party with spectacle, elegance, gaiety, pageant and dancing." The above statement has revealed in this study that the festival is graced with costumes showing aesthetics, colours, symbols and spectacles. This is not far-fetched from costumes displayed by each of the 36 states during the Ekiti 2021 National Festival of Arts and Culture. Costume is a big factor that brings out the aesthetics of any kind of performance, be it dance or musical show. Atane-Igbinovia (229) views costumes as a style of dressing including accessories that are peculiar to a person, people or nation. The costumes reveal the cultural identity embedded in costumes used by the contingents from each of the states. The display of these costumes has made us see costumes beyond mere fashion. Costume should be seen as a tool for cultural representation, thereby showing its transformation from the angle of what it communicates.

Furthermore, costumes are symbolic in nature; wearing them is not just for fun, they connote meanings and send out messages as a means of communication. Akpoveta and Ogbemi, in Atane-Igbinovia (174), assert that: communication is a social process that uses symbols and other means to bring about interchange of thought and meanings between individual and groups for better understanding and relationships.

An example of costume standing as communication can be seen from the costume used by the Ekiti contingent in the indigenous fashion parade competition. A theme was given that dress should symbolize one Nigeria in all costumes to be showcased during the parade and the costume can be adopted as a national dress or attire.



Figure 1: Costumes made from local fabrics

Figure 2: Special indigenous costumes by Ekiti State contingents designed with FESTAC head, a symbol of unity.

In analyzing the above costume, it is seen that the attire showcased is a blend of materials from Yoruba fabric (Adire), Ebira fabric (Ita Inochi), Igbo fabric (Akwete) and Hausa fabric (Guinea Brocade). Looking at the picture, one can observe that the costumes are aesthetically indigenous with a national outlook when we talk of the Nigerian GREEN WHITE GREEN national colour.

Also, the symbols on the clothes which are AREWA and the FESTAC HEAD symbolize the national unity among the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The patterns on the clothes are a mixture of all the fabrics from each of the six zones.

The hand beads are coated with the colours of Tiv and Idoma people of Benue State; the hand fan (Akupe) is the Igbo traditional hand fan most common to the chiefs (or someone of a high status) from the eastern part of Nigeria. It is usually made from the native material called “Ute” and sometimes from animal skin. The Igbo cap (Okpu ndi Nze) is not left out as well, very catching to the eye, with creative effects which give the wearer a smart look. It fits any ceremony and also stands as a symbol of authority, tradition and culture.

Adire, also known as Kampala fabric, is not left out in what is combined to design the complete costume for the national dress. The material is popularly used by the Yoruba people of the South Western part of Nigeria. The production of the fabric is derived through the creation of patterns which are soaked into dye to bring out the aesthetics. The fabrics were also used to design the following:

- 1) Sport Vests
- 2) Track Suits
- 3) Socks
- 4) Shoes and handbags for women outfit

Another set of costume that is pleasing to the eye is the River State traditional costume. The men are adorned with the long sequin/velvet robe or long wrappers of fantastic colours. On their neck are the coral beads and a blend of hat and walking stick, while the women are dressed in a three-quarter George wrapper, a beaded head cap, neck accessories and a beaded walking stick which symbolize a traditional dress for a new bride.



Figure 3: Ornamental male costumes

Figure4: Bridal costumes from Rivers State

Moreover, the other 16 local government's areas in Ekiti State were not left out, as they were represented by the state contingents. They were all adorned in their regional tradition costumes. The aesthetics of the costumes used by the masquerades displaying in their acrobatic dances was pleasant to the eye. The dry raffia and fresh palm fronds were indeed colourful. Feathers from different birds were used in designing the head wears of the masquerades.



Figure 5: Traditional dance costumes from Ikere-Ekiti

Figure 6: Ede masquerade from Ekiti -State



Figure 7: A group of traditional masquerade from Ekiti -State



Figure 8: Some participants displaying their traditional costumes.

Figure 9: Isiagu costume from the Eastern part of Nigeria



Figure 10: Group of Ogun and Ondo State contingents

Set Design

The set design during the NAFEST event was a spectacular one. The set design is a motif of the rocks in Ekiti, which reveal the Ekiti people. It is a natural habitat and depicts the nature that surrounds the state. The rocks served as safety zones for the Ekiti people during wars like KIRIJI and EKITI PARAPO. Ekiti people hide in these rocks to capture their enemies and also to get safety during the war period. Therefore, the rocks were built into set designs which served as scenery for the one

thousand dancers who performed at the opening ceremony. Some of the rocks painted on the set are:

- Okutagbokutalori, Ado-Ekiti(The Rock that lifted and another rock)
- Olosunta Rock, Ikere -Ekiti; popularly known as Orun Ikere (Ikere's Heaven)
- Orole, Ikere -Ekiti; popularly known as Baba Oke (King of Rocks)
- Abanijorin cave, Ado-Ekiti



Figure 11: Design indicating rocks in Ekiti State

Figure 12: The 1000 dancers performing at the opening ceremony



Figure 13: The researcher poses for a shoot with one of

Figure 14: The first lady rendering her lines from a set designed the famous rock drawings like a groove

The set design did not stop with the opening ceremony alone; there were also set constructions for the palace of a traditional king of each state that participated. This was a competitive event; because of this, each state had to put good efforts in creating originality for their king's palace in a traditional form. The Ekiti king's palace was constructed with woods, while the entrances were designed with local mats and the

exterior in brick motifs. The interior also had a mat, a curtain, a seat for the king and figurines as part of beautification for the king's abode.



Figure 15: The exterior and interior of Ekiti State contingents' indigenous palace



Figure 16: The exterior of Abuja(FCT), Ondo and Rivers States contingents' indigenous palace

Dance

There were different spectacular dances showcased by each state during the festival. The Ekiti people who were the host for the NAFEST performed the Erukulele dance, professional dance, unity dance, and

Iwure dance (invocation of blessing). There were also Apepe dance from Ogun State, Shadi dance from the North, Obitun dance from Ondo State, Royal dance from Kano State,



Figure 17: The Iwure dance (invocation of blessings) Figure 18: Shadi dance from Kano State



Figure 19: The closing ceremony unity dance Figure 20: Royal dance from Kano

Gong

The gong is the national symbol of the NAFEST celebration. The gong is the award given out to the participants. The gong is one of the prominent musical instruments used in every state. It has the design of Nigeria's coat of arms on it, symbolizing the country's national unity.



Figure 21: The gong awards which is the NAFEST symbol

Figure 22: The Executive Governor of Ekiti and some important dignitaries pose with the gong awards won by the Ekiti State contingents

In conclusion, NAFEST EKITI 2021 has brought together a lot of people from the six geo-political zones of the country. Moreover, it has brought unity among the indigenes of Ekiti State. Also, the festival has exposed to the world the natural state of Ekiti which has brought improvement to the tourism sector in the state. The study reveals that the festival is a unique multi-ethnic event that brings together Nigerians and their kinsmen in the diaspora. NAFEST has equally provided a good opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Ekiti people and the economic values of their products and materials.

Furthermore, it was gathered that during the week-long NAFEST event, Ekiti State people witnessed a boom in their businesses. All the artisans were smiling to their banks after the event. Also, hoteliers could not hold their joy from money realized during this event. This was a big turnaround for them, because many of their rooms were hardly fully booked, but during this event all hotels were fully booked. In fact, the available hotels in Ekiti could not serve close to the 10,000 contingents that were on ground for the event.

Findings

The study discovered that individuals should note the strong difference between religion and culture. In view of the above, there is need to harness the cultural artifacts in the state. The study further reveals that the festival is a unique multi-ethnic event that brings together Nigerians and their kinsmen in the diaspora. NAFEST has equally provided a good opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Ekiti people and the economic values of their products and materials.

Recommendations

In order to improve the cultural sector of every state, there must be:

- 1) Regular meeting of directors of cultures. This will foster cultural exchange activities in each state and promote their art and cultural artifacts.
- 2) The meeting is expected to promote and improve development of literary, visual and performing arts in the country, such as traditional music, dance, drama, folklore, oral tradition, poetry, embroidery, weaving, among others.
- 3) Government should do more of cultural orientation programmes in each state. This will make the people of that environment understand the benefits they can derive from events such as NAFEST. This will erase the misconceptions of people that NAFEST is about idol worshiping. The programme will set the difference between religion and culture.

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CULTURAL RESILIENCE AND FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY AMONG AFRICAN DIASPORA: TO BE OR TO BELONG

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Executive Summary

Throughout the world, scholars of history and allied disciplines continue to reminisce on the impact of the slave trade. This inhuman activity which lasted for centuries, forcefully ensured that young Africans of working age were bundled out of their natural environment and transplanted to different locations. Their culture, self-worth and dignity were denied them as they were barely seen as good working tools. Among the slaves, issues of identity, cultural reconstruction and human dignity were some of the challenges which confronted them. The study noted that whether at home or in the diaspora, every dark coloured person is an African. This paper focused on the identification and practice of some African cultures outside the shores of Africa. It examined the factors which influenced their migration and how they survived in their new found land. The work identified how African diaspora applied their rich African Heritage to establish their roots. To facilitate the discussion, this paper applied the symbolic interactionism theory by Carter and Foller (2015) as the lens. The paper adopted the ethnographic and phenomenological methods of data collection in the discussion. It observed that among African diaspora, the resilience of African culture contributed to establish the unique identity of the Africans. It concluded that every

individual or group, should strive to identify what makes them different from others and amplify it.

Keywords: Culture, resilience, Africanness, diaspora and filial.

Introduction

Throughout the world, scholars of history and allied discipline continue to reminisce on the impact of the slave trade, especially on the African continent and its people. According to historians like Afigbo, Alagoa, and Buah, able bodied men and women of African origin were turned to commodity of trade and carried to the new world as if they have no future or any relevance for themselves. First of all, the trans-Atlantic slave trade started as what was called the trans Saharan trade in the 5th - 19th century. Although it was the European countries that made the trade popular in the effort to secure and sustain their economic interests. Spain, Portugal and many others, contributed strongly to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In the view of Rodney (2009), while the trans-Saharan trade was not publicly approved but conducted in secrecy, some Europeans who bought slaves realised the huge investment potential which the new world offered, noted that, they needed more hands to create real estate. Premised on the above, they decided to take up the slave trade directly, not willing to pass through the middle men. This paper focused on the identification and practice of some African cultures outside the shores of Africa. It examined the factors which influenced their migration and how they survived in their new found land. The work identified how African diaspora applied their rich African Heritage to establish their route. To facilitate discussion, the symbolic interactionism theory of Carter and Foller (2015) served as the lens. The paper adopted the ethnographic and phenomenological methods of data collection in the discussion. It observed that among African diaspora, the resilience of African culture helped to establish the unique identity of the Africans. It concluded that every individual or group, should strive to identify what makes them different from others and amplify it.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens of this study is the symbolic interactionism of Carter and Foller (2015). Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical discourse which attempts to explain the relationship between humans and the society where they find themselves. The principal assumption which underlies the theory of symbolic interactionism is that human action and interaction are better appreciated only through the exchange

of meaning, communication and/or symbols. Here, humans are presented as acting instead of being acted upon. The principles of symbolic interactionism hinges on three basic assumptions:

1. Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning such things have for them.
2. These meanings arise out of social interaction.
3. Social action results from a lifting of individual lines of action.

Based on the presupposition above, symbolic interactionism theory is of the view that people respond to elements of their environment according to the meanings they attach to them. In this wise, such meanings are nonetheless, being created and modified through social interaction involving symbolic communication with other people.

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical framework in sociology that describes how societies are created and maintained through the replicated actions of individuals (Carter and Foller, 2015). In a nutshell, people in society understand their social world through communication and exchange of meaning through language and symbols instead of addressing how individuals define and impact on other individuals subjective view point and they make sense of the world from their own perspective (Carter and Foller, 2015).

The objective structure of a society is less important in the symbolic interactionist view than how subjective repeated and meaningful interactions between individuals create society. Thus, society is thought to be a social construct through human interpretation. According to this theory, humans are distinct from other primates because these non-human organisms, ordinarily respond to their environment in an entirely different way. For instance, a stimulus evokes a response, whereas humans have the ability to interpret events around them. As it were, the non-human organisms, are not able to conceive of alternative response to gesture on their own volition. However, this is not indicative that humans never behave in a strict stimulus-response fashion. What obtains is that humans have the capability of responding in a different way and do so much of the time.

According to symbolic interactionism, the objective world has no reality for humans, only subjectively defined objects have. There is no single objective 'reality' instead, there are only (probable principles, possibly conflicting) interpretations of a situation. Therefore, meanings are not automatically bestowed on humans rather, their actions and behaviours are learned by habitation. In this regard, meanings can be altered

through the creative capabilities of humans and individual may influence the many meanings that form their society. In the light of the above, this theory concludes that Human society is a social creation.

The relevance of this theory to the position of this work, is that Africans in the diaspora, tried to create a new society for themselves based on their practical experience. Thus, forming a link between their past and their present reality, as the succeeding discussion shall show.

The concept of Africanness

In many circles, to be an African is to be black. To others, it is to reside in Africa while to some others more, it is to have an African heritage. In simple term, African indigenous religious tradition is not a creedal religion. It has no scripture. In view of the above, Mbiti (1969) contends that its tenets are preserved and communicated in songs, myths, music, festivals, symbols, folktales, dance ceremonies, rituals, customs among others. Corroborating the position canvassed by Mbiti above, Idowu (1973), Ikenga-metuh (1987) Dopamu and Awolalu (1979), Tasie and Olumati (2013) and Kanu (2015) argued that African indigenous religious tradition is not a missionary religion. To these scholars, the tenets of African traditional religion are preserved and communicated in rituals, customs and traditions. Idowu (1973, Danfulani, (2012) added that anyone who wishes to study African traditional religion has to apply the culture area approach for effective coverage and verifiability.

Different cultures have different means of explaining their existence and continuity. They also have different layers of beings starting with the supreme being which is at the apex although projected in different ways according to tradition. Some culture recognises and associate the supreme being with their economic activities. Some believed that the Supreme being reside in the sky, others that he resides in the earth while some others conclude that he dwells in the water (Obodoegbulam, 2019) There also exist the divinities or deities, spirits forces, ancestors as-well-as magic and medicinemen. In west Africa, there are five classes of spirit beings where as in east and central Africa, they have four (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987).

Without mincing word, religion and culture in Africa are like two sides of the same calabash. In an effort to define culture, Eze, Don (2014) holds that it is the way of life of a particular group of people expressed in their history, language, art, religion, philosophy, economics, music, food and dressing. Put in another way, culture includes knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, cuisine, and skills displayed by members of

any society. Hence, Mbiti (1969) as quoted by Kanu (2015) sees African culture as the rhythm of the African life.

This suggests that Africans carry their culture to wherever they go. The culture of the Africans is eternalised and not written in a book to be studied. Furthermore, Owete and Iheanacho (2013) assert that culture has a global scope, this means that culture can evolve as people migrate from one location to the other. Although the cultures that are transferred from one location to the other and from one people to other nation may not be completely original, but it still helps to identify the people.

Obiegwu, Ifeyinwa (2016) assert that language and culture are indisputably symbiotic. Language serves as an expression of culture without being entirely synonymous with it. In most cases, a language forms the bases for ethnic, regional, national or international identity. Without over stating the obvious, language remains an indispensable factor of integration among any people. Language is an indispensable tool to connect different people irrespective of time and space (Okafore and Emeka, 2012, Davis, 2015). It has the potential to create peace and harmony.

Language and cuisine. Prior to colonial destabilization of the culture of the African people, the value for indigenous delicacies and language were predominant. It was a mark of identity of a distinct people to communicate in their local dialect known as mother tongue. Thus, the people of Nigeria like other Africans, appreciated their diversity as food and language defined their cultural boundaries. Every indigenous group was uniquely known for their special dialect as well as food. Just as the Ogba people in the northern Niger Delta speak Ogba language and has delicacies like (Mnoku Oha, mnoku ulugbu, mnoku ede, mnoku nkpreku among others. The Igbos in the south-east, speak Igbo language and their food delicacies range from eat *Ofe oha, Apu and Ofensala, Isiewu, Ofe Onubu*, etc. The Yoruba people who occupy the south-west, speak the Yoruba language while their delicacies include *Amala and Ewedu, Elubo and Gbegiri, efo riro etc.* The Hausa people who are in the northern part of Nigeria, speak Hausa with food like *Tuo shinkafi, Tuo Masala, kilishi, kunu, nunu etc.* Other minority tribes had their language and delicacies, *Banga soup, Ofor soup Afam soup, edikiko, editan* and other too numerous to mention.

Some smaller cultures considered as minority and thereby submerge in the larger ethnic groups are *Ijaw, Abua, Ikwerre, Ekpeye, Ibibio Efik, Ogoni, Andoni, tiv Nupe, Igala* etc, equally have their distinct language and food that are special to them. Whereas, the local delicacies as mentioned above have gain global recognition especially in the different part of the world where Africans are found.

In view of the fact that African religion is not a religion of the books, the people take it along with them wherever they go. This aptly corresponds with what Leonard in Ejizu (1986) observed when he wrote that Africans eat religiously, dress religiously, dance religiously and die religiously. Despite the hardship which confronted the Africans in the new world, Africans in the Americas still maintain their cooking recipe and this fascinated a lot of the white folk especially their African jollof rice. This special feature of African women has allowed for employment as cooks as some of the white folk love their recipe and are pleased for them to cook in their houses. It is important to note that most white folks do not subscribe to cooking, staying near the fire and combining ingredients was equally a challenge so they employ the blacks to cook for them and these African women are not paid for their labour. At the same time, these cuisines contain African crops that are new to the whites and they wish to enjoy these recipes with them.

The time and energy an African woman spend arranging her kitchen and cooking ingredients makes their cook special. Rather than grinding, they would pound, they go to the farm, harvest fresh crops and vegetables for delicious meal and the white cherish this a lot.

Above all, their climate is similar to that of west Africa. They also planted some tropical crops like yam, cocoyam, water-yam, Okro, Pepper, Pumpkin, Bitter leaf etc. By so doing they preserve their culture. While examining the pattern of cultural migration among the blacks in the diaspora, Diakete (2015) observed that in the diaspora Africans travel with their religion. Because it is not a creedal tradition. Every tradition, custom, or ritual is preserved and communicated from one generation to another through folktales, music, dance etc.

When Africans saw themselves in the new world, they continued to reminiscent on the African heritage. Sometime, when they are given a day off and taken to church, they dance as if in honour of saint Mary; where as they in their inner most mind, were dancing in honour of their deities.

The challenge posed by the movement of Africans to the New world, compelled them to look inward to identify what makes them different from the place of their abode and how their uniqueness can be sustained.

In order to destroy everything that will remind the African slaves of their Africanness, they were separated to different state, island or city on their arrival in the new world. This made it very difficult for members of one ethnic group to interface or preserve their culture in its original form. To effectively ensure a disintegration of the black community, slaves from different parts of Africa were confined in an environment because the slave masters feared that they may plot a coup and take over them, so some slaves from Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Congo, Angola and Cameroon were not ordinarily permitted to associate with anyone who speaks the same language. This made it very difficult for the Africans to commune with their kinsfolk. Nevertheless, they never forgot some African liturgies, relics and rituals which survived in their memories.

What exists today as the African religion in the Americas in the view of Der Meer (2015) are simple facets of the Africanness in the memories of the slaves of which when they are given any little opportunity to worship with their masters, they recall African liturgies and apply them to their worship. The ingredients of African religion practiced in the Americas made the slaves unique and help to perpetuate their culture.

In the Americas some African cults were still operational but the liturgies they used in the cults are different from the originals for instance the kumina cult originated from Akan region in Ghana with the original name as kum-akan but the name has been creolized. Yet the cult still represents what it is meant to represent in the African case.

Somehow, the cults help the adherent to remember the ancestors of Africa and in one of the African cults it is believed that when they die, they would return to their land in Africa. One of their tenets was that God is black and Satan is white. Africans also believe in reincarnation and retributive justice. Therefore, in the next world, all the whites will go to hell while all the blacks will go to paradise.

Music and Dance Societies

According to Ogumbile (2015) One of the renowned societies in the Americas is the Ekpe society. This society is a creolized form of the

elders' council in the present day Akwa-Ibom and cross river state of Nigeria. This is an elders' guild which has similar characteristics with the Ogboni fraternity of western Nigeria. Here, the elders listen to reports and adjudicate on issues brought before them as a means of maintaining society in equilibrium. The music and dance steps of this society was not done as the original version.

Folklores/myth

Africans still maintain their folklores and mythologies as medium of transmitting values, ethics, morals and precepts to the younger generation. They teach the children African tales, still observe the myths and encourage themselves through their folklores and by this means, they transmit values, morals and the core essence of the African communal life-style. They speak of African tales, totems, taboos and ancient African stories. They endeavour not to violate these observances, not minding that they are not in Africa. They see maintaining these precepts as filial responsibilities which they owe their ancestors and the generation yet unborn. Owing to the unbroken chain which binds all, Africans do not negate the possibilities of the outcome of these myths. For example, an Afro-American movie "palm trees in the snow" portrayed how blacks of Guinea republic still believe in oath taken in the midst of their white counterparts as an authentic means of dispute resolution or resource control.

Similarly, the older women became baby sitters for the younger women while they did so, African tenets were communicated. They sang African songs to them, told them folktales etc. even as they take their day off to ease off stress, ready for work the next day, they organized festivals, told stories together (not minding that the whites may be mocking them as they sing and dance) but in essence, they were preserving and transmitting their culture. Considering the mode of production, Africans work tirelessly unlike the whites in order to achieve their aim. They work without looking at the time.

Africans are recognised as a result of their unique characteristics such as hair style and clothing. In the western world, most whites now adopt African dress code. African male adults tie wrappers, wear kaftan, dashiki or dasiki, turbans, workor, etibo etc while the ladies use beads on their hands, necks, waist and feet. Similarly, they are known for their braided hairstyles against the whites who go on peming their hair.

These exceptional qualities demonstrate the negritude of the Africans in the diaspora. They use these ingredients as a way of preserving their

cultural heritage. They could be considered to an extent creolized yet they still maintain aspects of their culture

Concluding Discussion

The trend of globalization has severely and hugely impacted on the culture of the indigenous people of Africa. For instance, wherever they find themselves, their dialect is often spoken, while their local delicacies are consumed. In recent time, some part of America, Asia and Europe have added Nigeria's cultural festival like Osun Oshogbo fishing festival, Orisa and *Ogun* of the Yoruba people, and new yam festival (*Ohaji*) of the Igbos to their mirage of diverse entertainments. This active influence of the global relevance of the African languages and food, gives the people in Diaspora a sense of identity.

The cultural displays have become a tool for unity and favourable co-existence of Africans in other countries of the world. An example of cultural pride and unification of the Nigerians expressing the values of their culture in the Diaspora are the activities of the indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) and the Oodua people congress (OPC) of both Igbo's, Ogoni and Yoruba's all over the world.

The local dialect spoken by the indigenous people of Africa in the Diaspora has Facilitated their identity and respect by other nations of the world. Today, indigenous Nigerian delicacies are globally sought as a result of the presence of Africans in many parts of the globe. Many restaurants in the world refers to local delicacies like *Afam* soup, *Edikaiko*, *Banga*, *Nkwobi*, *Isiewu*, *Amala*, *Tuw*, *Ataka* etc. As it were, these African oriented delicacies are now consumed in many parts of the world.

These local foods that have found their way into foreign countries have become a very big boost to African economy through export revenues. On this basis, it is significant to observe that in order to satisfy different customers from Africa especially Nigeria, food restaurants prepare local food in foreign countries with local spices to give indigenous taste. They bring African heritage to the blacks in the diaspora.

It is equally significant to remark that Nigerian languages like Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Ogba, Abua, Ekpeye, Egeni, Ikwerre, Ijaw, Ogoni, Edo, Ibibio, Effik, Ngwa, etc spoken in foreign land gives the people of Nigeria and by extension Africa, a sense of unity and comfort. In this

wise, there has been cultural heritage program in places like London, California, Texas, Berlin, Philippines, etc were only local ethnic languages that are indigenous to the African are used as the means of communication and interaction.

Hence, when Africans in the Diaspora speak their language, it becomes a veritable means of propagation and promotion of their culture. Since language is an integral part of culture. This art is capable of strengthening their individual international identity. This also agrees with the Nigerian local adage that African kolanut understands only the local dialect.

Thus, before one can enjoy Nigerian local food, one must understand the local dialect and communicate with the food through it, since the local food understand only indigenous languages. It is very important to note that all local food have their indigenous names.

In order to blend their African beliefs with the new gods which their masters want to impose on them, some of the Christians saints were syncretized as the Africans called their gods the names of saints. While the Africans remember their gods as Ogun, Yemoja, Oshun, they creolised the original name for instance Ogun was called Oxun in the Americas, Yemoja because of the type of gods she is in Africa, was referred to as "our lady". Another important point is that the function of the gods in Africa was still the same in the Americas but there were slight differences. For instances Ogun the god of war and iron was used by the Americas to consult for arsenal and in war times. This helped to keep the tradition that is African heritage though in diaspora.

The scenario above, best portrays a typical African as catholic in the morning, Pentecostal in the afternoon and African traditional Religionist in the evening. Edowu 1964 describe Africans as those singing in the church "other gods I know not but under their armpit is a charm tied to their body". According to Leonard Baratute "the white man has succeeded in taking over the bodies of the blacks but they cannot take away the worldview of Africans that is conceived in his soul".

Recommendations

The way forward: In view of the arguments espoused in this work, the following shall serve as the way forward.

- (i) Those African cultures that are making waves in the new world such as festivals, traditional medicine and marriage

- should be sustained.
- (ii) African cuisine should be included in the teaching curriculum of schools in the black dominated area and countries in the Americas.
 - (iii) African names should be given to children by parents as a way of perpetuating African culture.
 - (iv) The Africans in the new world should see themselves as ambassadors of the African continent.
 - (v) Africans in the new world should try to interface with the people back here in Africa in order to update the practice of African religion as a world religion.
 - (vi) The world black and African festival of arts and culture should be revived to refresh the memories of all that Africa is rich in tradition and culture.

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REINVIGORATING THE AFRICAN MUSICAL CULTURE OF MORAL IMPARTATION: IDOMA ETHNIC MUSIC EXAMPLES

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Executive Summary

The moral decadence in Africa is a serious concern and it needs urgent attention. This moral degradation has led to the breakdown of moral value systems among the teeming population in Africa. The consequences of moral breakdown among active Africans is monumental and this has led to current African insecurity problems, corruption in almost all sectors of the economy, family infidelity and divorces, examination malpractices in all levels of educational institutions, immorality and prostitution, and other social vices that have engulfed the African nations. To resuscitate this ugly social menace and prevent it from further spreading, the instrumentality of African art forms has been suggested to be engaged. This paper therefore recommends African music (ethnic music) as a veritable tool for education, enlightenment, awareness and counsel about immoral lifestyles and moral virtues. The paper opines that one of the ways to rescue this moral depravity and degeneration is the reinvigoration of the musical culture of moral impartation, since music has the cognitive capacity to elicit emotions capable of forming attitudes and molding character. The paper therefore recommends that ethnic music in Africa be reinvigorated to impart moral messages to African listeners, as ethnic music is the music of the people, by the people, for the people. The paper uses selected Idoma ethnic musics that have been engaged in imparting moral value to Idoma societies as an example. Adopting the descriptive survey research design, the study used stratified sampling technique to investigate 400 out of a target population 1,040,449 sample size. The result of the investigation shows that music has role to play in moral impartation. The research was carried out in all the seven local government areas of the Idoma nation to ascertain the proof of Idoma ethnic music in moral impartation. The paper recommends musical principles and strategies to use in order to impart moral values, such that could make

the African continent a peaceful, safe, secure, trusted environment devoid of uncertainty and a better, attractive place to live.

Keywords: Reinvigorating, Musical culture, Moral impartation, Ethnic music, Moral decadence.

Introduction

Moral decadence in Nigerian society is a bane and a social problem that has plagued African nations in recent times. Nowadays, Nigerian societies are presently experiencing a high degree of moral degeneration in almost all structures of society- political, educational, commerce, social, economic, religious, and even traditional, all which have been gravely infected by the immoral cancerous disease (Echeta, 2007). The high immoral frequency at which Nigerian society operates is witnessed by all and sundry by the alarming rate of crime reports, insecurity, threats to life and peace, etc. The moral degeneration being witnessed in our society is monumentally exemplified in various degrees of criminal perpetuation. Moral decay is evidenced in the abounding incidences and cases of armed robbery and stealing/theft. The upsurge of high profile kidnapping for ransoms, unchecked destruction of lives and properties perpetrated by terrorist attacks and invasions, incessant destruction of lives and properties, through crisis occasioned by personal and religious hatred, a high rate of engaged corruption through embezzlement of public funds, high levels of examination malpractices in all levels of educational institutions, unabated bribery and extortions engaged by security personnel, commercialization of justice systems, bribery and prostitution in tertiary institutions, national and international child trafficking, hidden killings for rituals, uncontrolled nudity prostitutions, internet and bank frauds, greed, envy and personal hatred, purposeful assassinations, religious/church false prophecy and falsehood, the list is endless, are all indications of moral decadence in the society. With the level of moral decay stated above, there is a compelling need for moral reconstruction and revival in our society- a legacy that any society can bequeath to its younger generation (Echeta, 2007).

The main thrust of this paper is to present ethnic music as a tool for imparting morality or moral instruction to Nigerian society. To achieve this objective, ethnic music should be reinvigorated in our society to address the various structures demonstrating the act of immorality or moral decay.

Moral obligation and values

Moral obligation is the duty or responsibility someone feels honoured to perform without minding how difficult it may be or without considering their self interest. It can also be seen as a belief that one should act by the set of values that are good for the growth and development of the society, that is , by doing what one believes is good and right because of personal beliefs and values (Onuorah, 2015). Moral obligation is an act not legally binding on an individual, rather is a duty which one owes, and which he ought to perform but which is not legally bound to fulfil (Bouvier, in Onuorah 2015:288). Onuorah also asserts that moral obligation arise out of considerations of right or wrong (P.288). similarly, U.S. legal also looked at moral obligation as an obligation arising from ethical motives or mere conscientious duty, unconnected with any legal obligation, perfect or imperfect, or with the receipt of benefit by the promisors of a material or pecuniary nature, which springs out from a sense of justice and equity than an honourable benevolence or charity (U.S. Legal, 2016).

Moral values, on the other hand, as Nwala in Uzochukwu, are those things in human character, conduct and social relations which we judge as good or bad, right or wrong, progress or reaction, noble and ignoble (Uzochukwu, 2007). They are also those values that are considered within the context of morality as differentiated from other types of values, and are considered moral “if they reflect a person’s value and those of society” (Obiwulu, 2015). The general breakdown of societal moral obligation and values as a result of the political, social and economic changes which have taken place in present modern days, resulted into complete breakdown of morality which subsequently is manifested in the social vices we are witnessing today in our society (Toungo, 200).

Role and influence of ethnic music in moral impartation and revival

The ability and capability of music to impart moral character on an individual has so much been emphasized in literature by various authors. The role and influence of ethnic music has received much attention by scholars, especially from Africa. The question of whether music has power to positively impart moral character has been answered as in literature.

Ethnic music develops and instill moral obligation, moral value, moral attitudes, moral knowledge and moral understanding, and possess the emotional restraint necessary for listeners to become morally sound and

active, making them responsible citizens that could engage in societal duties and responsibilities, process and aware of their capability to effect change in their communities, societies and the world. For this role to be realized, the listeners are prompted to organize and analyze lyrical information, acquire deep content knowledge; develop effective inquisitiveness to know the meaning and reason for lyrical rhetoric, allusions, proverbs, etc; improve their listening appreciation, and rational capabilities; and acquire problem-solving skills and mentality that are relevant to all aspect of their lives.

Ethnic music operates on the basis that the listeners need to be equipped with rational thought, moral values, social competence and reasoned judgment to effectively swallow and digest the lyrical messages and process the information contain in the lyrics.

Ethnic music gives understanding through lyrics which could make one just, honest, compassionate, loyal, obedient, humble, godly, righteous, etc. (Nketia, 1975).

Ethnic music makes one to be curious about not just the questions of what is expected of me as a member of the community, but also the questions of how do I become morally responsible, and why am I expected to be morally responsible. Ethnic music is effectively a means of education and socializing both young and old member of the society, and its power lies in its ability to evoke in people experiences and state of consciousness ranging from exaltation to despair (Udoh, 2012; Okafor & Okafor, 2009).

Ethnic music gives psychological and therapeutic essence to the listeners. It evokes listeners' rational deliberations and heals their wounds of conscience. Nzewi, in similar assertion says that folk music in all its elements and applications has latent psychological, physical and spiritualizing essence (Nzewi, 1980).

Ethnic music is an ethnic communion that portrays group spirit, thoughts, myths and aspirations. At the same, it is a bond, the umbilical cord that links the ultra-terrstraiial forces whose potentials are made manifest in various awe-inspiring phenomenal and unpredictable ways in their lives (Nzewi, 1980, 2012; Ogunlade, 2012).

Ethnic music has a philosophic platform for education, enlightenment and moral force. It is rationalized as platform for social and cultural education as well as for moral negotiation, construction and training for

all members of the society- it subtle and penetrating quality makes it well adapted to all forms of humanizing education (Onyeji & Onyeji, 2011).

Research Methodology

In order to ascertain the use of ethnic popular music as moral impartation and moral education, research was conducted in the seven Idoma Local Government Areas of Benue state where Idoma language is spoken, heard and used as the only means of inter-communication. The LGAs. Ado, Agatu, Apa, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Okpokwu, and Otukpo. Structured oral interview was used for the illiterate Idoma respondents while structured questionnaire for literate Idoma and elite respondents. This approach is employed because it is helpful and useful in collecting data, items and opinions from different levels of respondents. The research covered the entire seven L.G.A.s of Idoma communities with the population of 1040449. The result from the findings of this study is applicable to the entire population of the people of Idoma nation. The populations of the entire seven L.G.As are tabulated below.

Table showing the L.G.As with their population.

S/N	L G As	Population
1	Ado	184,389
2	Agatu	115,597
3	Apa	96,780
4	Ogbadibo	130,988
5	Ohimini	70,688
6	Okpokwu	175,596
7	Otukpo	266,411
	Total	1040449

Source: NPC 2006

A sample size of 400 was selected as our size.

The formula for the selection is as follows:

$$1 + N (e)^2$$

Where N = Population

n = sample size

e = the limit of error

I = constant

$$N = N/I + n (e)^2$$

$$n = N$$

Where N = 1040449, n = 1040449, e = 3%

Substituting the value for the formula as follows:

$$\frac{N = 1040449}{1+1040449 (0.05)^2}$$

$$N = 1040449$$

$$\frac{1+1040449 (0.0025)}{= 1040449}$$

$$\frac{1+2601.1225}{= 1040449}$$

$$2602.1225$$

$$= 399846$$

$$= 400$$

$$= 400$$

$$= 400$$

$$= 400$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study is 400

To determine the number of questionnaire to be distributed in each of the selected seven LGAs the following calculations are tenable:

$$\text{Ado} \quad \frac{184389}{1040449} \times 400 = \frac{73755600}{1040449} = 70.88 = 71$$

$$\text{Agatu} \quad \frac{115597}{1040449} \times 400 = \frac{46238800}{1040449} = 44.44 = 44$$

$$\text{Apa} \quad \frac{96780}{1040449} \times 400 = \frac{38712000}{1040449} = 37.20 = 37$$

$$\text{Ogbadibo} \quad \frac{130988}{1040449} \times 400 = \frac{52395200}{1040449} = 50.35 = 50$$

$$\text{Ohimini} \quad \frac{70688}{1040449} \times 400 = \frac{28275200}{1040449} = 27.17 = 27$$

$$\text{Okpokwu} \quad \frac{175596}{1040449} \times 400 = \frac{70238400}{1040449} = 67.50 = 68$$

$$\text{Otukpo} \quad \frac{266411}{1040449} \times 400 = \frac{106564400}{1040449} = 102.42 = 102$$

Therefore 71+44+37+50+27+68+102= 399+1= 400 questionnaires are to be administered.

To determine also the number of people to be interviewed in each of the seven LGAs the following calculations are tenable:

$$\text{Ado} \quad \frac{71}{400} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{7100}{400} = 17.55 = 18$$

$$\text{Agatu} \quad \frac{44}{400} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{4400}{400} = 11$$

$$\text{Apa} \quad \frac{37}{400} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{3700}{400} = 9.25 = 9$$

$$\text{Ogbadibo} \quad \frac{50}{400} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{5000}{400} = 12.5 = 12$$

$$\text{Ohimini} \quad \frac{27}{400} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{2700}{400} = 6.75 = 7$$

$$\text{Okpokwu} \quad \frac{68}{400} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{6800}{400} = 17$$

$$\text{Otukpo} \quad \frac{102}{400} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{10200}{400} = 25.5 = 25$$

Therefore $18+11+9+12+7+17+25 = 100$ people are to be interviewed.

Questionnaires were administered to the sampled literate listeners of the Idoma morality music so as to tick freely the items in the therein. On the other hand, structured oral interview was scheduled accordingly with the sampled illiterate listeners of the morality music where their responses were used as data for the study. In addition, the secondary sources of data collection include selected musical examples, books, journals, government publications, periodicals and internet materials.

The data for this study were presented and analyzed based on the data collected from the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources which are the questionnaire responses are computer-processed and analyzed with the application of the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics in the form of mean scores, standard deviation and percentages were used to analyze the data collected and answers were provided to the five research questions. The decision levels are set thus: Strongly Agree = 3.50 - 4.00, Agree = 2.50 - 3.49, Disagree = 1.50 - 2.49 and Strongly Disagree = 1.00 - 1.49 respectively, with the cut-off mark = 2.50 for accepting a mean score. T-test statistics was used to test hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. T-test is considered best because it is suitable to bring out the extent that

the variable or items in the questionnaire. T-test can be a measure to be employed to analyze data for greater result in moral education in Idoma nation. On the other hand, data/responses from oral interview were analyzed qualitatively in relation to the responses of the research questions. The secondary source is music lyrics and its interpretation. The musical lyrics were based on the performance/presentation from the selected musical examples for the study, and the content analysis was based on the textbooks, journal articles, online materials that have been used in moral education. A total number of 432 copies of questionnaire were issued out to seven Idoma L.G.As which formed the respondents. These numbers of copies were shared to each of the seven L.G.As according to number of their population as shown in the sample size. Five extra copies were added to each number because of probability of missing copies. The questionnaire is on the roles of music in moral education.

What are the roles of music in moral education in Idoma nation?

Table showing the Percentage, Mean ratings and Standard Deviation of the roles of music in moral education in Idoma Nation.

S/n	Item	N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	Communication of moral messages	387	59.80 %	36.10 %	2.60%	1.30%	3.55	.615	Accepted
2	Emotional portrayal of moral Issues	384	36.90 %	49.70 %	8.20%	4.10%	3.21	.763	Accepted
3	Inducing attitudinal changes about sexual bahaviour that has moral implications.	387	48.20 %	43.00 %	5.20%	3.40%	3.36	.733	Accepted
4	Cannot deliver moral education.	386	19.10 %	18.30 %	37.10 %	25.10 %	2.32	1.051	Rejected
5	Cannot appeal to the conscience of people to conform to social norms.	387	24.20 %	21.90 %	32.20 %	21.40 %	2.49	1.081	Rejected

Valid N (list wise)	383					2.99		
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Legend: N = number of respondents; SA = Strongly Agree; A= Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Research Findings

The objective of this research is to determine whether it is feasible to use Idoma ethnic music as a method and means of educating Idoma listeners about morality. Based on the research results, it is feasible to engage Idoma people on Idoma ethnic morality music. Research interview held with the Idoma unlearned class revealed that they recognized the depth to which the ethnic music culture had penetrated the lives of the Idoma people. Research questionnaires administered to the Idoma learned and elite class also revealed that most of them listened to Idoma ethnic music on a daily basis. This genre of music represents a diverse body of music, some of which have positive and motivational content that has been used to raise public health and societal moral consciousness. The use of this music challenges the traditional moral pedagogue paradigm and provides an alternative to the pedantic approach to educating people about morality. The ethnic music is inspirational, motivational and familiar to Idoma people and the people knew more about the songs which may have supported a sense of belonging and greater involvement. From the explication of the research objective above and from the analysis of data based on respondent's responses through research interview and questionnaires, and from the lyrics of selected Idoma ethnic music, the researcher can infer that music, through its content, has roles in the moral education and impartation in Idoma nation. This is possible through the communication of moral messages; emotional portrayal of moral issues; inducing attitudinal change about behaviour that has moral implications; delivery and inculcating moral education on the danger and effects of criminal, dreadful and shocking attitudes; and appealing to the conscience of people to conform to social norms.

Based on summative assessment and evaluation of Idoma ethnic morality music, it has become clear that music is a feasible means of information and communication that addresses an important public lives issue such as morality, and can be implemented to complement other moral education. It engages the listeners to reflect on their attitudes and choices that they may make. The use of music in moral communication is also sustainable since listeners listen to these songs almost every day with every activity they engage in community settings.

There is also greater opportunity for disseminating this music to other peers through sharing. This approach is widely appreciable and can be replicated in other places to address other public lives issues.

Roles Music Play in Moral Impartation

From research interview conducted and from research questionnaire the respondents from both instruments were of the view that, music to great extent plays significant and functional roles in creating moral consciousness in an individual. This is reviewed by the interview response and percentage of Agree rating of item statements 1, 2, 3 which ranged from 82.9% to 91.10% as against Disagree rating of the same items ranging from 9% to 18.1%; and Agree rating of items 4 & 5 with 11.1% & 21.2%, as against Disagree rating of 89.9% & 79.8%. From the research questionnaire also, responses mean ratings of the three item statements (1, 2, 3) of 3.55, 3.21, 3.36, and Standard Deviation of .615, .763 and .733 respectively, which are above cut-off point of 2.50 with the Decision Accepted; while the mean ratings of the two item statements for both strongly agree (SA) and agree (A) which is also great extent above average cut-off point (3,4) of 2.32 & 2.49 and standard Deviation of 1.051 & 1.081 which are below the cut-off point of 2.50, and the Decision is Rejected attested to the results. These results support the findings and views of some writers on the roles of music in African societies. For example, the communicative function music plays is supported by Merriam (1971) who comments that “music through song texts employs or communicate direct information to those who understand the language in which it is couched”. It conveys emotion of something similar to those who understand its idioms. Ogunrinade (2015:3), in support of the author above, states that music, being popular form of entertainment, is also powerful media for getting information and messages across. Reimer, in evaluating African music philosophy, argues that music is perceived through an understanding of how music works and is put together (cited in Okanfah (2009). Also, Zoltan Kodaly, in Dickinson, cited by Ogunrinade (2015:4) relates that music is the manifestation of human spirit similar to language. Its greatest practitioners have conveyed to the mankind things not possible to say in any language.

Also, music plays the role of enforcing conformity to the society's norms. Music does this by appealing to the conscience of people to conform to social norms regarding morality. Music also does this by inculcating moral education on the danger of criminal lives. Merriam posits that “songs of social control play an important part in a substantial number of cultures, both through direct warning to erring

members of the society and through direct establishment of what is considered to be proper behavior” (p.233). This view is supported by Ajewola (2011:170) who comments that music count on values like love, kindness, hard-work, coverage, wisdom and vices like hatred, greed, naughtiness, laziness etc in order to discourage bad habits and encourage good habits for a healthy nation”. Ogunrinade also comments that music serves as a tool for corrective measure (p.1).

Again, the functions music plays in society cannot be complete without including the expression of emotion. Merriam (1971) supports that music expresses emotion. Merriam state that “on a more general level, however music seems clearly to be involved with emotion and to be a vehicle for its expression weather such emotion be special (obscenity, censure etc) general”. Scott (1976) argues that music operates on the mind and emotions of man through the medium of suggestion (p.12). Scott uses Aristotle’s statement to explain the nature of emotion by expatiating that if we repeatedly hear melancholy music, we tend to become melancholic; if we hear gay music, we tend to become gay, and so forth. Thus, the particular emotion which a given piece of music depicts is reproduced in us; it operates through the law of correspondence (p.34).

Furthermore, music induces attitudinal change about indulging in social vices and anti-social behavior that has morality implications. This statement is supported by Scott who argues thus:

we purpose, in fact, to show that each specific type of music has exercised a pronounced effect on history, on morals and on culture; that music- however horrifying this statement may appear to the orthodox- is a potent force in the moulding of character than religious creeds, precepts or moral philosophies; for although these latter show the desirability of certain qualities, it is music which facilitates their acquisition (p.39).

This idea is supported by Saun (2015) when he states that music has power to change lives, community, and maybe even bring peace in the countries. He further argues that music runs deep and touches not only the mind but also the heart. From the stand-points of the above writers, and from the probable data generated from the respondents to oral interview and research questionnaire on the roles music plays in moral impartation, it can be stated coherently that music to a great extent plays functional and fundamental roles in moral impartation and moral education.

Examples of Idoma Ethnic Music that have moral forces for moral impartations

Idoma ethnic music refers to the music created, composed, performed and practiced by the indigenous people of Idoma nation of Benue State, Nigeria. Similarly, it is the music of the native or ethnic tribe of Idoma land. It is the indigenous music of Idoma people. In discussing the examples of Idoma ethnic music that have moral essence and moral forces for emulation and adoption by other African ethnic groups for moral impartation, the researcher seeks to state that it will be impossible, due to space, to discuss all the Idoma ethnic music composed and performed specifically for moral inculcation, since the selected ones perform the functions of others ethnic musicians. The researcher tends to use Idoma ethnic music as a case study to ascertain the measure of moral lyrics or contents inherent in the music in line with human needs and its influence on the African society at large (Udo, 2012).

Lyrical Presentation of Selected Idoma Ethnic Music that had Imparted Morality

The following are an examples of immorality song composed and performed by the Idoma music artists.

Owoicho le'ka cha'ja (God placed a curse on immorality) by Peter Otulu

Solo: *Alo huma tona ka'ja ogbo la'leche e-pono, ko'che duno gba'ja geno owoicho* *gechonu.*

We have been announcing about immorality to humanity which they didn't listen, that nobody should go into immorality because God is angry.

A'che lewa pela no ho na e-la'ja yo'bi'je, e-ko'di na'lo je, alo nmileyi ne; a-anyo ga gba'ja mene owoicho le'ka kwa'ja.

Many people heard about these, they still made immorality a source of money. They said "what do we know", are we sociable? You people can go into immorality; God has placed a curse on immorality.

Jehovah le'ka kwa'ja, Agaba ku-Judah le-chonu ole'ka kwa'ja.

Jehovah has placed a curse on immorality, Lion of Judah grew annoyed and placed curse on immorality.

Ale ye lekeleke na l'AID kpo eyi gbuwo go'o.

If you walk pompously immorally and contract AIDS, your eyes will open clearly.

A-me'che no takpata no ho na a-ojoda huma ye gi'cho, e-huma ye ga'je oya ke le'chi k'AID je ejo gila no; a-nyo ga gba'ja mene owoicho le'ka kw'aja.

You see this wide world, the learned have been going up and down so as to know the drugs for AIDS, but they couldn't. You people can go into immorality; God has placed a curse on immorality.

Background of the Music

Owoicho le'ka kwa'ja (God placed a curse on immorality) is an Idoma indigenous gospel music. The song was composed basically as a result of the prevalence of immorality in Idoma Nation, Benue State and the entire Nigerian Society. The music is essentially characterized by an enlightenment and educative texts using proverbial, allegorical language to communicate its audience and listeners, as typical of Idoma indigenous communication. The Music is basically about how God placed a curse on immorality by using HIV/AIDS as an *eka* (Diabolical object or charm) to catch anybody who engages in immorality. The intention of the composer is to enlighten and educate the Idoma population on the danger and consequences of immorality- a source of HIV/AIDS and the need to guide and protect them from this dreadful disease.

AJA O'GBO L'ECHE T'IHLE (Immorality Makes this World Detestable) by Stephen Olega

Recitation: *Oyabia kw'eche na tihle. M'ege n'ayi g'echi j'eche bia-e.*
Sin has made this world detestable. See how the children of the world spoiled the world.

Eche n'Owoicho y'ona k'echihili mege n'eche bia nchea.
The world God has fashioned in six days, see how the world spoiled today.

Ah! Oyabia l'eche tihle. Ochu k'eche gbo nipi.
Ah! Sin made this world detestable. The aroma of the world is beginning to smell.

Owoicho ko lalo heta nw'ipo oyabia.
God should help us from the shackles of sin.

Solo: *Oyabia che l'eche no ho na le t'ihle. Igbandala k'eche l'eche jato ga lecha.*
Sin has made this world detestable. The highway of the world has deceitfully lead it into destruction

Ayi geche gb'aja nana uwa y'uweyi gen.ip'achi, eyi g'owe w'ega ochikp'onya .uche n'ebe g'eya al'eche lo pio le olamu.
The children of the world commit immorality without shame. In the bush and roadside sexual intercourse is now practiced. Human being have gone after the lifestyle of animals.

Aklobia ohi lebenk'Opi an Omulede, ochuchu kuwa che luwa kw'ikponyaoche kpo.

Some young men are like He-goat and Ram, their quest for immorality makes sexual intercourse their hobbies.

Anchanya ohi le benka ogblega k'ojila, Emichi ml'Abakpa ge nyo gw'iye tuwa. Ow'edoche du na we alofu g'ipuwa ga gw'iye.
Some young women are like public stream, Tivs and Hausas go there to take their bath. Irrespective of the person you are, you can go there and take your bath.

Recitation:

Awo no w'onchonya ana m'iyo ta benko ogblega k'ojila, benki igbanjila ku gometi, moto tu moto, ache tu m'oche yoi yea.Kai, olohi no, hum!!!!
You young lady, you just left yourself like a public stream, like government highway where all type of vehicles and people are passing. Kai, it is not good, hum!!!!.

Background of the Music

Oyabia l'eche t'ihle is an Idoma music composed to create awareness of moral behaviour. The music is the exposition of immorality which serves as a prelude for acquiring bad lifestyles. The composer makes use of aphorisms to relate the truth of what is behind immorality. The form of the music features recitation, solo and call-and-response. The call-and-response is used extensively to bring out the hard truths many people refuse to hear if it were a face-to-face communication. The music reveals the composer's astonishment of what the world has now turned into, where immorality is rampant. The composer is a popular Idoma gospel singer who has made impact on theme music.

ALEKWU K'AMNON MLU TAMAR (The Spirit of Amnon and Tamar)BonifaceAdigwu

Recitation: *Okwiye k'alekwu Amnon mlu Tamar yo y'ukolo kw'iche, anu ya no talaha mlu brother and sister ne ba yoya l'ipinu ku church kpo, ohibi k'alekwu k'Amon mlu Tharma kwoha memlua kpo.Oteyinyi mbiyo.*
It is disheartening that the spirit of Amnon and Tamar is working till

today. That is why it is possible for brother and sister to befriend each other right inside the church because it is the spirit of Ammon and Tamar that is following them continuously. It is a pity.

Solo: *Absalom no w'oyi ku David ol'oyine ochonya ne hiyenu lu Tharma. Tharma no ho na oj'ochonyilo jeje eno. Ihotu kunu ol'Ammon kwu kw'icho kw'aje. Ammon mlu tharma ke w'oyiada, oyiada ge tete gb'aja t'oyiada ne?* Absalom who is a son of David has a sister they called her name Tharma. This Tharma has not known man before. Ammon's love for her intoxicated him from up and down. Ammon and Tharma are children of a father. Does a father's child usually commit fornication with a father's child?

Recitation: *Brother, sister, aba ka hu brother, sister ano ko ho nwtu e'kponu mla alekwu k'owoicho fa. Uba oha no gwo ehaje kotu no.* Brother, sister, as you are calling brother, sister let us do that from one heart and with the spirit of God.

Unison/Chorus: *Ayi gene alo l'eyi k'ondu bia t'aje. Alo no yu choir yo gw'eje lok'olonye nu demo l'aje le, n'eje gbo je b'alali.* My brother, we have destroyed the blood of the Lord. We sing in choir, dance to melodious songs yet we live in immorality.

Okwiye nehi k'otu k'owoicho le bie n'alo alewa gbo gb'aja tiy'alo. Ao youth alewa ka le mu ml'aja ogbo ge. Ada ku choir no tete yo gw'eje k'aja, m'egene no ge jau'choir l'onya ogbogba. Onya du n'obunu gekwu ol'efie he lau leaders. Enya oko k'alo hoa, Ocho ko t'alo abo, ondu-e ko t'alo abo. It is very shameful and it hurts God that many of us commit immorality among ourselves. Many youths are filled with immorality. Choirmaster that usually sing about immorality would be impregnating choir members one after the others. Any woman who turns widow would put leaders in to trouble. This is our prayer, God should help us, Lord should help us.

Background of the Music

Alekwu k'Ammon mlu Tamar is music about a blood-related brother and sister (Amnon and Tamar) who had gone into immorality and committed fornication with themselves. It is a biblical story of how a brother lured his sister into immorality through scheming and deception. The composer uses the song to relate how distrust and immorality is going on in the church between the so called brothers and sisters in Christ, between leaders and members of the church of God. The music was composed by a popular, prolific and aphoristic gospel musician in Idoma nation.

Conclusion

The need to understand the basis of moral values is necessary because of the serious moral problems such as corruption, nepotism, armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings, cultism, immorality, greed for wealth, indiscipline, etc, which plague our contemporary African society. Neither the moral teaching in schools and churches nor our penal or criminal codes have helped in instilling morality. (Uzochukwu, 2007). Similarly, Ogbu in Uzochukwu (2007:131) states that “the pivot or the basis of the moral values of any society is the level and character of its social development. But its social development depends on the way and manner the society produces, distributes and changes its wealth and types of relations which this mode of production creates”. In analysis of the above assertions, it can be said that social values define the proper conduct, proper relations among people and institutions in the society (P.31). This paper has been able to establish probable fact of the role of ethnic music in moral impartation. The paper therefore recommends that African music be reinvigorated to serve as a means of moral impartation in this corrupt, character degeneration and vices-laden African society. For this to be realized, the paper also recommends that the listeners are prompted to organize and analyze lyrical information, acquire deep content knowledge; develop effective inquisitiveness to know the meaning and reason for lyrical rhetoric, allusions, proverbs, etc; improve their listening appreciation, and rational capabilities; and acquire problem-solving skills and mentality that are relevant to all aspect of their lives.

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**UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIMENSION OF PEACE
BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS IN NIGERIA: A
LOOK AT THE OVERLOOKED**

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Executive Summary

Culture had played and will continue to play fundamental roles in the history of humanity. Peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution is one of the un-accomplished tasks of the Nigerian state. Primarily, the imperative of building a culture of peace in Nigeria is the thrust of this paper. Hence, this paper examined how cultural diversity cum ethnic pluralism could be positively harness to promote peaceful coexistence, which will subsequently foster inclusive growth and sustainable development in Nigeria. Additionally, the paper identified and addressed the problems of cultural and ethnic pluralism in Nigeria to ensure unity within diversities for a strong, united, virile and democratic society in Nigeria. The main source of information is secondary data such as books, articles, newspapers and journals. The paper call on all stakeholders in the education, tourism and mass communication industries to exploit the potentials the Nigeria's cultural values offers to promote the "Nigerian in us". Among other suggestions, this paper recommended that massive cultural education should be embarked upon by relevant agencies, like the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), Centre for Black and African Arts and

Civilization (CBAAC) the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to take pride in the strength and plurality of Nigeria.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Peace Building, Conflict Resolutions, Peaceful Coexistence

Introduction

Over the years, there has been growing concern about the decline of positive values in Nigeria. It is an incontrovertible fact that the advent of colonialism and cultural globalization has caused some disruption in the Nigerian cultural pathway and value system (Macaulay, 2003). Sharing in the above view, former president Nyerere of Tanzania said: "Of all the crimes of colonialism there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe that we have no indigenous culture of our own or that what we did was worthless or something of which we should be ashamed, instead of being a source of pride" (Akinpelu, 1983). Globalization can be seen as one of the major forces influencing global cultures. Hence, the need for enculturation and cultural preservation among African nations has become an important consideration in this age. Today, the world has not only become a global village, but a global neighbourhood. In the Nigerian situation, the need for inclusive growth and its overwhelming significance for sustainable national development and overall well-being of the citizenry cannot be overemphasized. If sustainable peace through equal opportunities, justice, social integration and symbiotic life, as well as values and peaceful co-existence are to be upheld for nation building and growth, effectively harnessing our cultural diversity should be a fundamental answer. In a global context, peaceful co-existence is the key that unlocks the door to meaningful development of any nation. Hence, inclusive growth is a wholesome and indispensable factor towards enhance standard of living of the general population. In this paper, the researcher unpacked some potentials of Nigeria's cultural diversity against the backdrop of the threat of cultural globalization

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity or pluralism is a term used to describe a situation when ethnic groups within a larger society maintain their distinct cultural identities, and their values and practices are only accepted by the wider culture provided they are consistent with the laws and values of the wider society (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2011). The UNESCO's 33rd General Convention in Paris defined cultural diversity in October 2005 as "the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and

societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies.” These expressions are used by human beings to identify themselves in their localities. These identities could be manifested in food, dress, housing, language, occupation, cultural activities, goods, services, values and living. These diversities are nurtured and promoted by artists and other stakeholders in the creative industry. Some of these cultural expressions include; our different modes of dressing, linguistic differences, festivals, ceremonies, celebrations, shrines, artifacts (both antiquities and contemporary), monuments, architecture, food etc (Abara, 2011). The General Conference of the United Nations’ Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2001, affirmed in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that “...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature” (UNESCO, 2001).

Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is a set of seventeen (17) goals and 169 targets. Spearheaded by the United Nations, through a deliberative process involving its 194 member states, as well as global civil society, the goals are contained in a resolution after a summit held between 25-27 September, 2015 in New York, United States of America. Over the next fifteen years, with these new goals that universally apply to all countries, will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind (United Nations Organization) in (Oludele & Adebusuyi, 2016). In fact, the aim is that by the year 2030, the world would have achieved sustainable development for humanity and well safeguarded planet earth.

Contextually, sustainability is described as the ability of a thing, idea, principle or value to be sustained, supported, uphold or confirmed (Wikipedia, 2018). Hence, Al-Roubaie in Ajibade (2013), avers that sustainable development is a situation that requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life. He goes on to say that, sustainable development requires the promotion of values that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecologically possible and to which all can reasonably aspire. Sustainable development has also been defined as the development that meets the needs and aspirations of the current generations without compromising the ability to meet those of the future generation (Abudul-Rasheed) in (Owolali, 2012). Similarly, the United Nations defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Some Challenging Issues Emerging from Cultural Diversity and Implications for Peaceful Coexistence Sustainable and Development in Nigeria

Ethno-politico-religious sentiments are widespread in Nigeria. These, at times, end up in the disruption of peace and order resulting to loss of innocent lives and destruction of properties. There have been incidences of such cases in Kano, Bauchi, Jos, Maiduguri, Aba, Warri, etc. The incessant incidents of mayhem and violence in Jos, Maiduguri, Kaduna and other parts of Nigeria have been linked to ethno-religious problem. However, religion has been employed to ginger a national support to justify incidences leading to violence in Nigeria. It is in this respect that the archbishop of Abuja has condemned the violence in Jos, not as religious but as due to social, economic, tribal and cultural differences (The Nation, 2010). Most recently, the mayhem and violence caused by the controlled and unquestioned activities of the Fulani herdsmen, especially in Benue state could be attributed to ethno-politico-religious differences in Nigeria.

Nigeria's ethno-linguistic diversity has very significant implications in almost every area of the economy. It implies a major investment in educational and media resources to reach a diverse population. Diverse ethnic groups, with varied cultural patterns, have very different levels of social capital and thus differing capacities to enter into the process of proper change. The relative wealth of the country and the large size of some ethnic groups has allowed them to express their ethnicity in remarkable and sometimes problematic ways that are not mirrored in other similar countries. Dominance of particular ethnic groups in certain sectors of the economy has significant implications for equity. The pattern of dominant and excluded minorities is embedded in the administrative and economic subsystems and has important implications for access to justice and equitable resource sharing. Ethnic conflict has been a perennial feature of the Nigerian scene since pre-colonial times, but access to modern media and sophisticated weapons has increased the intensity of such conflicts to a degree that threatens the present fragile and "nascent" democracy.

The increased quest for ethnic exclusivity in recent times in Nigeria has continued to polarize the country with the attendant adverse consequences on development. Adefolaju (2016) asserts that this enduring agitation is caused by the socio-economic imbalance in the

country, while Chief Gbenga Daniel believes that Nigeria's heterogeneous status is problematic arising from the reality or perception that access to the commonwealth is unequal and far between (Guardian, Jan. 27, 2004) in (Egbule, 2020). Consequently, Nigerian leaders have exploited the situation to further their ethnically structured social, economic and political objectives at the expense of national development and peaceful coexistence among Nigerians. This is evident in the appearance of many centrifugal tendencies, which are threatening or working for the dismemberment of the country such as the current Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, the activities of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the East and the militants in the Niger Delta. The consequences of these acts of mutual intolerance, inter-ethnic clashes and extreme ethnic nationalism are located within the prism of the country's level of socio-economic development. One hundred and five years since the amalgamation of the various ethnic nationalities and over fifty-eight years since independence, the country is still underdeveloped.

The avoidable and disastrous Nigerian civil war that claimed millions of lives was facilitated by ethnic chauvinism. For instance, the counter-coup of 1966, supported primarily by Northern military officers, facilitated the rise of Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon to Head of State. Tension rose between the North and South. Igbos in Northern cities suffered persecution and many fled to the Eastern Region. In May 1967, the Eastern Region declared independence as a state called the Republic of Biafra, under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Emeka Ojukwu. The Nigerian Civil War began as the official Nigerian government side (predominated by soldiers from the North and West) attacked Biafra (South-East) on 6 July 1967 at Garkem. The 30-month war, with a long siege of Biafra and its isolation from trade and supplies, ended in January 1970. Estimates of the number of dead in the former Eastern Region are between 1 and 3 million people, from warfare, disease, and starvation, during the 30-month civil war (Metz, 1991). The June 12, 1993 crisis in Nigeria was due to selfish desires of a particular ethnic group to lord it over other groups, especially those who feel they are born to rule.

Contributing to this discourse, Adefolaju (2016) states that the space presently occupied by Nigeria had always been home to various ethnic nationalities ever before colonial creation and occupation of it as a "Nigerian" nation. Thus, Nigeria has always been a multi-national,

multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society embodying various larger and smaller groups, angling for access and control of her scarce and valuable resources. Ifeanacho and Nwagwu in Egbule (2021) observed that Nigeria's efforts at achieving of national development and peaceful coexistence among Nigerians have remained largely unrealized. The entire social matrix in Nigeria is characterized by inter-community and intra-community; inter ethnic and intra-ethnic; inter-religious and intra-religious strife. Some of these conflicts are as old as the history of Nigeria as a nation.

Amali and Jekayinfa (2013) states that efforts to build one indivisible nation from the several ethnic nationalities have constituted problems as well. Some of the problems that emerged are sometimes not anticipated. Most of the problems have disintegrative elements and still persist. Generally, culture is supposed to be a basic tool for development that is why education is sometimes defined as cultural transmission. However, the multi cultural nature of the Nigerian society, which emphasizes the cultures of female circumcision, betrothal, early marriage, inhuman treatment to widows as well as expensive burial and building houses for corpse are cultures that are retrogressive and can lead to underdevelopment.

In a multi-ethnic African society like Nigeria, national development and peaceful coexistence has remained a difficult process. In practical terms, members of each ethnic group strive to actualize the interests of their groups, which are often conflicting because of group desire to exert hegemony over one another. Continuous ethno-cultural group struggles, weaken the centre and tend to strengthen the group with resources and strength to struggle (Bassey, 2015). For instance, the quest for power and domination among the various ethnic groups is a recurring issue in Nigeria's political scene. Of the many ethnic groups, three stand out and have been prominent in the quest to be at the centre-stage of decision making in the country. These are the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The big puzzle: Can cultural diversity and ethnic pluralism be harness for sustainable development and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria? The simple answer is yes; as shown below.

The Contributions of Nigeria's Diverse Culture to Peaceful Coexistence and Sustainable Development

Culture is a way of life evolved by a given people over the years. It is a life style that comes because of accumulated knowledge and experiences given the peculiar environment the people found themselves. It controls their ideas and philosophy of life. It manifests in

behavioural patterns and practical production of material objects with which the people interact with their environment. Generally, Nigerians cherish their communal values such as extended family system, respect for the elderly, eating with the right hand, disciplining of erring children, rendering service to one another, not publicly showing anger, the principle of dignity of labour (hard work and handiwork), cultural festivals, respect for the marriage institution and so on.

Cultural diversity is a valuable resource for attaining development goals, including fighting poverty and promoting gender equality, quality education and human rights, and we must fully integrate it into the global strategies for sustainable development. In achieving the Millennium Development Goals, UNESCO is continuing to strengthen its advocacy and action in favour of the link between culture and sustainable development. Hence, Irina Bokova, former Director-General of UNESCO (2009-2017), stated that the cultural diversity is a valuable resource for attaining development goals. She stated further that our cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity. It is a source of renewal of ideas and societies, through which we open up to others and craft new ways of thinking. This diversity provides opportunities for peace and sustainable development.

As a tool for societal living, the knowledge of culture and its application help transform a person from mere biological being to a social being. It gives order and meaning to the mode of social organization a people have evolved over a period. It promotes unity, love, loyalty among the people of the same culture. In fact, people who share the same cultural traits such as common values or language, tend to be united by those traits or elements (Egbule, 2014). It regulates human behavior and conduct. It provides roles that govern the members of a given society. For instance, Nigerian culture abhors and forbids people marrying their blood relatives or pre-marital sexual relationship.

Respecting and promoting cultural diversity facilitates intercultural dialogue, prevents conflicts and protects the rights of marginalized groups within and between nations, thus creating optimal conditions for achieving development goals. Promoting cultural activities and traditional knowledge and skills are very effective means to strengthen environmental sustainability and the social capital of communities. Culture contributes to the alleviation of poverty, control of diseases and improvement of the standards of living of the people. Cultural heritage, culture and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism, and

cultural infrastructure serve as strategic tools for revenue generation, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, giving her rich-cultural heritage and substantial labour force (Deekor & Maekae, 2015).

In addition, it creates job opportunities through creative arts and craft works. Also, most people in Nigeria are farmers because farming as an occupation has been inherited from their fore fathers. The United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013, co-published by UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), confirms that the creative economy is one of the most rapidly growing sectors in the world. From audio-visual design to production, performing arts to new media, publishing to the visual arts, our cultural diversity is a creative diversity. It is a source of income, conveying identities and collective benchmarks, contributing to social cohesion and self-esteem in our globalized world.

Culture establishes ways of meeting our biological needs, subsequently, enhancing human capital development. For instance, marriage, reproduction, family life, raising of one's children (child upbringing) and even social interaction are all within the confines of culture. Extended families are still the norm in Nigeria and are, in fact, the backbone of the social system. The family is expected to provide for the welfare of every member. In fact, it defines the identity and heritage of a people and does not allow them to be swallowed up by other cultures. In other words, it distinguishes a people from their neighbours or other groups in Nigeria. Culture also enhances progressive human development, creativity and increase productivity.

Culture is not a commodity like any other, and this principle, which is internationally recognized by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted in 2005, is a guiding principle for forging more innovative and sustainable development strategies. Hence, culture can be used as a stabilizing agent and an effective tool for arresting the tide of poverty, unemployment and misery. It is an agent of communication. As man interacts with his neighbours in the society, his culture informs his particular mode of communication or language. It is with this language he interacts and communicates ideas with, and to his fellow being. Man can equally communicate through music.

Cultural diversity is a stimulator of creativity. Investing in this creativity can transform societies. It is our responsibility to develop education and intercultural skills in young people to sustain the

diversity of our world and to learn to live together in the diversity of our languages, cultures and religions, to bring about change. It emphasizes dignity of labour, promotes social and moral values. It informs man on how to grow his crops for food, how to enjoy his life through play, music or dance. In order to survive as he interacts with his environment, he builds a house to live in, a chair to sit on, a cutlass for farming, and a means of movement - all these forms the scope of culture.

Culture defines the specific roles of individuals both as members of a family and a given society - thereby averting undue conflict of interest and interference. For instance, the roles of fathers, mothers and children differ in the family. In addition, age grade (peers) performs specific duties (like maintaining the local roads, market square, etc) as stipulated by the people's culture (Egbule, 2019).

It promotes healthy competition and nation building, through cultural festivals/days. Many nations use cultural heritage and cultural events and institutions to improve their image, stimulate urban development and attract visitors (tourists) as well as investment to their economies. The local economy stands to be boosted as many cultural artifacts would be on sale and many employment opportunities would be created for the people. Wase Rock, Kura falls, ancient Jos museum in Plateau state, Argungu fishing festival in Kebbi state, Obudu cattle ranch, Tinapa shopping complex, the ancient city of Benin in Edo state, Osun festival in Osogbo, Igbo new yam festivals, National War Museum displaying relics of the Nigerian Civil War and local inventions, Akwette: Blue River Tourist Village, The Long Juju Shrine of Arochukwu in Abia State, Yankari game reserve in Bauchi state, Eyo festival in Lagos are some of tourist attractions in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Generally, Nigerians see themselves first as members of one cultural or ethnic group or the other, and secondarily as Nigerians. The cultural divergences of the ethnic groups in Nigeria are manifest in all areas of their cultural life such as language, legends, occupation, oral literature, ways of marrying, thinking and solving problems, dances, the type of food they eat and way of cooking and eating it. Cultural diversity can serve as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity. Inclusive growth and sustainable development is not achievable if no effort is made to recognize the role that cultural diversity play out in everyone's lives. For Nigeria to move away from her present chaotic and violent condition, coupled with the pandemic crisis, Nigerians and their leaders

must arouse the spirit of oneness to foster collective action. Interestingly, strategies that would help in addressing the problems of pan Nigeria values are suggested.

Suggestions/Way Forward

In view of the aforementioned challenges posed by cultural diversities, as well as its usefulness, the paper recommends some workable strategies towards positive utilization of our diverse culture, aimed at achieving peaceful coexistence within diversity for a strong, united, virile and democratic society in Nigeria. Below is a twelve-point viable options:

Massive cultural education should be embarked upon by relevant agencies (e.g. National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC)), the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to take pride in the strength and plurality of Nigeria.

The people and government of Nigeria must rise up to the challenges posed by the pluralism of the Nigeria Federation in order to accommodate groups (especially the minority) and guarantee access to power and equitable distribution of resources. The diversity in the nation should be used for strength and not for political polarization and ethno-religious conflict.

This paper call on all stake-holders in the culture industry (ministry) to take advantage of the unique opportunities of the mass media in their quest for the promotion of patriotism and Nigerian cultural heritage. In addition, the mass media should be highly responsible in their reportage, especially in their use of language. Responsible journalism should be the media practitioners watch word. While the movie industries should project more of Nigerian culture, which has the potency of integration.

Nigeria needs a bold, vibrant and articulate leadership to manage her diversities, promote national integration and development, as well as enhancing peaceful coexistence. It is pitiable and pathetic to note that Nigeria has been less fortunate in its leadership. Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have continued because Nigerian elites are corrupt and split along lines of religion and ethnic chauvinism. This has resulted in ethnic rivalry, suspicion, witch-hunting and hostility among leaders.

Government should organize public enlightenment campaigns through the National Orientation Agency (NOA), NYSC orientation camps, seminars and workshops on the ways of promoting tolerance, especially among non-students.

The media should be credible and free from any kind of influence from various pressure groups. In fact, they should keep a distance from any kind of political and commercial control to avoid the menace of “paid news” phenomenon.

Finally, this paper is a clarion call on Member States of UNESCO and respective governments to ensure the development of new and viable institutions and mechanisms to champion the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

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THE PROBLEM(S) OF NAMING THE ULTIMATE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

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Executive Summary

Africa as a continent has suffered greatly from all angles or sectors of their lives, this is noticed with the coming or introduction of new cultures from other continents which parade themselves as superior continents with superior cultures. This is seen in the changes and abandonment by Africans in their moral, social, economic, cultural and even spiritual or religious life, all in attempt to catch up with the superior continents or adapt to their way of lives. This created big problems and confusions among the African people in being original or themselves while living out their daily normal lives. With the above problem or confusion especially from the religious point of view, Africans found it very hard to ascertain if the name of the Ultimate Reality found in their culture or religion is originally from them or an influence of cultural or religious contact from their colonizers. This is the thrust of this paper, to investigate whether the name of the Ultimate Reality is original to Africans in their different religious worships or a borrowed name from other religious contacts. This write-up employed the investigative research into the opinions of past and present authors concerning the above issue which has been a burning and dividing issue within the African Traditional Religion.

Keywords: African traditional religion, Naming, Ultimate, God

Introduction

A closer look at the religious change that took place in Africa clearly indicates that a lot of changes took place without the Africans knowing about it, just like the dividing of African continents into nations by their colonizers. As of today, the religious changes that took place in Africa, none of the values or customs are practiced fully except in the combination of the new religious values and African religious values.

Muslim religion was known for its possible combination of values but Christianity initially rejected everything about African culture or values in their religious practice. Fisher (1973) in his historical analysis of African conversion reiterated the above issue that African religious change tends towards discontinuity and at the same time has element of continuity. It is only Fisher among all the religious theorists that captured the current situation of Africans towards conversion to Christianity and Muslim religions. In the adherence stage of conversion process Fisher explained that Africans stood with one foot in African Traditional religion and another foot in Muslim or Christian religion, adopting their new worship process as useful supplements to the old religion. Again, the stages of religious conversion explain the situation found in Africa in general as regards to practice of inculturation which is an attempt by many African scholars to interpret the Christian gospel from African point of view.

According to Metuh (1985) Trimmingham ascribed the large scale of religious changes in Africa 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 macrocosm 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. These necessitated changes in the African traditional societies in the way things are being done and carried out for its survival. The way of worship, the habit of eating, agricultural production, economical change, informal education to formal education, manner of addressing and mode of dressing, speaking, and means of transportation and so on, all changed due to religious contacts.

Another factor that led to the forced religious change in Africa is that the two famous religions (Christianity and Islam) according to Ekwunife (2012) displayed exclusive, uncompromising, intolerant and aggressive attitudes towards African Traditional Religion. Both religions proclaimed a monopoly on absolute truth, each regarded all other religious values and spiritual qualities to be false and invalid. According to him:

Both felt a pressing need to convert the whole world to the truth each upheld. To that end, both used military force unhesitatingly. The record on both sides is stained with acts of violence, barbarism, and atrociousness....the emergence of Judaism,

Christianity and Islam in the middle East laid and sowed the seed of controversies over true religion, true faith, true religious practice and invariably, true God. (pp. 3-4).

All this tends to explain or show that a kind of forced religious change took place in Africa which was never planned, hence originality was lost and confusion setting in. This was largely seen in Africa on the name the Ultimate Being is called. Some of the African scholars believed that it is borrowed from new religions that invaded African continents, indicating that Africans have no name for the Ultimate Reality or Being. Another group of scholars insisted or argued that the Africans have names for the Ultimate Reality irrespective of new religious contacts. They believed that the names were original to African people because they have been calling on the Ultimate Being before the advent of new religions. However, it is obvious that there are a lot of influences with regard to the names of the Ultimate Reality in African Traditional Religion, certainly Africans have names original to them for the Ultimate Being or Reality which must have undergone some processes due to influence of globalization and technological advancement going on daily.

Beyond the arguments being generated or posited on the issue of names of God in African traditional religion, it seems that the above arguments further created or manifested itself on the type of religion being practiced today in the African countries. First of all, the missionaries who brought the gospel to African soil came with different types of gospel messages, each with different names of the Ultimate Reality, each again tried to outwit the other in getting more converts to their fold and hence the missionaries created unhealthy rivalries among them and among the converts themselves. This accounts also for the proliferation of churches in African soil today which spring up on daily basis. According to Smith (cited by Agazue, 2015):

The number of prosperity churches is huge, with entrepreneurial pastors starting new churches seemingly every day. Pentecostalism has become the fastest growing industry in Nigeria, and the second most popular export (after crude oil). Churches in Nigeria... now out-number schools, clinics and banks all put together. (pp. 1-2).

The effects of the problem of naming the Ultimate Reality today in Africa have brought multiple and spiral problems towards the development of Africa in all sectors of life. For religion according to Ekwunife (2012) acts as a binding force both in moral definitions, ethical

prescriptions, technological advancement, in other words it is religion that co-ordinates and elevates these inherent qualities in a society and man to a transcendental plane thereby imbuing them with deeper meanings in man's everyday life.

The Controversies Surrounding the Naming of the Supreme Being

There many issues or factors that brought about the problems of naming the Ultimate in African Traditional Religion, which led to the discordant tunes by some group of scholars claiming that the name of the Ultimate Being in Africa is imported through the missionaries or through the global contact. Another group of scholars believed that the name of Ultimate Being is indigenous to Africans themselves because they have been worshiping and calling on their Supreme Being before the coming of the missionaries from different parts of the world. Though there may be influences which may have taken place with time due to contact with other parts of the world. For strong culture is not one that does not change but adapts to the reality of the time in which it found itself. For no culture or paradigm can exist and operate in its pristine form and still be relevant to the people it is serving, hence Oguejiofor (2010) talked of the resilient nature of African cultures.

The above change in pristine form of culture or resilient nature of African culture was well depicted by Onunwa (2005) thus:

Some votaries of the traditional religion conveniently use such terms and ideas as if they were originally part of the traditional religious system. Often in the village, one is surprised to hear some elders of the traditional religion conclude prayers and petitions when pouring libation with the phrase, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. This is also true of the prayers when breaking kola nuts. After the prayers some of the elders freely end with 'in the name of Jesus Amen' as if it was the pattern of ending it in the traditional way. We see here that it is no longer Christianity trying to use or accept African symbols to make its gospel meaningful for Africans but rather African Traditional Religion trying to imbibe Christian ideas and languages to preserve itself and make itself relevant to modern man. (pp. 207-208).

One of the enduring values of African Traditional religion is its versatility and its historical development. For example the way Igbo Traditional Religion has enlarged its practices, vocabularies, liturgies, and rituals pertaining or tending towards solving the poverty of its people with the elements it borrowed from Christianity, is responsible for its survival and relevance among the Igbo people despite attack it receives from change agents and those seeing it as evil practices. This

nullifies the earlier notion that the gods of the Africans are on retreat and yet to come back to its people.

According to Ekwunife (2012) with the invasion of African land by European, American and Moslem missionaries in the middle of 19th and 20th centuries the problem of new perception, interpretation of values in African world set in. This affected the whole entire of African social and religious institutions. This also involves the naming of the Ultimate Being in Africa, because the missionaries in trying to understand the culture of the Africans introduced their values as a better one than the African values. Furthermore having come as supreme culture or value to African culture they destroyed many cultural values of the people to build or propagate their own cultural values. Hence this brought about the clash of values or complications of naming the Supreme Being. The consequence of this single effect of clash of values caused ripples in the life of the Africans even till today. Africans are yet to find any model solutions to help to arrest the negative effects being generated in the modern African life.

Sequel to the above problem, the missionaries who were unable to comprehend the values of the Africans with their own cultural background and biases went ahead to call or name the Ultimate Being in Africa with all sorts of derogatory names. According to Boas (1961), Kofi (1978) and Quarcoopome (1987) the derogatory terms were imposed on Africans and they all have racial undertone. These derogatory terms according to Kanu (2015) include pagan, heathen, primitive, ancestor worship, magic, fetish, juju, animism and so on. This means that Africans were seen as a people who needed to be liberated from their worship of false gods hence everything concerning them has to be changed because superior culture has been imposed on them. The missionaries pursued this mandate vigorously; so many cultural values were crushed on the process. It is at this point that Onwubiko (1991) remarked that one of the reasons that led to the "Deus Otiosus" theory of the early missionary writers on African religions was their inability to discover sacrifices to the Supreme Being which were less frequent compared to those given to the minor deities.

Another predominant factor that caused controversy over the naming of the Ultimate Being in African Traditional religion is the difficulties involved in studying African Traditional Religion. The Africa continent is a vast continent with different countries, languages, ethnic and complex dialects. This already is a barrier to any meaningful research to be done or carried out on Africa though most of the missionaries were

not concerned about founding the truth concerning African people and their culture. The Supreme Being is called different names in many languages and dialects of Africans. Kanu (2015) observed that it might be difficult for a scholar to fully understand the concept of Supreme Being among the different African groups. The result will be rash generalizations and wrong conclusions as seen today by the early missionaries on African Traditional Religion. Coupled with the above problem, is the problem of the unwritten records from earliest times unlike other world religions. This single factor tends to relegate the African Traditional Religion to background and local religion; hence various interpretations seem to be the order of the day.

African Traditional religion has been described or seen to be polytheistic in nature. The term polytheism according to Kofi ((1978) means “the belief in, and worship of, more than one god....” (p.5). Of all the factors, this polytheism used to describe the nature of African Traditional Religion did a lot of harm to it more than any other factor. Quarcoopome (1987) argued that what determines polytheism in any religion is the absence of a cohesive or unifying and Supernatural Ultimate. It implies that the presence of Ultimate Being determines monotheism which is the worship of one God. But Parriender (1961) argued that African Traditional Religion is polytheistic in nature in the sense that:

...his choice of the term on the grounds that polytheistic religions are tolerant of other religious views and can easily accept new gods or cults. There are no jealous gods that forbid the addition of new beliefs as long as the traditional deities are not attacked. (p. 11).

Many scholars have argued that African Traditional religion cannot be regarded as polytheistic religion for a religion cannot be said to be polytheistic merely because there exist many divinities in that religion. Kofi (1978) remarked that in classical polytheism, the gods in the pantheon were all independent of one another. One of the gods might be regarded as the chief or head, but that god can never be regarded as the creator of the other gods. From the above discussions it is clear that those who used the term polytheism on African Traditional Religion understood little or nothing about the religion itself. Hence these misconceptions continued to generate confusion in the understanding of the name of Ultimate Being in the African world.

The Ultimate Being: Imported or Original to African Traditional Religion?

It has been argued from different quarters whether the idea of Ultimate Being came from missionaries of two most populous religions that invaded Africa or is it original to African Traditional Religion. Bearing in mind that African Traditional Religion is criticized heavily by many to be polytheistic in nature and lacks written records. Uchendu (1965) categorically stated that "it is a polytheistic religion; their numerous deities, which are strikingly democratic, continue to increase with the rate of culture contact" (p.94). Though, no religion in its purest form can be said to be monotheistic analytically, unless one goes by faith. For monotheism according to Dhavamony (1973) can either be explicit or implicit where one God is believed in and worshipped as a Supreme Being, Dhavamony calls this monotheism in African Traditional Religion to be implicit monotheism which is a complex form of monotheism that allows for the compatibility of other divinities alongside the belief in one Supreme Being.

Consequently there are two groups of scholars who are projecting the issue of Ultimate Being in African Traditional Religion namely; the protagonists and the antagonists group. According to Ekwunife (2012):

The protagonists in their various academic writings demonstrate that the idea of, and worship of the Supreme Being-God are part and parcel of African traditional life, thought and worship. They insist that internal evidences from a meticulous examination of oral sources of A.T.R, sacred institutions of traditional culture, Art works and symbols prove their contentions beyond reasonable doubts. Moreover, the fact that traditional Africans are part and parcel of created humanity with rational capacity excludes doubts as regards the existence of the Supreme Being (God) in thoughts and worship....The antagonists scholars objected to the above claims of the protagonists. They rather insisted on the Christian/Islamic origin of the Supreme Being or at best foreign origin of this concept. (pp. 8-9).

The protagonist like Onwubiko (1991) explained that in African religions there is belief in the Supreme Being called by various indigenous names among the many African communities. According to him:

The names given to this Being manifest African ideas and concepts of Him. He is given both proper and descriptive names: NGEWO in Sierra-Leone; CHUKWU in Igboland; OLUUDUMARE in Yorubaland; NYAME in Ashanti; etc. Some of the African

names for God are anthropomorphic and are expressions of African concepts of God. There are acts of worship of Him, but these are very rare. It must be remarked that one of the impressions that led to the "Deus Otiosus" theory of the early writers on African religions was their inability to discover sacrifices to the Supreme Being which were less frequent compared to those given to the minor deities. (pp. 60-61).

Uchendu (1965) already has made the above stand of Onwubiko (1991) vividly clear using Igbo indigenous religion by saying that the idea of a creator of all things is focal to Igbo theology. According to Uchendu (1965):

They believe in a supreme god, a high god, who is all good. The logical implication of the concept of a god who is all good is the existence of a devil (*agbara*) to whom all evil must be attributed. This is not peculiar to Igbo thought. It is a characteristic of all known religions which accept the doctrine of a high god who does no evil. The Igbo high god is a withdrawn god. He is a god who has finished all active works of creation and keeps watch over his creatures from a distance. The Igbo high god is not worship directly. There is neither shrine nor priest dedicated to his service. He gets no direct sacrifice from the living but is concerned as the ultimate receiver of all sacrifice made to the minor deities....He is a satisfied god who is not jealous of the prosperity of man on earth. (pp. 94-95).

The above idea explained the stand point of African God conceived to be a high god and how the Africans perceive their Supreme Being contrary to the notion that the idea of Ultimate God comes to Africa from missionary contacts. Basden (1966) also confirmed the distinct recognition of a Supreme Being (beneficent in Character) who is above every other spirits good or evil. He is believed to control all things in heaven and earth. Other spirits are at his service whose sole aim is to fulfill His commands. Idowu (1975) is one of the strong contenders of African Traditional Religion being essentially monotheistic by nature. He came to this conclusion when he finished analyzing what he called errors of terminology. These terminologies which are derogatory in nature like primitive, paganism, animism, fetishism and so on, were errors used mainly by westerners to designate African Traditional Religion. The meaning of these terms according to Idowu, are deformed and are applied in this false notion of African Traditional Religion (ATR). These terms are not compatible in describing ATR rather in all African communities God is referred to as the Ultimate Being. In his

words “I do not know of any place in Africa where the Ultimate is not accorded to God...I conclude that the religion can only be adequately described as monotheistic” (p.135). Though, he described this monotheism as diffused monotheism which is the same with implicit monotheism as described earlier.

There are other protagonists of Supreme Being in African Traditional Religion who has given deep insights on the originality of Ultimate Being belonging to Africans. Some protagonists like Arinze (1970), Metuh (1985), Ede (1987), Adibe (2008) and host of others have shown in one way or the other that the Ultimate Being is original to African people and not the case of imported or foreign culture. Even some of the early foreign writers or visitors to African soil also affirmed the view that the Africans had a belief in a Supreme Being with most attributes that God has acquired anywhere in the world.

However, there are the other voices from the antagonists’ view which according to Ekwunife (2012) seems to rest on three connected premises: Firstly that African traditional religious culture is at the lowest rung of evolutionary development. The primitive traditionalists cannot conceptualize such a lofty philosophical concept as the Supreme Being. Oguejiofor (1996) commented that:

Such racist ideas, coupled with the fact that the missionaries rarely made efforts to understand the original beliefs of the people, make it today difficult to find out what the people originally believed. Igbo traditional beliefs and morals were globally termed *superstitious* and *devilish*. Again, the introduction of modernity and missionary success effectively instilled into the traditional religionists that their religion was retrograde. (p. 53).

Secondary, that the Christian/Islamic Supreme God cannot enjoy the same status as God with the primitive god of the Africans. Thirdly that the concept of the Supreme Being is a missionary invention into African soil, this means that the missionaries introduced it and imposed it on African Traditional Religion who appropriated it and made it their own in this modern times. Nwoga (1984) completely concludes that Africans (Igbo) do not originally have the idea of a Supreme God until the coming of the Christianity. This means that the idea of Supreme Being is a complete stranger in African traditional religious thought. He reached this view after examining the thoughts of some antagonists. Nwoga (1984) conclusively asserts that:

The Igbo person’s experience and consciousness of transcendent power operation in his personal affairs gave rise to and is

subsumed in the concept of Chi. Around this concept of Chi he consolidated his expectation of life and fortune. It is this Chi that is the god of the Igbo person. Each person has his god though it requires a certain level of maturity before a person can set up a shrine to the god. (p. 33).

The position of Nwoga above raises a lot of questions today concerning the belief in Supreme Being, does it mean that Africans have no common Supreme Being they worship as community or as a town except their personal Chi? What of the annual festivals taking place in different communities yearly, to which god do they offer those sacrifices? During consultation concerning some abnormal events happening in the community, which god do they consult? Though Nwoga claimed that it is the god of Aro oracle that the Igbo people meant when they refer to Chukwu as Ultimate God and their other needs are cared by divinities among their localities. There are others who are in the same line of thought like Nwoga, Ezekwugo (1987) asserts strongly that both Chukwu and Chineke were never applied or used by the traditional Igbo or Africans to mean Supreme Being. For him the Igbo had taken the name of the Aro oracle to stand for some sort of Ultimate Being.

Having seen the positions of protagonists and antagonists, it is obvious that all the arguments show different understanding of African Traditional Religion from different perspectives. None holds the absolute truth which can be verified in its favour. But their positions gave a way for further investigations in finding authentic possible answers to the controversy at hand. The analysis given by both sides, when properly viewed will definitely put or raise African Traditional Religion to a higher level with the other world religions.

The Implications of These Controversies in the Practice of African Traditional Religion

Today Africans have varieties of names for the Ultimate Being which accrue from many dialects and tribes that are in Africa countries, this is not problem in itself but problem lies in different churches and practices emanating from these different names and practices, each naming and calling Ultimate Being with different names which they formulated in response to their different practices. This is not what used to be the case in African societies, rather each societies or community has names of deity which they were known for or which they consult from time to time. Again, this has led to many young Africans initiating their own shrines mostly in their homes for sacrifice of different kinds especially

for money rituals purposes. This is quite different from what it used to be in the pristine time of African societies.

The consequences of smuggling of the word "Supreme" by the Christian/Moslem faiths according to Ekwunife (2012) accounts for the superiority in religion or culture which the Western world used in dominating African Traditional Religion. This led to derogatory names with which they regard African culture and religion, since then Africa has been caught up in the web of inferiority complex. This inferiority complex is virtually seen in everything Africans are doing. When what one is doing, is not in imitation of the western world, it will not be recognized as authentic or original. With this situation, Africans abandoned their education, natural food, culture, language, religion, annual festivals sports, and so on in search of new way of life. Hence the saying the gods are on retreat and the center cannot hold again. This accounts for gradual loss of languages, cultures, and so on among the Africans.

This again created different kinds of rivalries among the votaries of African Traditional Religion, just like in the early days of the missionaries in Africa. The missionaries in trying to gain grounds or have more converts in a particular place engaged in all sorts of practices and introduction of ideas so that they can have many converts hence rivalries of different sorts were seen among them. Today some African traditionalists engage in different forms of practices to attract people to their religious shrines. This led to the combination of African traditional religious practices with Christian or Islamic Religion which is called inculturation by the leaders of these churches in the name of preserving the religious practices of the Africans. With this all kinds of practices and means are employed in making people to believe on the efficacy of their religious practices. These practices include all kinds of sacrifices among the young people to be rich in the society without hard work. The sacrifice most often entails shedding of blood of animals, sleeping near the graves for a number of days, going naked in the market place, eating of their own or other people's defecations. Recently it involves sacrifice with human parts in order to achieve their aims and having many converts to their shrines.

However the new idea of God introduced by the western culture according to Kofi (1978) helped to solidify and enriched the names already in place in African Traditional Religion. This is not only seen in the new ideas about God but in other cultural practices like in marriage institution. With the introduction of Christianity and the establishment

of colonial governments, new forms of marriage were introduced. African Christians can now marry in the church and have Christian weddings or they can marry according to their cultural ordinance.

Conclusion

This write-up among other things seeks to know or trace the problems causing the controversies in Supreme Being ideology in African Traditional Religion. These factors seen above have led to the confusion among the African scholars inquiring to know the real name or names of Ultimate Being and whether it is of foreign origin or from Africans themselves. The African traditionalists or votaries have been influenced to have their own shrines and tries to combine it with new Christian and Islamic religions that exist side by side with African Traditional Religion.

Again the introduction of the word "Supreme" from colonialists and missionaries with regard to their God and culture, thereby indicating their religion to be supreme religion or Supreme God and supreme power/culture dealt serious blow to African values. This makes Africans to aspire for Whiteman's culture and religion which is seen to be Supreme in all aspects. The end results of these are relegating of anything African to background. Hence as of today, one hears of revitalization of African culture from all angles. The first step towards solving the problem of Ultimate Being controversy is the removal of the word "Supreme" from all cultures and world powers, for it carries with it racial and ethnocentric biases (Ekwinife, 2012).

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**THE AFRICAN WOMAN AND THE BURDEN OF TRADITION: A
SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF FLORA NWAPA'S EFURU &
IZUCHUKWU EMEAM'S WIFE OF THE GODS**

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Executive Summary

The black woman has always been seen as one who should not have the liberty to be on her own rather, she should be possessed by either a man or a spirit/ deity/god/. She has suffered this ordeal from the inception of the world. Man, and spirit continue in their struggle to ensure that the African woman remains under their dominance or in their custody. Efforts made by certain national and international bodies have not borne significant fruits as the African woman still suffers under the hegemonic influence of obnoxious traditional practices. Some African novelists, in their works have tried to make it a point of duty to loudly present this ordeal and culturally imposed marginalization of the African woman. Our aim in this paper is to critically analyze the relationship that firmly attaches the African woman to the African tradition and thus review the aspect of the African tradition responsible for the reduction of the value of the woman. To effectively achieve our aim, we have chosen as our corpus two novels: Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and *Izuchukwu Emeam's wife of the gods*. Given that both authors come from the Igbo region [Eastern Nigeria] in Africa and that both books have their setting in the same part of the country, we would like to narrow our analysis to the Igbo woman who incidentally is the black African woman. Also giving that the African tradition plays an important role in our analysis, we shall make use of the culture theory to achieve our goal in this paper.

Keywords: African woman, tradition, culture, possession, marginalization and socio-cultural

Introduction

The difference in gender has been so glaring in Igbo Land. From time immemorial the male gender has enjoyed preference over the female counterpart in the Igbo traditional society. It is not that the Igbo woman has been unaware of this treatment from the society, the man and the gods but she has kept on fighting for her liberation, a fight which has yielded little or no result (in this part of Nigeria). For instance, as Nwando Achebe recounts in "Women and Authority in West African History":⁶

Strikes and boycotts often meant that West African women would ignore their household or marital responsibilities. For instance, West African women could "boycott" or abstain from sexual intercourse with their husbands. J.S. Harris reports on a case when a community of Igbo women repeatedly asked their clansmen to clear the paths leading to the market. When they did not, all the women in the village refused to cook for their husbands until they did. The boycott worked because all the women of the village cooperated. Husbands could not ask their mothers or sisters for food.

Despite this result from the resolve of an aggrieved group of women as shown in the traditional Igbo society, the Igbo woman still suffers seriously under the weight of traditionally prescribed beliefs. It is important to understand the social organization of the Igbo society since our two books of interest are written by authors from Igbo land and both books have the Igbo land as their settings. At this time, we would like to talk a little about the Igbo society to enable us understand our topic of interest.

The Igbo Society

The typical Igbo society is patriarchal and highly patrilineal with the exception of some communities like Ohafia, Abiriba and Arochukwu who are matrilineal. In a traditional Igbo society, kingship, inheritance and succession are traced through the father. As a result of this, very great value is placed on the male child. Family is the smallest social unit while the clan is the largest. A family in Igbo land consists of both the immediate and extended family members. The Igbo culture allows a man to marry more than one wife; a choice can be influenced by the economy, war and the ability to give birth to children especially the male ones rather than sexual circumstances. For instance, a male farmer; who has large and numerous farm lands may like to get more wives who will give birth to so many children, so as to bring in more hands to work in the farms. A clan who is always at war with other clans could

advice their men to take many wives, to give birth to more sons, to fight and to replace those who could possibly die in the war. So, when a woman does not get as many sons as she desires, or even get any at all, the husband is encouraged to marry more wives. All the members of the family are expected to live in the same compound and the eldest male child is expected to be in charge of maintaining peace and order in the compound. The men are the breadwinners of the family, they honour their ancestors and defend their communities in times of war, while the women are trained from childhood to carry out domestic tasks which comprise mainly of: cooking, cleaning, raising and taking care of infants and maintain a well-run home.

Marriage in Igbo land is usually contracted between the large families of both the man and the woman and not just between the two people involved, and when there is dispute between the man and the woman, both families get involved in looking for solution and when there seem to be no solution, the dissolution is made by the two families. When the Igbo woman gets married, she is expected to contribute to the welfare of her home and community. She is expected to participate in Agriculture and Trade, some participate in customary religious practices but they do not perform significant roles in sacrifices and community rituals like their male counterparts. In the Igbo cultural background, the nuclear family and the extended family are seen as family. The culture teaches that family is family, and there should exist strong unity and bond among family members. Parents are the head of the family, and the children should respect and obey their parents. Parents take care of their children as required; however, when parents get old, there is a shift of responsibility; children take care of their parents in their homes and not care facilities. This aspect of the culture is taught in the veins of all. Grandparents have their roles too in the lives of their grandchildren. They also contribute to raising their grandchildren and grandchildren if they are fortunate enough to support their grandparents in their old years, they do so joyfully without any compulsion. Uncles and aunts from both sides are also seen as members of the family. They have their roles in correcting and directing their nephews and nieces, and the latter, in turn, are bound to show great respect to them. The culture made it that the family is a vital part of the society where the foundation of love, respect, and care is laid. The impact of the culture on the family is immense.

During the time of Flora Nwapa, the Igbo, society supported themselves mainly by farming and their main foods were yam, cassava,

cocoyam, maize, melon, okra etc. Yam was cultivated by mostly men. Some other parts of the Igbo society in addition to these crops, cultivated palm oil, palm wine. In the Igbo cultural society women are prohibited from certain cults and activities that are strictly for men such as: belonging to the Masquerade cult, Ozo cult, praying over cola nut, discussion on bride price, praying over yam during the new yam festival, getting close to the house of the masquerade etc.

The pertinence of our submission in this study is dependent on the fact that despite the countless efforts put in place to shove up the Igbo woman's dignity and give her some independence that can allow her be on her own without having to face the humiliation of being owned by either the man or the god/goddess, there are still traditional practices that hamper her emancipation. Our aim in this paper is therefore to analyze the strong bond that links the Igbo woman to the Igbo tradition, and thus expose the aspects of this tradition responsible for the subjugation of the Igbo woman. To effectively drive home our point, we have chosen as our corpus, two novels: Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Izuchukwu Emeam's *Wife of the gods*.

Before delving into the analysis of our work we wish to throw some light on certain aspects of the Igbo tradition that interfere with the liberty of the Igbo woman. These aspects include discrimination and violence, obnoxious rites associated to marriage, female genital mutilation, son preference, etc.

Harmful Traditional Practices: Discrimination and Violence

In 1945 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which "prohibits all forms of discrimination based on sex and ensures the right to life, liberty and security of persons; it recognizes equality before the law and equal protection against any discrimination in violation of the Declaration". (Fact Sheet No. 23). In spite of this Universal declaration, discrimination against the Igbo woman continues. As far back as 1995, about 135 countries had endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This endorsement is targeted at traditional practices, values and beliefs that debilitate the freedom of the woman. Most of these cultural practices have been established in the African communities for generations. According to Fact Sheet, some of these practices are:

Beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group such as women. These harmful traditional practices include female genital mutilation (FGM); forced feeding of

women; early marriage; the various taboos or practices which prevent women from controlling their own fertility; nutritional taboos and traditional birth practices; son preference and its implications for the status of the girl child; female infanticide; early pregnancy; and dowry price. (No 23)

According to Wester, in Sub-Saharan Africa, women face human rights abuses more than anywhere else in the world. She makes us understand the confusion in the resolution of some gender problems when she says that although the colonial powers left behind judicial systems that may be considered national in African nations, customary courts are allowed to exist. According to her, despite the fact that this arrangement is "designed to be culturally inclusive, these systems neglect gender as a category of analysis and often trap women's human rights between formal law and traditional culture (3). It is necessary to mention that Igbo land is the said Sub-Saharan Africa.

Oloruntoba-Ojo and Oloruntoba-Ojo examine the position of the African woman from the standpoint of "imagery and categorizations that ironically reinforced the colonial tags of African intellectual inferiority". They criticize Senghor for setting the tone for the glorification of the African woman with the ironical legacy of creating the impression that only her body counts. According to them "...the trouble is that the association of males and females with separate and fixed biological and psychological characteristics leads to hierarchical social power dynamics within society that is generally unfavourable to the genders, and is particularly oppressive to the female". (6) The earliest realization of this is at birth "when a nurse or midwife announces 'it's a girl', this is not merely stating the sex but engaging a social performative that keys into existing social norms and established semiotics of gender differentiation" (Oloruntoba-Ojo and Oloruntoba-Ojo, 7). To justify this discrimination that begins at birth, Fonchingong (135) points out reactions of husbands after the birth of their children in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo slaughters a goat to celebrate the birth of a third son in a row by one of his three wives, and, in *The Concubine* Madume is unhappy because his wife cannot produce a male heir.

African writers including writer of Igbo origin, continue to write on these issues because, despite international human rights laws, these treatments continue to exist. It is obvious that those who are supposed to effect these laws are guilty of these attitudes that humiliate the African [Igbo] woman morally, psychologically, physically and

economically. Fact Sheet No. 23 says that these unpleasant traditional practices persist because "...neither the governments concerned nor the international community challenged the sinister implications of such practices...Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation were considered sensitive cultural issues falling within the spheres of women and the family".

Besides the negative effects of these harmful cultural practices on the woman, as explained above, the woman has to, in addition, bear the burden of domestic violence. This explains why the topic keeps on recurring in literary texts that seek to expose this negative attitude that affects the African woman [igbo woman]. Fulu and Warner (4) argue that "Violence against women and girls has historically been silenced, overlooked or condoned". Going further to encourage writers to continue to hammer on this negative societal phenomenon and to bring it to the front burner, they state that "violence against women and girls is now widely recognized as a fundamental violation of human rights, and a problem with considerable social and economic cost to individuals, communities and countries" (Fulu and Warner, 4). Going further to lay emphasis on the plight of the Igbo woman, Ashmi; a research scholar, Bharthi Women's College, University of Madras Chennai, Tamil Nadu India, in his paper " Gender disparities in the Igbo Culture as portrayed in Nwapa's *Efuru*" points out that Men are not the only beings who exploit women. Women do it to themselves. They become advocates to male dominance. Igbo culture is one of the foremost cultures which follows Patriarchy. Women in the culture are inferior to men by all means. The women are provided with various restrictions while the men are free from customs to a certain extent. Exploitation of women in the Igbo culture happens at various levels and existence of women is a times unrecognized. In a male dominated society men dictate what is right and wrong, what should be done and what should not be done. Women are mere spectators in matters concerning them. To better analyze these issues as presented in our work, we need to rely on the culture theory.

Culture Theory

According to Encyclopedia.com, cultural theory is a term has been applied to diverse attempts to conceptualize and understand the dynamics of culture. Some of its major concerns border on culture and nature, culture and society, high and low culture, cultural tradition and cultural diversity. Cultural theory can be viewed from different theoretical prisms such as structuralism, Marxism, feminism, etc. Some theorists who have shaped the theory include Raymond Williams in *The*

Long Revolution (1961), E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), Louis Althusser who related cultural theory to Marxism, Antonio Gramsci who charted new ways of conceptualizing the role of culture and cultural practices in class formations and Michel Foucault who shaped a more discursive understanding of cultural language and how power and representation work. The relation that exists between race, ethnicity and culture has also surfaced as a primary concern of cultural theory. Recently feminist arguments have greatly influenced cultural theory. This has elicited a lot of discussion about the “ways in which gender identities are formed within cultural languages and through cultural practices” (Encyclopedia.com)

Tyson talking about cultural criticism states that “while we are constrained within the limits set for us by our culture, we may struggle against those limits or transform them.” (297) This struggle to transform the negative aspects of the African tradition on the liberties of women is the driving force behind the literary creations of many authors including Flora Nwapa and Izuchukwu Emeam.

It is mainly due to the overlap of other relevant theories, as expressed above, that we have deemed it necessary to depend on the cultural theory for our analysis. The interplay between culture, society and cultural diversity that is at the root of discrimination against women can be better handled by exploiting the cultural theory. Obnoxious traditional practices deeply rooted in the history of the Igbo culture have succeeded in relegating the woman to the background. An analysis of our corpus would expose how Nwapa and Emeam contribute their literary voices respectively to the fight against the Igbo traditional “values” that negatively affect the Igbo woman.

Analysis

One notes that both novels: Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* published in 1966 and Izuchukwu Emeam's *wife of the gods* published in 2009 talk about the menace of the burden that igbo culture and tradition place on the Igbo woman. It is seen that man is not the only one that exploits the Igbo woman, she is exploited by herself and also by the gods. For instance, in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, we see Adizua who could not pay *Efuru's* bride price without *Efuru's* help, starting to maltreat her. He started tormenting her by not eating her food without any cause and going out to other women without saying anything to her, knowing that in the Igbo tradition, it is the duty of the woman to cook her husband's food and the man refuses to eat his wife's food only when there is a quarrel

or when his wife has committed a crime or a sacrilege. He exploits Efuru emotionally, she says to her mother-in-law: “you mean Adizua, my husband...My husband did not return last night. I waited till about midnight and when I did not see him, I went to bed, but I did not sleep a wink... He has been doing this for weeks now. What beats me is that I have not offended him. If I had offended him, I would render an apology easily”. (Nwapa 51). Efuru goes through the emotional torture, because the society has so indoctrinated and messed up the head of the Igbo woman, she blames herself on her inadequacies whenever her man leaves her. She thinks that there must have been something she didn't do right. He makes her think so low of herself. This explains Efuru's thought: “Perhaps there is no woman in my husband's life after all...No it is not possible. Men behave this way when women are in their lives and she is so influential that they cannot but bow to her whims and will. No, I was right. There is a woman behind this indifference. A woman whose personality is greater than mine...” (Nwapa 54) Even the day Adizua came back asking for his food After wasting food severally, food he never provided money for, Efuru went in to make his food, he left the house by the time Efuru was done with the food. “I did not cook anything for you. For weeks now you have not asked for your food and tonight you have returned demanding your food. There is no food. I have wasted a lot of money cooking food that you never ate”. [Nwapa, 52-53]. When he insisted that he wants his food, Efuru went into the kitchen that night to make food for her husband who was nowhere to be seen by the time the food was served. “That night Efuru did not sleep”. [Nwapa 52]. When she confronted him to know why he treats her the way he does, he treated her with silence. “...Adizua where did you go last night and why did you get me up from bed to cook for you only to go out before I finished cooking? Adizua made no reply” [Nwapa. 52.]

Also, in Emeam's *Wife of the gods*, one remarks the same emotional exploitation and torment between Umunna and his wife. Nwanjije, Umunna's wife is naturally endowed with good features which gets her favour from other people, but her husband turns those good features into having bad connotation.

“Her gap teeth, however, made her distinct in a crowd. She loved her gap teeth and flaunted it around. Her smiles were captivating and made her look more good-natured, beautiful and welcoming. Such infectious smile got her almost everything she wanted from people, but not from her husband. Umunna, her husband, saw the smiles of his wife as chameleonic.” [Emeam, 39]

Again, it was demeaning for a man to share information with women because the women are seen as being inferior, for instance, Emeam gives a reason why Dike is looked down upon. "Any way Dike's talk did not carry much weight. He was flippant, sharing much with women." [Emeam. 44].

Igbo culture is one of the cultures in Africa where there is a great male dominance. It is unfortunate that according to Ashmi in his article "Gender Disparities in the Igbo Culture as portrayed in Nwapa's *Efuru*", "Patriarchy or the male domination in the society has been followed not only because they are forced by the men in the society, but also because they are advocated by the women in the society". One sees in *Efuru*, Women encouraging this male dominance and working against fellow women by deceiving other women and by literally being brainwashed themselves in accepting that they are inferior to men. When one is brainwashed, she tries to sell the notion to other women. Often women suffer in the hands of other women. For example, Omirima, in the novel trying to discredit Efuru before her mother-in-law by blaming Efuru for not giving Gilbert a child after one year of being married to him. She tells Gilbert's mother: "It is a year since your son married. One year is enough for any woman who would have a baby to begin making one. Find out quickly and if she is barren start early to look for a black goat, because at night a black goat will be difficult to find. Besides there are other girls you will like to have as daughters inlaw" [Nwapa, 139] She automatically blames Efuru for her delay in child bearing. At the end of the novel Omirima lies against Efuru that she has committed adultery and because of her waywardness, the gods have struck her with a strange sickness.

Adizua's mother Ossai is an example of the brainwashed docile igbo woman, who is not satisfied that she makes a mistake but wants to convince other women to tow her path. She explains her situation to Efuru telling her of her resolution and dedication to staying faithful to her husband who abandoned her and her son Adizua for another woman. she kept faith alive in waiting for him. She had a hope that he would come to her and Adizua. Ossai encourages Efuru to do the same with Adizua. She advises Efuru to be patient until her son Adizua returns back. She advises Efuru "My daughter... my son has neglected you...be patient. It pays to be patient. I have been patient all my life" [Nwapa 59]. Ossai had lived the rest of her life without her husband. She tells her story to make Efuru stay and wait for her son:

“When Adizua was five years old, he was very ill...Harvest came and everybody returned to the town to sell their yams, but Adizua’s father did not return...for a long time I heard nothing from him and we almost begged for food... My husband refused to return... my mother asked me to leave my husband’s house but I refused. I still had faith in him. I was so confident that he would come back to me and Adizua... we heard that he was at Agbor and was married to a wealthy woman.” [Nwapa. 60]

In *Efuru* Nwapa fights for the Igbo woman to be allowed to have a say in matters concerning her. She should be allowed the right and freedom to choose her path without the social inhibitions that are found in the Igbo culture. She uses *Efuru*, a beautiful and strong woman who comes from a well-respected family. *Efuru* falls in love with a poor young man, Adizua, a nobody. She knows that Adizua is no match to her and may not have been allowed to marry her, because of the class distinction. She decides to tow a more difficult path, by running to him who could not afford her bride price. She does this knowing very well how the society frowns at such, especially coming from a well-respected home. She leaves the same Adizua when he proves himself unworthy of her. She defies again the advice from the people whom she holds in high esteem.

In her father’s house she marries Gilbert because she feels he would be good enough for her and treat her well, and, leaves him when she feels humiliated by him by believing Omirima’s lies that her sickness was as a result of the adultery she committed and the gods being angry with her and striking her with a strange and incurable disease. One expects that when *Efuru* returns to her father’s house she would be independent and free from the clutches of being owned but unfortunately, she is free from the clutch of being answerable to husbands and father but not to the gods. Here Nwapa shows that the Igbo woman unlike the man cannot be allowed total freedom. One sees the same ordeal facing *Ihuaku* in Emeam’s *Wife of the gods*. *Ihuaku* was struck with an incurable disease because she refused being wife of the gods, she was healed by Nma who marries her afterwards. She is not given the privilege of independence.

An Igbo woman considers herself a real woman only when she proves her fertility by giving birth to children especially male ones. Women who don’t have children in the Igbo society experience the feeling of rejection and incompleteness. These women are blamed by the society for their barrenness. The society does not care to know if the man has a share in the infertility, the woman is solely blamed for it. Nwapa speaks

about the frustration and restlessness faced by Efuru because of her barrenness. Efuru frequented the Dibias [native doctors], made sacrifices to her chi and her ancestors to placate them in case they are angry with her. This is because in Igbo land a Woman's worth is measured by motherhood. When she fails to attain this stage, she is considered as waste to herself, to her husband and to her society, irrespective of her wealth, generosity and good nature. No wonder Omirima tells her mother-in-law "Your daughter in-law is good but she is childless. She is beautiful but we cannot eat beauty. She is wealthy but riches cannot go on errands for you." [Nwapa 163] One sees that irrespective of these qualities the goddess must have endowed Efuru with, denying her fruitfulness, makes her irrelevant and useless in the eyes of the society and bad luck to the families she was married to. Omirima gives a list of those women in her category: women who have been chosen by Uhamiri, the river goddess to worship her and to whom she gives wealth but denies the joy of motherhood thereby subjecting them to huge emotional hardship, torment, humiliation and ridicule.

When a woman is blessed with the fruit of the womb, she spends most of her time taking care of the children and her husband. She is dependent on her husband for her major needs and that of the children, which are dependent on the man's disposition. The man decides whether to grant her requests or not. She does not have much choice than to be at the beck and call of her husband. She seems to have no life and liberty except the ones her husband allows her to have. This keeps the woman as a "second-class citizen" and the man lords over her. Now when this woman is chosen by the gods to serve them, she is also kept in the bondage of not offending the gods. The woman is perpetually under the bondage of the man or of the gods which tradition places on her. The Dibia, Enesha Aagorua tells Efuru's father, Nwashike Ogene "... your daughter is a great woman. The goddess of the lake has chosen her to be one of her worshippers. It is a great honour. She is going to protect you and shower riches on you" [Nwapa 153]. Riches are seen as moving into the man's domain. It is supposed to distinguish the person who has it and give him honour and respect in the society but in the case of the woman as seen in Flora Nwapa's Efuru, Uhamiri punishes her by denying her the most sought-after blessing: the fruit of the womb, making her suffer mockery and humiliation. Although Efuru is kind loving, beautiful and wealthy. Omirima says, "It is said she makes money; she makes money are you going to eat money? [Nwapa. 162]. Nwapa reminds us that even the wealth comes with conditions:

“...you must keep her taboos. Orié day is her great day. You are not to fish on that day.... You should persuade people not to fish. You are not to eat yams on this day. You are not to sleep with your husband. You have to boil, roast or fry plantains on Orié days. Uhammiri likes plantains very much.... When you got bed, you must be in whites on Orié nights. You can sacrifice a white fowl to Uhammiri on that day. When you feel particularly happy, or grateful, you should sacrifice a white sheep to her. Above all you will keep yourself holy...” [Nwapa 154]

Also, in Emeam's *Wife of the gods*, the same fate befalls the woman. Ihuaku chosen by tradition to be wife of the gods, against her will, is prohibited from getting married to the man of her dreams and from procreating. She too invites the chief priest to interpret her strange and disturbing dreams. After some enchantment and divinations, he looked straight into Ihuaku's eyes and said “you are the wife of the gods of our land. You are to be where our people are. The foreign land will not keep you. And you are to remain single ... Ihuaku objected that she could not possibly be a wife to evil spirit.” [Emeam. 16]

Like Efuru, she is blessed with beauty and wealth. Okeziri one of her suitors describes her as: “a woman of means and extreme beauty”. [Emeam 85] She is so beautiful that her beauty paves way for her where men are afraid to get into. “The colonial masters were severally deceived by her beauty. They supposed her to be an unfortunate African woman, favoured by nature to be a white but disfavoured by destiny and had to be an African. Every District Officer who sets eyes on her gave her an open cheque of employment.” [Emeam 47]

She is influential in the society, “but the story of the perilous path to Gadaga changed when Ihuaku influenced the colonial administration to reconstruct the road to the river.” [Emeam 28]. Also, she goes against the tradition by stripping off the right of Kingship from the rightful clan and brings it to her family, even when she knows that tradition favours the first village to occupy the Royal seat. “Ihuaku recommended her elder brother for the crown. Nwabara an overweight, dull and detestable character was crowned the king of the community.” [Emeam 47]. These wealth and influence make the men to fear her but like Efuru she belongs to the gods and she is denied the joy of motherhood. She is allowed to enjoy her wealth and influence as long as she lives within the confines of the rules and regulations of the gods which is not getting married to any mortal nor procreate. Like Efuru she defies the gods and gets pregnant for a white man lover, the gods in their anger strike her

with an incurable disease which made her white lover abandon her and goes back to his country Britain.

Conclusion

In different societies, motherhood is enveloped with different meanings as it affects the culture of that society. In both books, both authors being from the same region, write, how motherhood plays an important role in the Igbo society: which presents a woman's central purpose as being able to bear a child and also believes that, motherhood is the only thing that gives a woman her identity. Both authors in their various ways bring out in their books the importance of childbearing in the Igbo society. Their female protagonists long to have that inner fulfillment that motherhood brings even with their wealth and influence; showing that wealth does not substitute for motherhood.

Both authors are not against their women being under the protection of the man but are not comfortable with the fact that the Igbo woman is voiceless. They present their female protagonists as not only being made to be docile or just being there to take care of children and their men, but should contribute to the needs of the society and, not see such acts as belonging to the male folk alone. They also bring out the ordeal of the Igbo woman; the culture and tradition do not allow her to have both freedom, wealth and fulfillment like her male counterparts. The woman has to be possessed by either man or spirits or even both, just to make sure that she is not free. Though they both tried to create a space for their women in the masculine league by giving them beauty, wealth and influence, which are supposed to empower these female characters and give them freedom and dignity in their community, these women still need support and compliment from either the men or the gods. Efuru though, very strong and successful still longs for a suitable husband. She has the coverage of the river goddess when both husbands failed. Also, her counterpart Ihuaku is healed and married by Nma an extra ordinary man equipped and sent by the gods. The Igbo society, through culture and tradition, has made it that, the fate of the Igbo woman will always be decided by either the gods or man or even both. We in this paper, are not asking the woman to revolt against the society and the tradition but to lend her worth and voice to the society. She should be a player in her team and a voice in matters concerning her. When she gives to the society, the society will recognize her.

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**THE ROLE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITES ON
MARITAL STABILITY: A CASE OF THE ABAGUSII PEOPLE,
KENYA**

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Executive Summary

The major purpose of this study was to explore the role of African traditional marriage rites on marital stability; in a case study of the Abagusii ethnic community from Kisii and Nyamira counties, Kenya. The study was based on the Symbolic Interactionism (SI) theory of Social Psychology and adopted the use of narrative qualitative research methods. The study facilitated the gathering of data of narratives related to culture and the rituals with regard to the marriage of the Abagusii ethnic community. The qualitative study used a focus group of 12 elderly people from the Gusii community who were selected through purposeful and snowball sampling. Research instruments included interview schedules, the data was then analysed using qualitative within the purview of the research questions and the marriage rites themes. Focus group discussions were used to identify issues and interpretations. A discussion guide was used to ask general questions. The qualitative study findings indicated that various Kisii traditional marriage rites were practised to sustain marital stability. These include initiation and mentorship into adulthood, courtship, aided partner search, in-laws' visitations, introduction ceremonies, payment of bridal wealth, wrestling matches, weddings and post-wedding marriage rituals. Finally, the qualitative study found out that traditional marriage rites are believed to circumvent divorce and contribute to marital stability. Marriage sustainability was through celebrations and communal support. The study recommends that there is a need to revive the African traditional marriage practices and marriage therapists can incorporate this perspective during marital counselling sessions.

Keywords: Marriage, marriage rites, marital stability, bridal wealth

Background

Marital instability has increased tremendously in western developed countries since the mid-1960s. Despite the lack of consistent data, it seems that the same trend has been noted in Iran recently (Vakili et al 2015). Marital instability reveals affective and cognitive states in the company, with related actions, which are foreseen to terminate a relationship (Kreager et al 2014). Meyer Fortes purports that many first unions may be terminated after some time. To capture the flexible character of these marriages Fortes classifies them as 'experimental marriages' (Fortes1949).

Kihombo (2018) asserts that in spite the marital conflicts being a worldwide phenomenon, the United States is the leading country in the world in terms of marital conflicts that lead to divorces.

Existing research suggests that different types of violence often coexist: physical IPV is often accompanied by sexual IPV, and is usually accompanied by emotional abuse. For example, in the WHO multi-country study, 23–56% of women who reported ever experiencing physical or sexual IPV had experienced both (3). A comparative analysis of DHS data from 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries found that the majority (61–93%) of women who reported physical IPV in the past 12 months also reported experiencing emotional abuse (Bott S. et al. 2012). A study was conducted on how individual characteristics, family backgrounds, homogamous/heterogamous marriages, and dyadic interactions are linked with marital conflict and marital satisfaction among married Chinese participants. Multivariate statistical analyses based on the China General Social Survey 2006 data (CGSS 2006) indicate that marital duration, rural origin, egalitarian decision-making, and frequent dyadic communication decrease marital conflict, whereas personal income, egalitarian gender ideologies, social class standing, and double-earner status elevate marital conflict (Xiaohe Xu and Donna Miller 2017).

Karimi et al (2019) explain that the extracted protective factors associated with marital stability in long-term marriage were classified as interpersonal and intrapersonal. It remains unclear exactly what role culture plays in race-ethnic differences in marital behaviour. Accounting for the traditional culture among Mexican Americans does not explain the earlier age at marriage for Mexican Americans as compared to Whites (Raley et al., 2004). However, Raley et al. (2004) suggest that culture may be significant to ethnic differences in marriage patterns and emphasize the need for future research to focus on specific

aspects of culture. We examine several cultural factors, including social support, religion, and attitudes about marriage and gender. According to Kihombo (2018) socialization is one of the factors that are responsible for marriage divorce in Africa and around the globe generally.

Recent evidence has shown that Africa has witnessed a high rate of marital conflict as a result of westernization, globalization, urbanization and industrialization periods triggered by a monetary industrial economy that have affected the extended families that had the responsibility to solve any conflict between the couples (Adeniran, 2015). According to Vida (2013), available 7 information, on Sub-Saharan Africa including Tanzania has depicted an increasing rate of marriage breakdowns, even though statistics on marriage breakdowns in the region are limited and unreliable. This is due to some studies conducted in the area of marital dissolution and the little coverage on registration of marriages and divorces. Though limited, the UN (2006) as cited in Vida (2013) has indicated that more than one-third of women in this region experience marital dissolution before they reach ages forty and sixty in their first marriages.

A study conducted on South African people in rural KwaZulu-Natal between 2000 and 2006 on marriages, focused on the distribution of marital status by age and sex, purports that some adults are reported as divorced or separated, the proportion not rising above five per cent in any age group. The low rate of divorce in The Africa Centre Demographic Information System (ACDIS) population likely reflects the high proportion of marriages contracted through customary rites. Prior to 1998, marriages contracted under the Customary Marriage Act could be dissolved by a tribal court. However, in reality, this was rarely done given the complexity of the marriage process and attendant payments between families, barriers to litigation by women, and traditional customs that allowed men to take additional wives. A large number of couples continue to embark upon the process of “ilobolo” or become engaged, going on to marry in both traditional and civil ceremonies. There could also be under-reporting of divorce, particularly in families whose faith tradition does not permit divorce (Hosegood et al 2006).

Marital instability is an emerging and increasing phenomenon in Kenyan societies. A study by (Musau et al 2015) examined, the nature of marital instability among women in the rural areas, the major causes, and its impact on the female-headed household livelihoods. The study adopted a cross-sectional case study design and it involved women of

the 15-49 age interval years who were separated, divorced or deserted by their husbands. Most of the separated mothers are faced with challenges of achieving and maintaining their livelihood due to financial hardships. Okeno (2012) conducted research in Kenya among the Abagusii community which assessed the influence of Christianity on Kisii traditional marriage with particular reference to bridewealth in Gucha District, Kisii county Kenya. The church on the same note will be able to adopt important aspects from the traditional view of bridewealth of the Abagusii purposely to enrich the payment of bride price in the Christian church. The study found out that both Christian and traditional marriages agree in one way or another. Both share a system of 'bridewealth negotiation, the ceremonies binding the payment of bridewealth, which assists in countering divorce. Further, the respondents on variables agreed that both bride price systems are interlinked. The study, therefore, recommended that there should be a common system of bridewealth in both Christian and traditional marriages and a common form of bridewealth negotiation and terms of payment among all groups.

In the past, most studies have been conducted worldwide but few studies have been carried out in Africa. More so, other studies have been focusing on other factors that contribute to marital but few studies have focused on culture and especially the contribution of the African traditions on marital stability. Hardly any studies have specifically focused on the role of marriage rites in marital stability within the Abagusii community.

Methods

The study was conducted in Kisii and Nyamira counties by the members of the Abagusii community. The use of qualitative methods for this study was to facilitate the gathering of narratives and lived experiences related to culture and the rituals of the Abagusii, and more so, with regard to and as manifested in marriage. The use of qualitative methods for this study facilitated the gathering of data of narratives related to culture and the rituals with regard to the marriage of the Abagusii ethnic community. The qualitative study used a focus group of 12 elderly people as a representative group of the Gusii community who were selected through purposeful and snowball sampling. Research instruments included interview schedules, the data was then analysed using qualitative design within the purview of the research questions and the marriage rites themes. Focus group discussions were used to identify issues and interpretations. A discussion guide was used to ask general questions.

Results

Questions that were used in facilitating the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were drawn from the interview guide prepared for the study. The principal aim of these discussions was to explore the marriage rites practised by the Abagusii people and examine the influence of marriage rites on marital stability. The thematic analysis resulted in the exhaustive descriptions of Kisii Marriage rites and the effects on marital stability. The responses from the participants were recorded in video and field notes were captured. Thereafter, the results were coded and significant statements formed at aided in generating categories and themes from the focus group discussions.

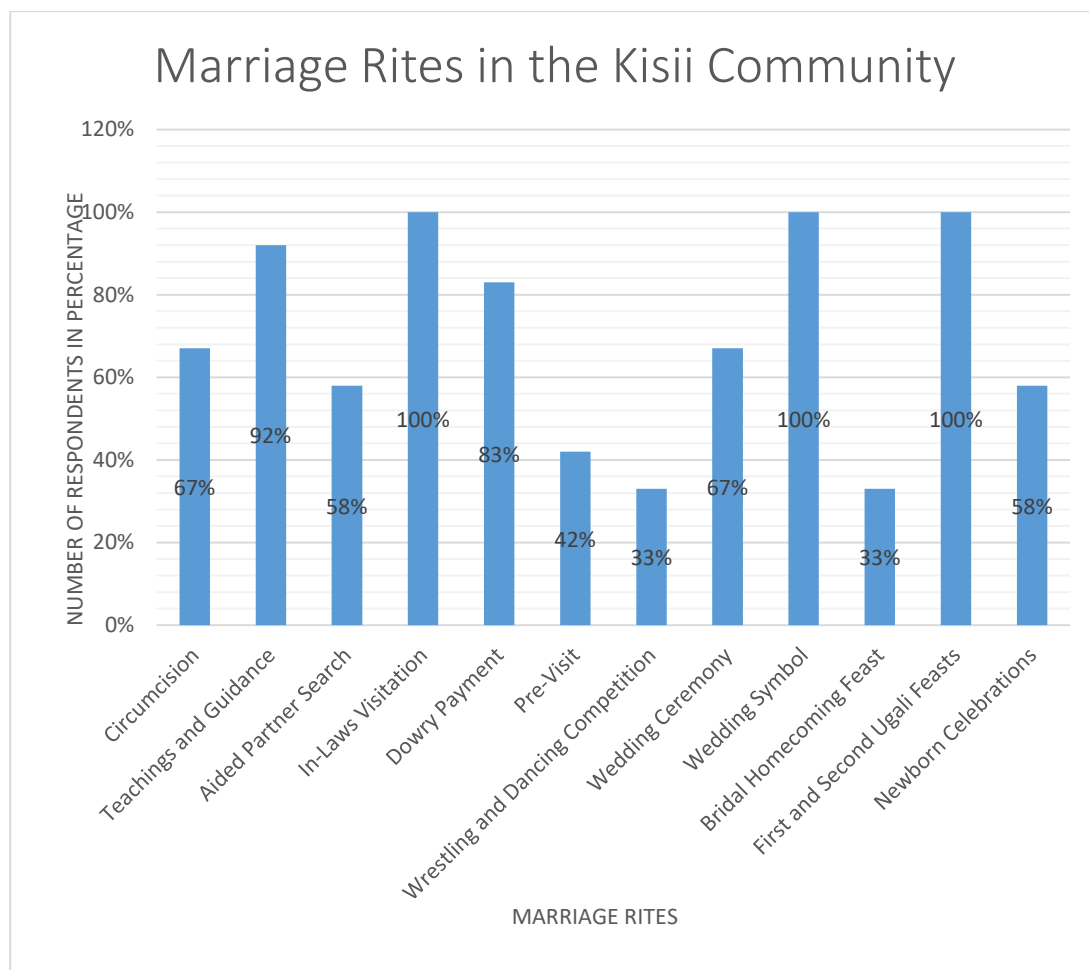


Fig 1 Themes on which marriage rites are significant

The African Traditional Marriage Rites Practised by the Abagusii People

Initiation and Adulthood

The participants reported that one of these customs is the initiation rite. This entailed circumcision and receiving various teachings on the transition into adulthood. Among the Abagusii, no one could get into marriage without being initiated by circumcision. Since marriage was thought of as the most important thing it was believed to be the beginning of life. The bearing of children was regarded as the fruit of marriage. Marriage among the Abagusii is intrinsically connected to initiation. Interviews showed that it was widely believed that circumcision reduces sexual urges in women and would sustain a marriage. In continuing with the practice, the Kisii seek to ensure that their women do not become promiscuous.

The participant emphasized that the circumcision exercise was highly regarded and more rituals were performed and vow taken that would help in sustaining their marriages later in life. The study established that upholding cultural traditions were the main reason why initiation was practised. Female circumcision was considered an integral part of the Kisii people's way of life and culture as the study found out during the interview. As one respondent pointed out,

“Boys and girls were circumcised at puberty which symbolised endurance and a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Preserving sexual morality was a reason given why female circumcision was undertaken. Circumcision was also important for men since after circumcision they join adulthood and take new roles in the community like fending for the family, offering defence during tribal war and attack from wild animals and cattle rustlers.” (Participant 2, focus group discussion, March 2022)

According to Mayer (1953), both boys and girls went through marital counselling on what was expected of them in transition into adulthood and how to handle their relationships once they got married. The pain that they underwent during circumcision without sedation was to train and prepare them to learn to endure as they transit into adulthood. One of the participants had a view that;

“They were taught various traditions and how to step into adulthood. They were taught about sexuality, adult roles, hard work, protection and fending for the family among other roles. They underwent marriage counselling from aunts and uncles, on a commitment to marriage by being faithful, in order to escape curses and harsh punishment including death that resulted from breaking the marital taboos “amasangi”. (Participant 1, focus group discussion, March 2022)

Courtship

The participants reported that the courtship period did not last for a long time because they entirely depended on the information gathered from the go-between (*esigani*) This is the time between bride and groom identification and wedding. During this short period, the two main steps entailed partner search and groom and also bride identification and introductions (*ekerorano*). There were certain rituals that were practised including visitations, introductions, feasting, further spying and investigations of the two families.

Ago-between(*esigani*)wouldbeidentifiedbytheparentsoftheboy.The go-between (*esigani*)maybeofeithergender and maybe a neighbour or a relative.Heorsheissentbytheboy'sparents to assist in searching for a suitable girl for marriage. A go-between who could be a distant relative or friend was sent to identify a good, hardworking girl with a good sexual reputation (not sexually promiscuous), not short-tempered andwhose parents are not witches (*abarogi*).The go-between is to first give a detailed report to both sides (*ogosigana*); this was his first task. (Nyaruri, 2014). The final task of the go-between was to find out whether the girl has any disfiguringmarks on her body which are not visiblewhen dressed, that is, beauty and health check. (Okeno, D. 2012). One of the respondents pointed out that;

“Emissaries and spying and mediation “*Esigani*” could try to inquire about bridal virginity test, “*ogwekunga*” and grooms’ sexual ability assessments. They checked if the families were witches or thieves or if it was a lazy girl or if they had scars on their body. Theexistenceof such scars particularly thoseresulting from burns was sometimes seen as parenting carelessness or lower the bride price.”(Participant 4, focus group discussion, March 2022)

In-laws visitations and introduction ceremonies (*Ekerorano*) were done where a feast that was called ‘*Ekeri-boko*’ (eating and drinking with in-laws). Usually,thiswasdoneintheevening followed by much dancing, drinking andfestivity. A goat and some chicken were slaughtered and served. The participants narrated that,

“The visitors felt more honoured with the goat meat due to its bigger size as compared to chicken. It was taboo for the groom to eat chicken at the in-laws since due to its smaller size, it’s believed to be like despise or disrespect to the son-in-law. However again when the chicken was served, it was a test

conducted to see if the groom is trained to abhor traditions and taboos since in case, he ate, then the in-law's relationship (oboko) may be broken. (Participant 8, focus group discussion, March 2022)

Bride wealth

Payment of bride price involves the two groups of elders that meet at the groom's home for bride price negotiations known as "*okomanachiombe*" (scrutiny and selection of cattle) which constituted the first important step in the bride price transfer. A participant explained that;

"More animals were given as bride price for girls that were virgins and sometimes if not, the girls were sent back to be married later as second wives. The girl had to report privately to the aunts later if the man was competent in sexuality. Bride price payment was always accompanied by eating and bride price was paid the bride price in instalments for the two families to ensure that they keep standards for the marriage not to break and for bride price debt to be eventually cleared." (Participant 7, focus group discussion, March 2022)

In the process of selection, the elders portrayed a business-like spirit of hard bargaining and arguments between the giving elders and the receiving elders. If the animals offered at the view were accepted, the bride's father declared his final satisfaction. He could not afterwards ask for more. This means that if he was not satisfied with the offered bride's wealth, he rejected the proposal there and then. The element of finality in the agreement was outwardly symbolized by an intensive celebration which took place immediately after acceptance (Obegi, 1920).

Post bride price bride's new home pre-visit entailed a test after the bride's arrival on the sexual performance of both the bride and the groom. This was a handle that led to a big trial for the two because the impotence of the groom would cause the bride to break off the marriage. A girl could also be sent away!

"The bride was supposed to be taken to her new home a few days later after bride price payment for orientation. Once she arrived at the groom's home, she was welcomed with lots of feasting and celebrations." (Participant 3, focus group discussion, March 2022)

Wedding Ceremonies and Rituals

A wrestling match ("*enyameni*) and the bridegroom's final visit was organized between the men of the girl's party and

the groom's men. The *obokano* (harp) is the main musical instrument of the Abagusii people and was played. The wrestling winning team was given a bull for slaughter. The focus group discussion panellists reported that;

"After the prewedding feasts, the bridegroom visits the bride home some days later smartly dressed and highly decorated with, skin wristband (*ebitwanga*), anklets (*chinchigiri*) and a crown on his head (*ekiore*) and on the following day the two groups meet for a wrestling match "*enyameni*" and the winning team takes home a whole slaughtered bull." (Participant 5, focus group discussion, March 2022)

A prewedding ceremony "*ekeragerio*" precedes the real wedding day and it's a big celebration that is organised at the groom's and brides' homes but on different days. The bride will have gone back to her home to participate in the prewedding ceremony. On this day, a bull is slaughtered and the main aim is to just make merry and give speeches and advice to the bride or groom. The wedding (*enyangi*) itself was performed by the wedding officiant who acted as a priest, '*omokundekane*' to join the couple.

"Somewhere in the middle of the way, the group of relatives and villagers from the girl home met the other group of bridegrooms' sides and handed over their daughter and went back. When the party reached the boy's home, more rituals are performed" (Participant 11, focus group discussion, March 2022).

The wedding symbols (*ebitwanga*, *ebitinge*, *ebete*) where the newly wedded were marked by putting on some bracelets and anklets or even rings to show that they are married and they could only be removed in case of death or divorce.

Post-Wedding Rituals

After the wedding, it meant that the relationship had been cemented. The parent's in-law from the two groups would start calling each other by a special and respectable name, that is, "the nurturer" (*korera*). The bride and groom also started referring to the parents' in-laws as their own parents, that is, mum and dad (*mama* and *tata*). The bridal homecoming feast (*kwarigania omoriakari*) was very significant.

The meal-sharing "*ugali*" feast was performed where *ugali*, '*obokima*' is brought with a ready slaughtered goat meat from the bride's home by her sisters, cousins and girlfriends (young maidens carrying on their heads) a few days after the main wedding or customary marriage rites. The main agenda of the

visitation was for the young maidens to find out about the welfare of their sister and confirm if their sister arrived safely on the wedding day and if she was being treated well. (Participant 6, focus group discussion, March 2022)

Within the first week after the bride has come to the bridegroom's home, 'obokima' ugali in a nicely made basket and raw meat is brought by women from the bride's home. The reason for this is to check how their daughter arrived and how she was welcomed. They also took this opportunity to inquire about her husband's 'fitness'. This bringing of ugali and slaughtered goat could be done again later on two or more occasions.

Newborn celebrations "*Ekerero*" were highly regarded if the couple has a child, after a year or so, several rites are performed, beer and food are brought from the girl's home. The boy's home also slaughters a goat and prepares a feast to welcome the newborn. The villager could also offer to work for the new mum and bring various gifts to celebrate the newborn. This occasion is called '*ogwasimoria omwand*', calling the child by name. (Participant 12, focus group discussion, March 2022)

"Newborns were highly celebrated; there were other marital ceremonies that were carried out all along throughout the lifetime of the married couples to ensure the sustainability of the marriage"

If the married couples live together for about two years without offspring, people begin to suspect both of them. In most cases, the parents of the boy contact some magicians and traditional healers to treat or to give guidance or advice on the steps to be taken. On the other hand, a close relation of the groom may be identified and then asked to come privately relate sexually with the bride. If it is the man's fault, the girl is allowed to stay and somebody takes the opportunity to give birth with her and the offspring were counted to belong to the wedded husband. However, if the woman is at fault, the man has full responsibility to divorce her!

Discussions

The analysis supposes the Symbolic interactionists theory that explores the changing meanings attached to family. They argue that shared activities help to build emotional bonds among family members, and that marriage and family relationships are based on negotiated meanings. The interactionist perspective emphasizes that families reinforce and rejuvenate bonds through symbolic mechanism rituals such as family meals and holidays. Marriage breakdown is rare for

those who practice traditional marriage rites. According to Musau (2015), Kenya is still faced with the problem of an increase in marital instabilities and there is little information available about the causes of this trend, its effect on the family institution and the effectiveness and appropriateness of the existing policies and programmes in curbing the problem. The research participants also noted that of late, very many marriages are breaking. Yakubu (1998) opined that in marriage, there are lots of stresses, bitterness, failures and successes. Other factors that threaten marital stability include the age of marriage, educational level of spouse, religion, income, type of marriage, fertility status, kind of family background of spouses, communication, culture, etc. The results indicate that since marriage was thought of as the most important thing it was believed to be the beginning of life. The bearing of children was regarded as the fruit of marriage.

The most significant finding was that marriage was a community affair and it could only be strengthened through participation in various marriage rites. In line with the expected results, the Kisii community actively engaged in various marriage ceremonies just like all other African communities. This is in line with marriage is a major transforming ceremony in African Religion. It is viewed as a community activity that involves all members, those who are currently physically living in the community, the ancestors and those yet to be born. This point comes out clearly in Mbiti's explanation of the nature of Bahemuka, (1992). The study established that upholding cultural traditions were the main reason why initiation was practised. The participants reported that respect for culture was highly regarded among the Abagusii people, especially in matters of marriage relationships. Contrary to this, within the Americans, the most prominent aspects of couples' relationships linked to marital stability consisted of religion, sexual relationship, commitment, intimacy, and congruence in values and beliefs. In Asian countries, the most prominent factors included communication, religion, children, conflict resolution, emotional issues and love, and in European countries, the key factors included a sexual relationship, commitment, relationship satisfaction, and support from one's mate (Karimi et al 2019).

Female circumcision was considered an integral part of the Kisii people's way of life and culture as the study found out during the interview. Male Adulthood At about age twelve, boys have to undergo circumcision in order to become junior warriors. In order for a female member of the Maasai community to be considered socially adult, she has to undergo clitoridectomy (emorata). On the circumcision day,

according to Hughes (2006), “her father sacrificed a ram and brought honey-beer, to ensure that she would bear children” (p. 20). Her head is shaved and she wears a special chain of tiny metal discs on her head to show that she is now ready to be a bride. Circumcision is, according to Spencer (1988), the “immediate and most significant step..., which places her in a ritual limbo between girlhood and wifhood (Okiya 2016).

Initiation brings each individual into the maturity of adulthood. It thus ushers one into marriage, itself a rite of passage. Bridewealth as a “legitimation of children” is an essential component of marriage because it has a social and religious value. It is the foundation for which families are built and a communication channel with the ancestors. Magesa brings in the theme of polygyny when he discusses “the value behind different forms of marriage” (Magesa 1997). He concludes his discussion of marriage in the context of kinship by discussing moral maturity in death. “Longevity is a prized aspect of life ... it is seen as a consequence and proof of having lived morally” (Magesa 1997). In his discussion of marriage, he clearly illustrates how several themes are manifested in marriage (Magesa 1997). The role of the community includes the ancestors as the senior-most members of the community, family or lineage. When a dead African individual is considered an ancestor, he or she does not cease to be a member of the community, family or lineage of origin. And the role of the ancestors in marriage is underlined within the community, family or lineage of origin of the said individual. The central role of procreation in marriage further underlines the importance of the community because procreation facilitates the growth of the community (Magesa 1997).

Based on the findings, the study found out that teachings and guidance, payment of bride price, wedding ceremony and meal sharing feasts were among the most significant rituals for marital stability. bride price was very significant, this is in agreement with Adams and Mburugu (1994) in their work on the Kikuyu in Kenya, who write that bridewealth (another term for bride price) is the primary indicator of marriage, with one respondent saying: ‘There was no ceremony, but traditionally I am married because I paid the bride wealth.’ With regard to the Sebei of Uganda, anthropologist Goldschmidt (1974) notes that without the transfer of bride price there is no marriage and any children will not belong to the father’s lineage. Similar to this, a study conducted by Siwan A., Lori B., and Jean-Philippe P., (2018) where respondents were presented with emotions of frowning and smiling faces to visualize the scale. Based on the respondents’ answers, on their self-

reported happiness. The findings appear to suggest that a higher bride price is associated with a better marriage, where the wife is happier.

The results agree with the existing literature of Conflict Theory by German philosopher and sociologist Karl Marx (1818–1883) who looks at society as a competition for limited resources. Polish-Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909) expanded on Marx's ideas by arguing that war and conquest are the basis of civilizations and believed that cultural and ethnic conflicts led to states being identified and defined by a dominant group that had power over other groups (Irving 2007). Consequently, these results built on the existing evidence of this theory that suggests that the results should be taken into account when considering a step-by-step process of how to perform customs of the process of their marriage union. The data contributes a clear understanding of the various marriage rites that existed or still exist within the Abagusii people. On the other hand, it was interesting to note that, unlike conflict theorists that argue that family is not necessarily a group characterized by consensus. It might be held together by constraint or coercion. On the other hand, conflict theorists argue that harmony is not necessary for the continuation of order in the family. This means that misunderstanding might even build strong relationships, making them rewarding in the final analysis (Stark (2007). Unexpected results were a bit contrary is that still within the Kisii community, there were slight differences through which the rites were performed since some could take a longer period than others and in some clans, the series of rituals were intertwined yet within some clans, some rituals were performed in a different way or skipped. However, all the rituals were geared towards a common agenda. However, based on the findings of similar studies, a more plausible explanation is that all the rites practised aimed at a common agenda of stabilizing marriages and ensuring sustainability. Interestingly, the study found out that marriage sustainability was a community affair. This is in agreement with the communitarian aspect of Maasai culture and religion that accords the community a special place in the selection of the bride, proposal for marriage and negotiation of bride wealth. It was indicated by 115/163 (71%) respondents that the community or family members had a major role to investigate the family backgrounds of the partners (Okiya 2016).

The generalizability of the research is limited by the fact that a small representative sample size was used to identify the participants for the focus group discussion. Problems encountered during data collection included language barriers that made it difficult to interpret and find

the right words to describe some rituals or the exact rite that was involved. Or analyzed. The results presented are a qualitative part of the major research design that's an exploratory sequential design which is likely to contain richer and more comprehensive findings as compared to the first part. In conclusion, the results are valid despite the limitations because the focus group participants were carefully selected from the two counties occupied by the Abagusii community and most of them were over the age of seventy and have a vast knowledge of culture.

However, it's important to note that some shortcomings related to the traditional rituals were noted. For instance, if the girl was not a virgin, she was the only one victimised and sent back to her home or married as a second or subsequent wife. Secondly, in the case of barrenness, the woman was despised and sent away but for a man, another man in the clan was identified to sire children for him. Gender imbalance aspect is related to the findings of Vakili et al. (2014) showing that overall women were more likely to have dissatisfaction with their marriage and were more likely to complain. It might be related to patriarchy. In a patriarchal society like Iran, power is primarily held by adult men. Males predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property; and, in the domain of the family, fathers or father-figures hold authority over women and children similar to Thompson, Linda and Alexis J Walker (1989) who claim that emotional differences between men and women might be another related factor to marital challenges.

Conclusion

It should be noted that this study identified fundamental cultural aspects that are still relevant in modern society for marriage stability. Marriage sustainability was a community affair. The two families nurtured it with the support of the clan members. The originality of this study lies in its strength-focused perspective on the deeper investigation into the traditional marriage rites and the impact on marital stability and the fact that its results can be applied to family establishments and for counsellors and therapists to take the initiative of stabilizing marriages.

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IGBO LANGUAGE AS THE CULTURE THAT UNITES THE IGBO PEOPLE: PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Executive Summary

Culture pictures peoples' way of life. Language is one of the major aspects of culture. In fact it houses other aspects of culture, because other aspects of culture are expressed and transmitted through language. Igbo is one of the major tribes in Nigeria. In Igbo land, there are different cultural communities with different cultural practices. All these are expressed through the Igbo language. It means differences in cultural life of Igbo people has its unity in Igbo language. This paper centers on how Igbo language unites different cultures in Igbo land and the prospects for the development of Igbo language. With this in mind, the writer shows how important Igbo language is in the life and unity of Igbo people. As such, if Igbo language dies, the unity of Igbo people dies. The research adopted ethnolinguistic identity theory as the theoretical framework. The paper shows the nature of cultural practices among the Igbo people, the role of Igbo language in Igbo culture, the place of Igbo language among the Igbo people, efforts that have been put in place by some prominent Igbo people and some societies in order to promote and develop Igbo language, Way forward to the development of Igbo language.

Keywords: Igbo, Language, Culture, People, Development

Introduction

Culture is the mode of life of a people. It houses and shows the way groups of people view and understand the world. It is expressed through different channels; the most prominent of which is language. In Igbo land, there many communities differentiated by different ways of living. These communities speak Igbo language as their native language; and their ways of living are expressed through the Igbo language. It all means that different communities in Igbo land which

are differentiated by different cultural practices are united by Igbo language as their common language.

Language is an aspect of culture. As such, Igbo language as an aspect of Igbo culture is as old as Igbo land. Record has it that before the advent of colonial Masters, Igbo language was the only language spoken by Igbo people. So, they cherished Igbo language to their hearts. This led to rapid development of Igbo language in every aspect of language development. However, towards the tail end of twentieth century and the beginning of twenty-first century, attention of some Igbo people started shifting from Igbo language towards embracing English language which is a foreign language, even within the Igbo geographical areas. This ugly development wounded the progress and development of Igbo language.

The decline in the use of Igbo language by some people of Igbo origin drew the attention of some people who love the progress of the language. These people helped in the public out-cry on the need to protect and fan into flame the dimming Igbo language and save it from drowning. This led to the formation of different societies and organizations for promotion of Igbo language.

By and large, there had been no recorded evidence of research on how Igbo language, as an aspect of Igbo culture unites Igbo people and their culture, and the prospects for its development. Besides, the situation of Igbo language at this age requires attention. As such, the researcher deemed it fit to embark on this research in order to bridge the gap and provide a better atmosphere for Igbo language to thrive. The research reflects on how different communities in Igbo land differ in some cultural practices; whereas they are one in some aspects; how the Igbo language serves as the culture that unites the Igbo people and their culture; the nature of Igbo language before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria till the end of twentieth century; how the people embraced the language in the past; the present situation of neglect of the language by some Igbo people especially the young ones, in this twenty-first century; the fate of Igbo land and Igbo people if the Igbo language happen to go into extinction. Then on the possible remedy on how to rescue Igbo language from extinction, in order for it to continue in its unifying function.

Conceptual Studies

In order to treat this topic well, there is need to look at some basic concepts that formed the key words in the research. The basic concepts include, Language, Culture, Igbo People and Igbo Language.

Language

Tasky (2007) defines language as a formal system of signs governed by grammatical rules of combination of signs to communicate meaning. In this definition, Tasky makes it clear that human language has some ingredients that come together in order to make an utterance meaningful. The signs must be generally accepted by the group that owns and speaks that language. As such, language is a generally accepted mode of communication.

Furthermore, Hauser and Fitch (2003) define language as a system of communication that enables humans to exchange verbal or symbolic utterances. Their definition emphasizes the social function of language. People in society use language to interact among themselves and to express their intentions. It means that a language must have vocabularies which are signs relating to different meanings.

Here, the researcher defines language as the recognized and unified means of communication by the people of common ancestral origin despite division in their cultural practices.

Culture

James, Magee, Scerri and Steger (2015) define culture as a social domain that emphasizes the practices, discourses and material expressions, which over time, expresses the continuities and discontinuities of social meaning of a life held in common. This definition gives the picture of culture as a people's way of life. It covers the nature of relationship that exists among people in different societies.

Besides, Geertz (1973) defines culture as the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions. It is an ordered system of meaning and of symbols in terms of which social interaction takes place. From the definition above, Geertz presents culture as the eyes through which people see and interpret the happenings in the world. It means different cultures see the world from different perspectives. This accounts for differences in human behaviour.

Furthermore, Hofstede (1984) defines culture as the mind's collective programming that differentiates between one category of people and members of one group from another. The term category might imply nations, religion, and ethnicities, regions across or within nations, gender, organizations or occupations. Hofstede's definition views culture as it touches every aspect of human life.

The above definitions are welcomed, but as it touches this paper, the researcher sees culture as the concrete articulation of different organs that form human behavior in different communities of the world.

Igbo People and Igbo Language

Onwuejeogu (1981) says that Igbo land covers from Agbo and Kwele in Delta State extending to Ahoada, Diobu and Umuabanyi in Port Harcourt. It passed Arochukwu in Abia State reaching Afikpo and Isiagu in Abakaliki extending to Enugwu-Ezike in Nsukka district and passed Ebu near River Niger. His definition points out that Igbo land covers the following states: Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, and some part of Delta, Akwa Ibom, and Revers.

Ugochukwu (2019) defines Igbo people as those from Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, and some part of Delta, Akwa Ibom, and Revers whose fatherland is Igbo. From every indication, Ugochukwu draws her definition from that of Onwuejeogu (1981). The definition summarizes the land boundaries of Igbo nation.

Furthermore, Nwadike (2002) defines together Igbo people and Igbo language. According to him, Igbo stands for the people of Igbo origin; second, it shows the boundaries of Igbo nation; third, it stands for the language spoken by the Igbo people. From his definition, Igbo people are those born of Igbo blood, no matter their place of domicile; Igbo land stands for the land occupied by the Igbo people, and Igbo language is the language spoken by the Igbo people as their mother tongue.

In addition, Umezi (2021) defines Igbo people as those whose parents are of Igbo origin, not minding their place of domicile. He went along to define Igbo language as 'Kwa' language spoken by Igbo people as their mother tongue.

However, as it concerns this research, the researcher is defining Igbo people as the people whose place of origin covers Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, and some part of Delta, Akwa Ibom, and Revers; who have common ancestral origin, practicing different cultures, but united by one language called Igbo language. Then, Igbo language is one of the 'Kwa' languages spoken by the Igbo people, and stands as their common unifying language.

Empirical Studies

In order to delve properly into this research, there is need to examine some related works in order to strike a balance and know where to put footsteps so as to achieve the goal of the research.

Chukwu (2005), in his research on the relationship between language and culture noted that, language is not only an aspect of culture but the vital means expressing people's culture and values. He further stated that languages generally are the most effective means of human's communication, interaction, co-operation and development. Chukwu's research shows that language is a very important aspect of culture. In fact, it is language that gives meaning to every other aspect of culture. This is because language is the vanguard of other aspects of culture. They are expressed and preserved through language.

Umezi and Ibeh (2020) in their research on how Igbo language and Igbo culture are intermingled, says that the rites of breaking kola nut is the clear picture of the marriage between Igbo language and Igbo culture. Igbo language is an aspect of Igbo culture. In fact, it unites all Igbo people despite differences in culture. Umezi and Ibeh try to give the picture of how Igbo language unites Igbo people. This is pictured in the ceremony of kola nut, which according to Igbo culture, must be performed in Igbo language; no matter the geographical location of the place where the ceremony takes place.

Besides, Basden (1921) conducted a research on the life of the Igbo people. He observed that Igbo language is tied to Igbo culture. The Igbo people love their language and prefer it to any other language. Basden's research shows the true picture of the Igbo people before and during the period of colonialism. How they embraced the Igbo language and made it part of their life. It is a good foothold to this work, because it helps in knowing the state of Igbo language and culture in the past. It differs from this work because it dwelt on the entire life of Igbo people; whereas this research centers on how Igbo language unites the Igbo people and prospects for its development.

Furthermore, Isichei (1976) in tracing the history of Igbo people narrated how the colonial Europeans introduced English language to co-exist with Igbo language. That is the origin of the struggle for survival being faced by Igbo language today. The work is useful in the sense that it helps to expose the history and the past lives of Igbo people. It will help the young generation Igbo people to know where the

struggle for liberation and improvement of Igbo language began, in order to know the strategies to deploy for its development.

Ogunyemi (2000), in his research on the negative influence of English language on the development of Yoruba language, observed that co-existence of English language with other Nigerian languages has negative influence on the speed development and advancement of the local languages. According to him, English language is being accorded more attention both in curriculum planning and development, scheduling and teaching approaches. All these hamper the development of Nigerian languages and negatively affects peoples' attitude towards them. Ogunyemi's observation is very clear. Attention which should be given to Nigerian indigenous languages are being offered to English language which is a foreign language. This hinders the rate at which the local languages develop. If such attention is given to local languages, they would not be where they are today. His work is related to this work as both are speaking of the prospects for the development of Nigerian local languages. However, they differ from each other in the sense that Ogunyemi's work hinges on the negative influence of English language on Yoruba and other Nigerian languages; whereas this work centers on prospects for the development of Igbo language. His throws more light on this research.

Emenanjo (1999:83), speaking on the need for owners of different languages to protect their languages says, "language is the key to the heart of the people. If we lose the key, we lose the people. A lost language is a lost tribe, a lost tribe is a lost culture, a lost culture is invaluable knowledge lost... the whole vast of archives of knowledge and expertise... will be consigned to oblivion." Emenanjo's statement summarizes everything about the need to promote and protect indigenous languages. The people's language is their culture, and their culture pictures their system of living. As such if one loses one's language, everything about one's life is lost. It stands as a reference point on the struggle to promote Igbo language.

Furthermore, Ugochukwu (2020), in her research on Igbo language amidst globalization: the way forward, remarks that globalization has come to stay. It is promoting some languages and culture and at the same time terminating some languages and culture. She therefore advises that it is the duty of Igbo people to promote the Igbo language in order to survive the blowing wind of globalization. She further noted that some individuals of Igbo origin had helped in their various capacities in building the Igbo language to the present stage. The

present generation is being called upon to continue from where they stopped. Ugochukwu's research is very good. It is of great help to lovers of Igbo language to work round the clock to pursue the course for the development and promotion of Igbo language to fit with the key languages of the world. Her research resemble this research because both of them are working out the way to develop Igbo language. However, they differ from each other because Ugochukwu's research centers on the way forward for survival of Igbo language in the era of globalization; whereas this research focuses on how to develop Igbo language as the aspect of culture that unites Igbo people.

Umezi (2021), in his research on the state of Igbo language in Nigeria, observed that, considering the high place of Igbo people in the economy of Nigeria especially in commerce and industry, Igbo language is supposed to be the most wide-spread language in Nigeria. The research pictures the lamentable nature of Igbo language among other major ethnic languages in Nigeria. The research came at the proper time, when there is a desperate call for attention on Igbo language. The research helps to draw the attention of Igbo people on their position in Nigerian economy and the need to beef up their language to be a major language in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This paper will be guided by ethnolinguistic identity theory. This theory was propounded by Howard Giles and Patricia Johnson in 1981 in their work, "The role of language in ethnic group relations." The theory holds that language is the major sign of group attachment and identity. It posits that people use communication accommodation strategies including verbal and nonverbal convergence to or divergence from their communication partner in order to emphasize affiliation or disaffiliation respectively.

The choice of this theory lies on the unifying role of Igbo language among the Igbo people. The differences in the cultural practices experienced in different communities in Igbo land find their unity in Igbo language as the language of the Igbo people.

Findings

Findings in this research are presented in the following subheadings: cultural practices which are universally practiced throughout the Igbo land, cultural practices restricted to some communities in Igbo land which are not practiced in other parts of the Igbo land, the role of Igbo

language in Igbo culture, and the place of Igbo language among the Igbo people, efforts made to develop Igbo language

Cultural practices which are common to every Igbo community

Findings in this research show that there are cultural practices which are common to every community in Igbo land. Such cultures as, Ceremony of kola nut, ọzọ title taking, marriage ceremony, funeral rites etc. are generally seen in all Igbo communities.

The ceremony of kola nut is one of the cultural practices that are generally practiced in the entire Igbo communities. It is an official sign of unity among the people involved. It is used in different ceremonies involving the Igbo people. However, the rites differ according to communities.

Besides, ọzọ title taking is another popular cultural practice noticed in every community in Igbo land. It is a popular position which puts one ahead of his age mates because of responsibilities attached to it. It is presumed that whoever takes ọzọ title is an upright man devoid of deceit and other human vices.

Marriage ceremony is one of the cultural rites of passages being practiced in the entire Igbo land. It is official formation and opening of a family by male and female adults. In the whole of Igbo land, palm wine plays a very important role in that ceremony. However, the rites performed for its effect differ according to communities.

Furthermore, funeral ceremony is one of the dignified cultural rites which is universally practiced throughout Igbo land. It is the rite of passage in which the living bid farewell to their dead ones to the land of the ancestors. The Igbo believe in the existence of two worlds, namely the human (physical) world and the spiritual world. The belief in the existence of two worlds surfaces during the funeral rites. However, despite the general Igbo belief in the relationship between the living and the dead, the mode of funeral rites differ greatly from one Igbo community to another.

In addition, masquerading is another cultural practice in operation in the entire Igbo land. Masquerade is an embodied human spirit that appears in the human environment to indicate the relationship between the living and the dead in Igbo belief system. However, the practice differ from one Igbo community to another.

In sum, despite the fact that these named cultural practices exist in every community in Igbo land, the mode of practice for each and every one of them differ among the communities in Igbo land.

Cultural Practices Particular to Some Communities in Igbo Land

The findings in this research show that there are some cultural practices which are particular to some communities in Igbo land. Some of these practices have connection with the origin of the cultural communities involved or what happened in history, which touched the life of the community or individuals in it. As such, some are totems and festivals. Totems are sacred animals believed to belong to the ancestral spirit. As such, people of the communities involved do not harm them. In Igbo land, different animals are sacred in different cultural communities depending on the belief system and history of that community. Example of such animals are monkey, snake, bush rat, ostrich, tortoise, vulture etc. Some communities like Awka in Anambra state has monkey as their only sacred animal. The sacredness of monkey is in connection with ancestral origin of Awka town. Their history has it that it was the noise of monkeys on tree top that saved their ancestors from their warring enemies. So they believed that God appears to them in from of monkeys. Likewise Aguata and some other communities in Igbo land do not kill a particular type of snake; Nnokwa do not kill ostrich. It serves as their totem. The same with other communities in Igbo land and their totems. By and large, it differs from one community to another.

Furthermore, some cultural festivals are particular to some communities in Igbo land. It may be the festival of one deity or the other or any other anniversary. Example of such festivals is Ikeji festival. It is an annual cultural festival by arọ people, like Ndizuogu, Ndiokpaleze, Ndiokolo etc. Awka people also cerebrate Imo Awka festival. It is an annual festival in honour of Imo, Awka central deity. These cultural festivals are restricted to the communities involved. As such, they do not involve the entire Igbo land.

In addition, naming ceremony and child outing ceremony is a culture being practice in some communities in Igbo land, but they are not practiced in other communities. Likewise new yam festival, although it looks like a universal practice but some communities in Igbo land do not have the ceremony in their culture.

In sum, some cultural practices are universally practiced in the entire Igbo land; while some are restricted to some Igbo communities. As such,

there is no water tight uniformity in cultural practices among the Igbo people.

The Role of Igbo language in Igbo Culture

The findings in this research show that Igbo language is the language of communication throughout Igbo land. It implies that these cultures are expressed in Igbo language. As such Igbo language forms the bridge which unites different communities in Igbo land amid the differences in their cultural practices.

Furthermore, for some of the cultural practices to have the required effect, the rites and rituals must be performed in Igbo language. Example, the rites and rituals of kola nut must be performed by the proper authority in Igbo language; otherwise the rite would be null and void without any effect. Thus the Igbo people say, "*oji anaghị anụ oyibo*" (kola nut does not understand foreign language). This shows that Igbo language is very symbolic in Igbo culture. It is an aspect of Igbo culture and the vanguard of the rest aspects of the culture.

Since Igbo language is the central language used by the different communities in Igbo land to express and preserve their culture, Igbo language is very symbolic. It is the culture that unites the Igbo people in their different cultural areas. So, Igbo language plays a unifying role among the Igbo people and their culture.

The Place of Igbo Language among Igbo People

The findings in this research proved that the place of Igbo language among the Igbo people is shaking. It is not static rather it is shifting according to time and nature of things. Before the commencement of colonialism in Nigeria, Igbo language was the only language spoken by the Igbo people in Igbo geographical location. This is because the Igbo people had not come in contact with other nations with other languages. However, the advent of colonialism introduced a foreign language (English language) in Igbo land. The foreign language co-existed with Igbo language. Despite every effort made by the colonial masters to impose the English language on the Igbo people as a domineering language, the Igbo people still cherished their local language and used it more in daily communications. This led the colonial masters to making effort to make Igbo language, language of letter by developing and formalizing Igbo orthography, and other developmental strategies mapped out.

However, towards the tail end of twentieth century and early twenty-first century, attention of some Igbo people started shifting from Igbo language to embracing English language and other foreign languages. This ugly development gradually erodes the unifying force of Igbo language among the Igbo communities. Some people of Igbo origin do not understand Igbo language let alone being able to speak the language. The worst part of it is that some of such people are living within Igbo geographical location. This attitude brought a set back to the development of Igbo language.

Efforts Put in Place for Development of Igbo Language

Findings show that efforts are being made by some individuals and groups of Igbo origin to nip the problem of lack of interest in Igbo language in the bud. The findings show that some societies and organizations were formed, by some prominent Igbo people, to fight Igbo language apathy among the Igbo people. Some of such societies are Society for Promotion of Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) which was founded in 1949 by Frederick Chidozie Ogbalu. Their duty is to promote the Igbo language and Culture. They had since created a standard Igbo. *Otu Sɔwakwa Igbo* is another society founded by Pita Ejiofor for the sole purpose of promoting Igbo language and encouraging the Igbo people to embrace and speak their language. The society was founded in 2006. Furthermore, outside these two outstanding societies founded for the promotion of Igbo language, some non-prominent societies and organizations are in existence to give boost to Igbo language. Some individuals of Igbo origin are equally making effort from different quarters to give boost to Igbo language. All these are efforts to revive the zeal to love and speak Igbo language among the Igbo people and beyond.

Analysis of the Findings

The findings above made it clear that Igbo people have different cultural practices. Some of them are universally practiced in all the communities in Igbo land; whereas some others are restricted to some communities and are not practiced in other communities of the same Igbo land. This is an indication that Igbo people are partly culturally united and partly culturally separated. Even the universally practiced cultures have different modes of operation in different communities. The rites and ritual involved in performance of the cultural practices involved differ from one community to another. This implies that the unity of Igbo people does not hang on the cultural practices in Igbo land. Furthermore, another finding shows that the original language of expression and transmission of every culture in Igbo land is Igbo

language. Following from this, since every culture in Igbo land, both the ones universally practiced in the entire Igbo land and the ones restricted to some communities in Igbo land, use Igbo language as their vanguard, it means Igbo language is the unifying factor as far as culture in Igbo land is concerned. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that these Igbo communities where these cultures are practiced use Igbo language as their language of expression, transmission and preservation of these cultural values. To some extent, for the rites and rituals of some of these cultural practices to be efficacious, it must be done in Igbo language, otherwise it will be null and void and of no effect. Example of such cultural practices is the ceremony of kola nut, which must be done in Igbo language for it to be efficacious. All these considered, since Igbo language is an aspect of culture, it means Igbo language is the only culture uniting the Igbo people.

In addition, the research shows that Igbo language holds high place among the Igbo people from the period before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria; even till the tail end of twentieth century. During this time, Igbo people were proud of their native language and they preferred it to any other language. This led to fast development of the language at all levels. They saw Igbo language as their proper identity and the major unifying factor of the Igbo people everywhere they found themselves. However, this enthusiastic spirit started dwindling from the tail end of twentieth century, even in the twenty-first century. Some Igbo people especially those in diaspora, even those living within Igbo geographical area started developing cold feet in the usage of Igbo language. Such people would prefer to use English language or any other foreign language to Igbo language. This led to a serious reduction in the number of those that speak Igbo language in twenty-first century. Following from the above, it means that the unifying strength of Igbo language is gradually being eroded. If some people from Igbo geographical area cannot speak Igbo language fluently, it follows that the unifying force of the language has been weakened. This is because some of the people that practice the cultures in Igbo land cannot speak the umbrella language. Since there is a negative shift in the attitude of Igbo people towards Igbo language, it is a red indication that Igbo language is gradually moving into extinction. As such, if care is not taking, Igbo language will struggle for survival in the sea of globalization which is associated with language war. If Igbo language dies, the unity of Igbo people will end.

Furthermore, since some individuals and societies have started calling attention to the imminent doom approaching the Igbo language, it is a

sign that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Igbo language has potentiality of growing and developing to international standard like other international languages. It only needs effort and commitment.

Way Forward

From the findings and the analysis above, it has become obvious that different Igbo communities has different cultural practices. Despite the differences in culture, the Igbo language is common in all the communities. It all means that Igbo language which is an aspect of Igbo culture is the unifying element of the Igbo people. However, it was discovered that Igbo language started losing momentum in twenty-first century. Some people prefer speaking foreign languages to Igbo language. It is really a challenge to the development of Igbo language and a sword to Igbo unity. Since Igbo language which is the unifying factor among Igbo people is losing momentum, there is need for all heads to be put together to know the things necessary for the promotion of Igbo language.

Negligence on the use of any language brings about the death of that language. Example, the classical languages like Hebrew, Greek and Latin were reigning sometimes in the past but today where are they? The Igbo people should wake up from sleep and put heads together, value and speak Igbo language. Life of a language hangs on the increase in the vocabularies of that language. This is made possible by constant use of a language. With the awareness of the need to promote Igbo language created, the Igbo language will grow if the Igbo people take it to heart and speak the language on daily basis.

In promotion and development of Igbo language, no stone should be left unturned. There is need to start from the foundation. In the first place, Igbo parents should take Igbo language as their native language and understand it as the only and major factor uniting all the Igbo people. As such, they should speak it to their children in their homes and other places so that they can develop proper eloquence in Igbo language as their mother tongue. This will help to sustain the language from any possible extinction.

In the second place, Government should encourage the growth and development of Igbo language by making it a compulsory subject in basic schools and even tertiary institutions. This will help in making the youths of Igbo origin to love and speak Igbo language.

Besides, individuals and non-governmental organizations and societies showing love for Igbo language should add more zeal to their effort by organizing regular seminars and conferences to discuss Igbo language affairs. This will help in creating rooms for more research in the areas of Igbo language, especially those neglected by the language speakers.

In addition, Igbo scientists and internet gurus should work night and day to create more facilities to enable Igbo language become an internet language. This will make it easy for people to post articles written in Igbo language in the internet without further modifications. By and large, all these will make the ground fertile for Igbo language to grow and develop at jet speed in this era of globalization.

Conclusion

At the end of this research, "Igbo language as the culture that unites the Igbo people: Prospects for development", the researcher was able to accomplish his task. The findings and analysis show that Igbo people have different cultural practices, some of which are universally practiced; while some are restricted to some communities in Igbo land. It was equally observed that Igbo language as an aspect of Igbo culture stands as a unifying factor in Igbo cultural life. However, towards the tail end of twentieth century, some Igbo people started shifting attention to English language to the negligence of Igbo language. Because of this, some individuals of Igbo origin formed some societies to call the attention of the Igbo people on the importance of embracing their language. As such, attention has been drawn on the need to hold fast to Igbo language as the only unifying culture in Igbo land. This leads to finding different strategies to develop and promote the Igbo language. By and large, Igbo language has high rate prospects for development if more effort is put in by the owners, speakers and promoters of the language.

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AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE IN PEACE KEEPING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE IGBO SYSTEM

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Executive Summary

The Igbo people of south-east Nigeria have a unique system of governance that marks them out from other African societies. The Igbo system of governance starts from the family and stretches to the larger society. This system of governance, which is fast eroding in modern Igbo society, created an enabling environment for unity, peace and tranquillity. Conflicts are easily and amicably resolved through a laid-down system involving various institutions by which the Igbo govern themselves. Amicable resolution of conflict gives room for peace, progress and development in the society. Recently, the Igbo traditional system of governance has experienced a major setback, because of that, most people experience chaotic situations in political, social, economic and religious lives. It is, therefore, necessary to reawaken the Igbo system of governance which held the society together and enabled them to experience growth and development. Data for the study was got mainly through oral interview. Fifteen Igbo elders knowledgeable in the Igbo system of governance were randomly selected from some Igbo communities and interviewed. Three research questions guided the study, which are: (1) What do we mean by Igbo traditional system of governance? (2) In what ways did the Igbo people govern themselves in the past? (3) How did the Igbo traditional system of governance serve as a means for peace keeping and conflict resolution? It was found out that the Igbo system of governance was based on quasi-democratic republican system of government. The above system bound the traditional Igbo communities together and guaranteed egalitarianism through the appropriate deployment of organized institutions. By this system of

governance that ensures equity for the Igbo citizenry, the Igbo society experienced peace and societal advancement. The paper, therefore, advocates the return of the Igbo traditional system of governance for the modern Igbo society to reap the gains of the system.

Keywords: Igbo, South-East Nigeria, Traditional System, Governance, Peace and Conflict Resolution

Introduction

Human beings are political animals. Right from creation, man has a way of controlling his activities and creating rules and regulations that guide human actions. These codes of conduct are respected and there are sanctions and punishment for offenders.

Most African nations were under a monarchical system of governance. The monarchs exert great power despite the role of the members of the cabinet who also help in governance. There was hardly ever a time the Igbo nation was united under one political authority or sovereign nation like the Edo, Hausa, Yoruba, Igala of Nigeria and some other African societies. However, few towns in Igbo land, like Onitsha, Oguta, Agbor, Nri and Arochukwu, have a history of kingship which dates into history long before their contact with the Europeans.

Igbo traditional political structure starts from the family *ezinaulo* to the kindred *umunna* to the village *ogbe* and to the town level *obodo*. There are other political bodies like the age grade *otu ogbo*, the *ozo* titled men *ndi chiri echichi*, the daughters' union *umuada* or *umuokpu*, the wives' union *inyom di* and the secret institution *otu mmanwu*. These groups, with general consensus, exert political authorities within their areas of jurisdiction. For instance, if the case concerns a particular age grade, the entire members of that particular age grade or its executive must be consulted before any valid decision or enforcement of an earlier decision is taken. Certainly, as far as the Igbo traditional society is concerned, it had full complement of government organs which performed full political functions, including maintenance of law and order, defence of the territorial integrity of the community and social and economic development (Amucheazi, 2012:243). Every Igbo person contributes, in one way or the other, in the administration of his community. Amucheazi (2012) also insists that the Igbo person was a full participant in the various political processes within the Igbo society. He identified himself within the goals and aspirations of the community and was prepared to fulfil his responsibilities to his

community. And when he defaulted, there were regulations and institutions to enforce compliance.

Recently, the Igbo system of governance has changed drastically; and same is the case with most African societies. Several decades after independence, many African postcolonial states continue to experience widespread ethnic and civil conflicts, poverty, corruption, civil disobedience, frequent electoral and post-electoral strife and fragmentation of various aspects of their institutions of governance. The contemporary African state is not able to guarantee its citizens adequate security, while basic necessities of life have eluded its people (Oni & Segun, 2010). African traditional systems of governance, especially those of the Igbo of Nigeria, have been disarrayed. It is obvious that the colonial masters' system of governance, which the African state has adopted, could not totally solve the problems of African societies. In most cases, this new system of governance is not able to resolve conflicts as expected and so robs communities the peace needed for growth and development. Based on this, it is necessary to review the Igbo traditional system of governance in order to bring to limelight those areas in the present dispensation that need to be adjusted for peaceful resolution of conflicts and peace keeping among the people.

The Igbo Traditional System of Governance

The Igbo nation was organized into several interdependent societies before the arrival of and contact with the British colonial masters. This could partly explain why many people referred to Igbo people as *Igbo enwe eze*, meaning literally that Igbo have no king. The *Igbo enwe eze* notion is because of the misconceptions of Igbo traditional polity. Onunwa (2005), cited in Isidienu (2016), explains that the evolutionary development of Igbo political system is very intriguing and has consequently been grossly misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented by both the colonial administrators and some educated Igbo scholars themselves. Part of the reason for the misrepresentation is that the Europeans expected to see the type of monarchy they have in their countries and the type which they met in some other parts of Nigeria, which made colonization easy for them. However, in few places in Igbo land where the kingship existed, the Europeans refused to refer to them as kings; rather they call them chief(s). Amadi (2005:99) affirms that the Yoruba have a splendid array of famous and powerful kings. There were the great Alafin of Oyo, the Oni of Ife, the Alake of Abeokuta, the Awujale of Ijebu, the Owa of Ijesha. They all wielded considerable power. Amadi (2005) also states that Reverend Samuel Johnson referred to the government of Yoruba land as an absolute

monarchy, and that kings are more dreaded than even the gods. On the governance in northern Nigeria, Amadi (2005:100) asserts that, "The Emirs are powerful lords. There were the Emirs of Kano, the Emirs of Zaria, the Shehu of Bornu, Etsu Nupe, Sultan of Sokoto, and many more."

The Igbo traditional political system was characterized by lineages and clans in which there were political tolerance, compromise and a deep sense of unity to individual and communal rights and duties. In the past, there was an Igbo nation only in the sense that they are people who speak the same language, had the same custom, tradition, religious belief, economic system and who inhabit ageographical area probably not precisely defined. There was nothing like an Igbo state, for there had never been any central government, institution or authority running throughout the whole land. No wonder Ojumu (2016) describes the Igbo nation as a chief-less society which was segmentary and egalitarian in nature. Be that as it may, there existed many institutions in the pre-colonial Igbo society, charged with the responsibility of judicial, legislative and executive functions. Each town *obodo* regarded itself as *mba* (state or nation) autonomous in every respect (Ogbalu, 2006:20-21). Igbo political organization was, therefore, based on autonomous units. Each of such autonomous units could declare war or make peace, depending on the circumstances. Every grown-up male was recruited as a soldier when the need arose, since there was no standing army. The units could, as well, enter into diplomatic relations with their neighbours. Igbo people also made laws and tried peoples' cases with justice and fair-play. Ogbalu (1981:940-95) states that each community in Igbo land was autonomous; none paid allegiance to the other. Even during or after a war, no community would assert dominion over other communities. This is true because even the Arochukwu people, with their fearful long juju *Ibiniukpabi*, had no political authorities over other communities in Igbo land. Oni and Segun (2010), discussing on non-centralized and centralized states in African societies, cite Tallensi of Northern Ghana, Baito of Eritrea, the Sukuma of Tanzania, Oroma of Ethiopia, the Igbo of Nigeria, the Kgotla in Botswana, the Nuer of Southern Sudan, and the Kikuyu of Kenya as non-centralized states. They also state that, "the centralized states had a more structured and sophisticated political system. Examples are the Asante and Mole-Dabgani of Ghana, Yoruba land of Nigeria, Zulu of South Africa, Barotse of Zambia and Baganda of Uganda." African societies were governed through structures that ranged from those that were highly hierarchical to those that were highly decentralized (Economic Commission for Africa, South Africa Office, 2007).

The Igbo traditional system of governance was fragmented, although the parts are not significant on their own but characterized by consensus and republican in nature. According to Afigbo (1981:96), "Any local Igbo community... consisted of a federation of equivalent segments whose leaders met together in a council which was said to consist of the senior age grade in the community and was referred to collectively as elders." Speaking on this, Okodo (2006) points out that there were pockets of administrative area that were ruled by the consensus of the people at meetings at different levels of operations. There were no kings. This was informed by the Igbo man's mentality of egalitarianism. He so much believes in equality of rights. Igbo people work hard to earn a living, and so do not depend on any one for their needs. Even the physically challenged persons resort to engaging in things that can enable them earn a living; in such a situation, therefore, everyone feels equal with each other. Orji (1999:10) addresses the Igbo traditional political system as "Government by consensus." He states:

The government of the Igbo people before the advent of the white man was by consensus organized in communities, families, ... All the communities in Igbo land were severally independent of one another. They owe no allegiance to any person or organization. And nobody had the power to question a community for any action which its people might have decided to take, with regards any matter, whether good or bad.

In case of war, there could be loss of land if a town was defeated; but there was nothing like amnesty. Each community was responsible for their actions. Isichei (1974) was of the opinion that it was how the Igbo political system was organized that made the Igbo polity not to be autocratic. Ekwealor (1998:63), supporting the assertion, states that it is because Igbo communities were autonomous and their leadership decentralized that made the Europeans to declare Igbo land as people who do not have any leadership style. But in reality, the leadership style of the Igbo was egalitarian in nature. Igbo people have respect for elders and high regard for wisdom and experience which such elders had acquired over the years.

The Igbo traditional political structure was segmented. An Igbo town was made up of interrelated village communities and they have minimal and tenuous relationships with each other; although some of them may cooperate with each other in order to face external threats. Nwosu (1977:17-21) conclusively states that political power and authority were not concentrated at one level of Igbo society; rather, they

were dispersed and diffused into several organs and bodies. Accordingly, the Igbo system of governance in pre-colonial era is vividly captured thus:

Traditional Igbo political organization was based on quasi-democratic republican system of government. ...This system guaranteed its citizens equality... This government system was witnessed by the Portuguese who first arrived and met with the Igbo people in the 15th century. With the exception of a few notable Igbo towns like Onitsha, which had kings called Obi, and places like Nri Kingdom and Arochukwu, which had priest kings; Igbo communities... were overwhelmingly ruled solely by a republican consultative assembly of the common people... there was no centralization of power among the Igbo. ...everyone in the village has the authority to contribute in decision making. ...This way of governing was immensely different from most other communities of Western Africa, and only shared by the Ewe of Ghana (<https://nigerianscholars.com>tutorials>)

Traditional Political Institutions in Igbo Society

Among the Igbo, family is the basic unit of Igbo political institution. Mbiti (1970:106) opines that the family, for Africans, has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe and North America. Among African societies, the family includes: children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives. And so, the oldest member of the family is the head of the family. Ekwealor (1998:63) states that the eldest male is in possession of the family *Ofo*. His duty includes political, social and religious functions and the maintenance of good human relations. The head of the family is in charge of the family wealth, such as land, economic trees, etc., and this family wealth must be equitably shared. The family head also co-ordinates, directs and advises in such matters as marriage and in certain occupations requiring specialized skills, such as carving, healing, etc. He also reconciles conflicting issues. According to Nwosu (2002:235), "The amount of legitimacy and loyalty he generated depended on his political sagacity, his administrative skill, his moral probity ... The *ofo* did not only signify the symbol of authority but serves as an emblem of linkage with the ancestors". A child born into a family is socialized into the norms of the Igbo society through the family. He is a full-fledged member of the society as an active and articulate member of the family; this explains the importance of family to the Igbo.

Ogbalu (2006: 12) points out that the kindred *umunna* was the next unit of administration after the family. It is a group of families which have a common descent. The kindred played a very important role both in political and religious matters. They discipline their members whose behaviour and conduct were either anti-social or were likely to bring collective trouble or shame to the community. It is an organization whose decision is sought before an external organization or, in modern times, before a court of law decides on a case that involves two members of one particular kindred. The leaders always table matters before the general house of the kindred for deliberations at the end of which the members take decisions (Okodo, 2006).

The next level of administration after the kindred is the village assembly which is made up of different kindred that had common descent. Members of cabinet are usually drawn from different kindred that made up the village. Okodo (2006:43) opines that "the administration [at the village level] is by suggestions, and the decisions are summed up by the chairman, who rules in favour of the majority." People's opinion must be sought for before any final decision is taken. Matters billed for settlement cannot be tabled elsewhere without first and foremost submitting it to the village assembly. Isidienu (2016), citing Ogbalu (2006:12), confirms that, "the village assembly settles disputes which the kindred could not settle and is responsible for the defense of the village against thieves, intruders or wild animals."

Another level of administration in Igbo governance is the town assembly, made up of the council of elders. It is a place in which wide-ranging decisions are taken e.g. conflict, war and peace, negotiation between towns, and guiding principles. The highest political authority was vested on the council of elders. This council, which operated as the highest legislative, administrative and judicial body, was made up of titled men, outstanding and influential family heads and community leaders, war lords, heads of societies and age grades - men of wealth and unusual talents (Nwosu, 2002:235). Decisions were arrived at through a general consensus, and must represent the will of the people. There are other bodies in Igbo traditional society which also exert political authorities within their powers and areas of jurisdiction. These groups include daughters' union *umuada* or *umuokpu*, age grade *otu ogbo*, *ozo* titled institution *ndi chiri echichi* and secret institution *otu nzuzo*.

Daughters' Union *Umuada/Umuokpu* Daughters' Union, called *umuada/umuokpu*, is a gathering of women born in a family, in the same kindred, the same village, in a particular town. They are the daughters

of the soil, the native daughters of the same male ancestry. These women, by virtue of their union and authority as daughters, are very powerful. No Igbo person would want to make a case with *umuada/umuokpu*. Much respect is accorded to them at all levels of the Igbo political system – family, kindred, village and town levels. The *umuada/umuokpu* of a family, kindred, village and town, as an instrument of governance, helped in settling disputes in their father's house, in their kindred, in their village and in their town respectively. In some cases, they were able to settle cases which the males were not able to settle. It is *umuada/umuokpu* of various families that form *umuada/umuokpu* of the kindred; those from different kindreds form the village level *umuada/umuokpu*, while all the *umuada/umuokpu* of different villages form the union at the town level. They correct ill-behaviours of the members of their fathers' house, including those of their brothers and their brothers' wives. *umuada/umuokpu* also performs a very important role at the burial of a relation. At their meetings, which are on specific or special occasions, issues are deliberated upon, and decisions accepted by the majority before any action is taken. Olisa (2002) confirms that,

umuada/umuokpu hardly hold scheduled meetings. They meet during specific events such as the death of their relatives or title taking of one of their members of the kindred. It is in this type of occasion that they render their customary services as well as settle problems and disputes in the kindred. They also talk about the welfare of the kindred generally.

Wives' Union *Inyom Di*

These are women that are married to a particular town, same village, same kindred or particular family. Their levels of organization are like those of *umuada/umuokpu*, where they are organized at the family, kindred, village and town levels. The various levels of *inyom di* are powerful. Their duty is to bring peace among themselves and in the community. The union, through fines and other punishments, check the excesses of their recalcitrant members who engage in such vices as harlotry, adultery, disobedience to their husbands and his parents and family members, use of abusive words and fighting at, for instance, market places and streams, or quarrels or fights involving two of their members (Okodo, 2006: 42). Every married woman in the community works hard not to be found wanting by *inyom di*, because the union also protects their members from being maltreated. During their meetings, decisions are adopted before their implementation.

Age Grade *Otu Ogbọ/Ebiri/Uke*

Age grade is called *otu ogbò*, *otu ebiri*, or *otu uke*, depending on the speech variety. It is an organization of people who are born at approximately the same period. In some cases, many of the members of one age grade are born the same year, while some members may be up to five years older than others. The various *otu ogbò* of a community are known by names which they adopt or are given by their elder age grade. Often times, the name of an age grade is got through what is invoked or what is happening or has happened at its time of formation. For instance, *Ánataògù* Age Grade indicates that members of the age grade were born after a war or that their age grade was formed after a war. *Ósòndù* Age Grade could indicate that the members were born during a war, or that the community is battling with some life-threatening challenges. Other names which age grades go by include: *Òfúóbì*, *Ìgwèbu*, *Íkè*, *I*, *fu*, *náányá*, *Óbinwánnè*, *Èkwúèmé*, *Ùdókàm*, *mā*, *Mgbadabuenyi*, etc. Age grades form their executive committee by choosing their leaders on kindred, village and town levels. Among the Igbo, age grade leadership is egalitarian in nature, because their members feel equal to each other. Each decision is adopted by all the members, sometimes through vote.

There are adult and youthful age grades in every community, assigned based on the age of the members. The youthful age grades are assigned to tasks requiring physical strength, like the building and maintenance of roads and bridges, going to war and using force to collect debts from defaulters who were adamant in paying their debt. In the traditional Igbo society, there was no standby army. In the case of inter-town wars, soldiers are recruited by each community from the youthful age grades. In the performance of these duties, therefore, the youthful age grades serve as police and defence institution of their various communities. It is through the younger age grades that laws and customs of the society are enforced and orders maintained. They see to it that their members' behaviours are regulated, and that individuals and groups maintain public order. Nwanunobi (2001:113) asserts that, "In political system in which the affairs of the society are handled through age grade, the settlement of disputes and decisions on the upkeep of norms of the society are responsibilities of the age grade." Apart from the above functions, they help each other; for instance, they may agree to work for each other in turns, and they help their weak and sick members. They can give loan/capital for a startup of business to their members. They also help in the development of the town.

***Ọzọ* Titled Institution**

Ozọ titled institution wielded the most powerful political influence in Igbo society. It is an institution that is open to all free born of the community, but achieved only by the wealthy. It is known by different names in various Igbo communities and they are the people that attained the highest chieftaincy title in the society.

Any member of the *ozọ* titled institution must be one who is honest and free from any vice. It is their achieved status in the society, as well as their wealth, that raises them to a place of honour and respect, and therefore, they are the law makers of the society. They regulate the behaviour of all other interest groups in the society. They are like the chief judges and custodians of traditions of the society. They serve as a reference point in matters that concern the rules, practices and belief system of the society. Nwosu, (2002) affirms that the *ozọ* title holders are the custodians of the people's conscience, custom and tradition. It is also their administrative responsibility to ensure that individuals and groups conform to norms, ethos and customs. They also exercise the most political and administrative influence in Igbo society. It is also the duty of *ozọ* title holders to punish offenders, and as such any decisions they made were regarded as the final.

Secret Institution

There are various secret societies in Igbo land, but masquerade or *mmanwu* society cuts across all Igbo communities, though it could bear different dialectal names. It is only males that are initiated into the masquerade institution, except in a few places where very old influential women are initiated as *nne mmanwu* (masquerade's mother). *Mmanwu* society members are not to reveal the secrets of the organization to non-initiates. Masquerades serve as a linkage between the past and the present, for they represent the spirits of the ancestors. They are, therefore, revered and obeyed.

There were different grades of masquerades. The adult masquerades served as part of the arm of government. They announced laws which must have been approved by elders and titled men. Their pronouncements made people to be aware of those laws so that enacted laws would be kept. Almost all the difficult cases that defied settlement by other institutions, such as land and murder cases, were settled by the masquerade institution. Masquerades helped in the collection of debts, and so assisted in bringing and maintaining peace and order in the society. However, with the coming of the Europeans, arms of the judicial role of the masquerade began to dwindle. The masquerades no longer have an absolute control of the political institutions as before.

Masquerades' control over the executive, legislative and judicial of arm of Igbo traditional governance has been dominated by modern judicial system (Isidienu and Onyekelu, 2020).

Furthermore, in Igbo traditional society, masquerades were also used for corrective measures, in cases such as women who usually cooked very late in the night, women who were misbehaving by maltreating their husbands or mothers-in-law, and men who disrespected their parents or beat their wives. The masquerades handled such cases by paying such people surprise visits or by echoing their names late in the night, sometimes using songs, to satirize or embarrass them.

Findings and Further Discussions

The Igbo traditional system of governance is the established traditional and cultural dimensions of governance in Igbo society, geared towards the maintenance of order and harmony among the people. It is the political management of the people, or the political administration of the society. In Igbo traditional system of governance, people have freedom of expression and participation in matters that affect the community. Consultations and consensus are very important before any decision is arrived at. General opinion always prevails. The political administration of the modern Igbo society is the monarchical administration of the people. It involves the traditional rulers called *Igwe* or *Eze*, who have a cabinet made up of titled people who are representatives of different areas of jurisdiction of the community, such as kindred or village. They help the traditional ruler in the political administration of the community. The monarchical system now replaces the traditional political system which was republican administration, whereby it is the total decision of the people that is the machinery of the government. In those pre-colonial days, every Igbo person had a say in governance and roles were often clearly defined. For instance, issues of spiritual concern were handled by the chief priests or *eze mmu* of the deities, while the *o* *kpara* or the *aka ji o* *fo* handled any issue that pertained to oath-taking. Today, people elect the *Igwe* or *Eze*, as well as the President General. The President General, with his body of executive, comprising the Vice President General, Secretary General, Assistant Secretary General, Financial Secretary, and the Treasurer as principal officers, and the other positions that are not principal officers, like Publicity Secretary and Provost, play significant roles in the day-to-day political administration of their community to ensure that there are peace and security. There is a position reserved for a woman in some communities. It is known as Women Leader. The Women Leader, with the assistance of some select

women working with her, has it as her responsibility to mobilize and sensitize the women of her community for their active participation in the political affairs of their kindred, village or town.

Our research found out that today's monarchical system differs from that practiced by a few Igbo communities which were monarchical during the pre-colonial era. The few communities included: Nri Kingdom, Onitsha, Oguta, Arochukwu, and Agbor. The monarchs of today do not have ultimate powers because there are checks and balances for curtailing their excess powers. However, the pre-colonial monarchs exercised near-absolute authority. Except for the monarchs of Nri Kingdom and Arochukwu who were also the spiritual heads of their communities, the excessive powers of the pre-colonial monarchs were checked by the spiritual leaders of their communities, who wielded the authority of the gods of the land. From this, we can infer the supreme authority exercised by the monarchs of Nri Kingdom and Arochukwu community. Apart from these communities that had monarchs, other Igbo communities had no traditional rulers, prompting the colonialists to appoint warrant chiefs that would help them in governance. This is because the colonialists wanted a leader they could relate with in each community, since they could not key into the existing republican administration, which is made up of segments of administration at different levels of the communities and through different institutions like family, kindred, village, council of elders, daughters' union, wives' union, titled men, chief priests of deities, age grade, and masquerade. We gathered from our informants that the Igbo traditional republican system was not shaped as the republican system of modern society. There could be a leader in each level of administration of the communities, with few hands helping him. There were no secretaries or financial secretaries because there were no literate ones to read or write. But people of proven integrity were selected for keeping their families, kindred's, institution's or community's money for use in satisfying public needs and for the execution of projects of communal interest like building of community gathering places, shrines and markets.

The three arms of government - executive, legislative and judicial arms - were incorporated in Igbo traditional administration. For instance, judicial services could be rendered by converting the general house of the meeting of an administrative unit into a judicial session; hence, the popular saying: *A ga-anọ na nzuko e bute ikpe, a nọrọ ebe ahu, kpebe ikpe*. The chairman or leader at that meeting would become the judge, with the executive members and the entire house as the members of the jury.

The session would listen to cases, such as land case, theft, violence, and denial of rights, and adjudicate on the issues of dispute. The disputants could be asked to leave the venue at some point, to enable the session to confer or *gbaa izu* and take decisions. The disputants were called in after decisions were taken, and the decisions announced to them by the leader. It was usual for those in dispute to accept the decision. However, where one or both parties did not agree with the decisions, the aggrieved party could take the case to a higher body. This happens at different levels of Igbo administration, so whether it is at the town level, whether it is at the quarter level, community level, kindred level, it takes the same shape; for instance, from family level to the kindred level, up to the village and town levels. In some cases, each time there was a dispute, the people would assemble at the home of the traditional head, who would adjudicate on the contending matter. Appropriate sanctions, which could be a fine, were meted to recalcitrant individual. Through this means, the rights of individuals are maintained, as cases were settled at each level of administration - family, kindred, village and town levels - by the appropriate institution, like *aka ji ofo*, and council of elders.

Some of the informants from whom we collected our data for this study were of the opinion that the Igbo system of governance has not changed drastically but has been sharpened. According to them, in the olden days, there were no secretaries since the people could neither read nor write, but recently, a lot of people have become literate so there are now family, kindred, village, town and community administrative institution's secretaries. They also argued that in the past, there were no banks or secure means of keeping huge sums of money for future use; but today, things have changed, as there are now treasurers who keep large sums of money safely in banks, while financial secretaries keep accurate financial records. They also point out that the traditional institutions are not totally in charge of all disputes now, as some litigants could decide not to approach, or wait for, the traditional judicial process to handle their cases. For instance, those who have criminal cases like murder cases often prefer to go to court. Even in cases of theft, some people now decide not to wait for settlement through the traditional judicial system. Thus, such litigants would normally come to their kindred and ask, *unu a na-ekpeikpe ohi? Unu nwere ike ikpe ikpe ohi?, a si ya mba, mana o bughị na ha enweghi ike ikpe ikpe ohi. Unu kweta ka ha kpee, ha ekpee.* In such instances, they could go to court.

One of the many interesting findings of this research is that the processes in traditional judicial system are very much cheaper than the modern law system. Whereas the traditional system requires disputants to pay a token fee and bring some kola nut and a few kegs of palm wine, anybody that approaches a lawyer for a case must pay chunks of money to the lawyer from time to time. Moreover, having a court case deprives people of their steady job activities, as they must appear in court during work hours whenever their case is to be called up. There is hardly a quick dispensation of justice in the courts because courts adjourn from time to time, and each time a case would be tried, those in dispute do not go to their work places, and they must part with huge sums of money for payment to their lawyer(s). The Igbo traditional system abhors adjournments and tries to fix their meetings on days and times convenient to the stakeholders so that people would continue with their economic activities while attending the judicial meetings. This is why, in the traditional judicial system, judicial sessions could hold on Saturday or Sunday, and could stretch deep into the night until the dispute is amicably settled. This research found out that as people approach the law courts for settlement of their cases rather than refer the cases to the traditional judicial system, they are depriving the traditional system of money, kola, and wine which they ordinarily would have paid for their cases to be handled.

The governance of Igbo political system calls for convening of meetings; it provides a social point of meeting for people. They pray with kola nut at the commencement of meetings, and could eat and drink when food and drinks were available. These activities of eating or drinking together increase the brotherly bonding among the members of a community. The system involved in the presentation, distribution, praying with, breaking and eating of kola nut, collectively referred to as kola nut ritual, enables people to know their relationship with others, the way they have authorities and issues that pertain to seniorities.

In the current system of Igbo political administration, the Igwe or traditional ruler is at the helm of affairs, followed by the President General. Both of them, together with their statutory assistants, are ruling the community. However, the traditional ruler is the overall head that projects and protects the community, and is the chief security officer of his community. The President General is there to assist the traditional ruler. The Igwe and President General are supposed to be working together in harmony for the progress of the community; especially as each of them has his duties. However, in some communities, the Presidents General and the traditional rulers do not

work in harmony, thereby breeding problems in their communities. Every community where the traditional ruler and the President General are at loggerheads does not achieve any meaningful development. Some traditional rulers, rather than be peace makers, cause trouble for their people. In some cases, the traditional rulers use their position to amass wealth by conferring chieftaincy titles on people whose sources of wealth are questionable, after they had paid them huge sums of money. By receiving the titles, they are automatically incorporated into the traditional ruler's cabinet, to become role models for especially the youth. These are the manner of people that deliberate on issues that concern peace in the community, and are meant to resolve conflicts in their towns. Recently, there were, and still are, killings, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, and sale of human parts in different parts of Igbo land. Most of the bushes where the hoodlums occupy were in communities manned by traditional rulers and their cabinet members, and Presidents General and the members of their executive. It is clear from this that the Igbo traditional republican system of governance gave way to the present monarchical system introduced by the colonial masters, which has failed to serve the peace and security needs of the people. The British colonial administration has, therefore left behind several destabilizing policies that affected not only the nature of governance but introduced some strange political relationships (Ajeli, 2020:133). The British policy of indirect rule, the French policy of assimilation and the Belgian policy and patterns of exploitation were all colonial legacies that affected the processes of democratization and sowed seeds for conflicts production in Africa (Bodi, Tanko and Uniga, 2021).

It may be argued that community policing and vigilante help the regular police to identify the thieves and all the bad people in the community, and that when these people are caught, they go straight to court from there. So good it may sound, but the fact remains that bandits have taken over most of the bushes in recent times, making life difficult for people, especially the farmers and travellers who are often maimed and sometimes killed.

The recent change in Igbo traditional system of governance has some negative effects on the people's religious life. Core moral values such as honesty, respect for sacredness of life, patience, perseverance, kindness are relegated to the background. Economically, the modern system of governance has made way for fraud and cheating as acceptable ways of doing business. Hard work is relegated to the background, as Igbo people's means of economic advancement through agriculture and

manufacturing industries are neglected. This has prompted some Igbo youths to opt for ways to make quick money through killings, armed robbery, kidnapping and other fraudulent means, all to the detriment of the entire Igbo society. This insecurity situation is the reason people are restricting their movements, some businesses are grounding, and cost of every item has skyrocketed. The challenges bedevilling the Igbo nation are pointers that when governance is in jeopardy, especially in the areas of peace, security and conflict resolution, every other aspect of the society is negatively affected drastically.

Suggestions on the Way Forward

The Igbo traditional republican system of governance should support the modern monarchical system. The role the traditional institutions such as council of elders, age grade and daughters' union can play in the process of good governance cannot be denied. They can take up the role of advisory body to the government and also participate in the administration of their communities. They could be made to take up developmental roles, by complementing government efforts through organizing and mobilizing their people for the execution of projects in their various communities. The institutions can also inspire and encourage their members to respect the laws of the land, as well as participate actively in elections, either as candidates or as electorates.

The traditional system of governance should be integrated with the modern system in a way to effectively serve the citizenry in the area of good representation. Accessing justice should be easy and affordable, and dispensations of justice prompt.

There should be a return to core Igbo traditional values of hard work, honesty, kindness, and the attitude of being their brothers' keepers. Fraudulent and dishonest people should be relegated to the background and should not be allowed into positions of authority. Fraudulent traditional rulers and Presidents General and their cohorts should not be allowed to continue in office, if their communities would experience the much-needed growth and development.

Conclusion

Man is a political animal. Actually, politics is a spice of life which man, naturally, cannot do without. If the actions of man are not continuously put in check, there must be a state of lawlessness or anarchy. Maintenance of law and order, defence, enforcement of political decisions and authority in Igbo traditional republican society, as well as social, religious and economic development rests on different groups of

people who apply their authority in the different appropriate occasions. However, the structure and functions were not as elaborate as those of other modern republican societies because the Igbo traditional society was not as complex as its modern counterparts.

We identified two patterns of political organization in Igbo traditional society before the advent of the Europeans. They are the monarchical institution, which was found in only a few communities in Igbo land and the leadership by general consensus, which is republican in nature. It is clear that the basic republican unit in traditional Igbo society was the town which was subdivided into villages. The village is made up of lineage groups called the kindred. The kindred are a collection of families who have a common descent. This system enables full and active participation of each group in political matters and decision making.

We submit that it is necessary to maintain and sustain, in this modern era, the units through which Igbo traditionally ensured a harmonious, egalitarian and just community. Such units include: age grades, council of elders, daughters' union, and the wives' union, among others. The system of governance in the traditional Igbo political society is the bedrock of modern political system; it should be allowed and encouraged to continue to exist with the system in this modern era, albeit with certain influences and modifications.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Culture, religion, and development is at the root of how society form, function and evolve. Culture has been defined as the totality of a people's way of life, which are both manifest and latent. The manifest dimension of culture includes arts, foods, dressing, technology, and patterns of sociopolitical and economic arrangement, etc., which are tangible. The latent dimension of culture includes the beliefs, ethics, norms, philosophies, ideologies, and spirituality which are basically intangible but they control the life, bahaviour, and destiny of a people. This book on *Dialogue on African Religion, Culture and Development: Proceedings of the 2022 International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies*, aims at demonstrating that African culture, in both its latent and manifest forms, can guarantee Africa's development in the 21st century when well employed. The contributors to the different chapters of this piece, have identified areas in which African traditional cultural values and religious beliefs present better alternatives to the existing colonial legacies. +



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