Goldline & Jacobs Publishing
WWW.GOLDLINEANDJACOBS.COM
ISSN 2325-0801

Igbo Studies Review. Number 9 (2021)

Igbo Studies Review

Number 9. 2021

ISR

Published For The Igbo Studies Association

GOLDLINE & JACOBS PUBLISHING

IGBO STUDIES REVIEW
ISSN 2325-0801

Number 9 * 2021

ABOUT THE JOURNAL –ISSN 2325-0801

EDITORIAL DETAILS
Editorials *Igbo Studies Review*
Igbo Studies Association
Center for Igbo Studies
Dominican University
goldlineandjacobs@gmail.com

EDITORIAL POLICY
Igbo Studies Review (ISR) (ISSN 2325-0801) is published once a year in May and is the official publication of the Igbo Studies Association. The manuscripts originally presented at a meeting of the Igbo Studies Association are eligible for inclusion. *Igbo Studies Review (ISR)* is peer-reviewed and publishes original research from scholars across the disciplines on all aspects of Igbo studies, including topics related to the Igbo Diaspora worldwide. Submissions accepted for consideration will be evaluated anonymously by at least two external reviewers. All manuscripts submitted for consideration must be original works that have not been published previously or is currently being considered by any other publication outlet.

FORMAT AND STYLE

The journal uses the Chicago Manual of Style for endnotes and bibliography. Articles must be written in English. Spelling can be either British or American English but should be consistent throughout. Manuscripts should be typed in 12 pts Times New Roman, double-spaced, with ample margins using MSWord. They must be 8,000 words maximum, inclusive. Articles should include a brief abstract, and a short biography with the author's full name, title, current affiliation, and full postal address/phone/email details of the author(s). Authors are asked to strictly limit their use of capitals, underlining, and bolding. Tables should be kept to a minimum and should be typed on separate sheets and their position indicated by a marginal note in the text. All images should indicate their source(s) typed below the tables and submitted in grayscale (black and white) in .gif or .jpg format.

ADDRESS FOR SUBMISSION

Submission link: https://www.goldlineandjacobs.com/index.php/journals/igbo-studies-review

SUBSCRIPTION AND PAYMENT

Institutional and non-members subscriptions are $55 and $35 a year respectively. Add $5 per issue for subscriptions outside the United States. Institutional and subscribers and individual subscribers who are not members of the ISA should direct inquire about subscription (or standing order), claims for missing issues, and notifications of address changes to:

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor
Igbo Studies Review
Goldline and Jacobs Publishing
P. O. Box 5404, Milwaukee, WI 53205 [Email: goldlineandjacobs@gmail.com]

Members of the association should direct address changes and claims for missing issues to the secretary of the Igbo Studies Association. See WWW.Igbostudiesassociation.org

---

IGBO STUDIES REVIEW
Number 9 * 2021

ARTICLES

Igbo Studies Review 9, (May 2021): 1-16

COLONIALISM AND ANIOMA STRIDES IN NIGERIA UP TO THE NIGERIA-BIAFRA WAR

ODIGWE A. NWAOKOCHA

Abstract: The story of European colonialism and the forces it let loose in modern Nigeria can never be over-emphasized as they continue to shape and define socio-political developments in many ways. This work traces the dynamics produced by the relative early contact the Anioma had with Europe and how that propelled them to the high echelon of modern Nigeria up to the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The Anioma had been pace-setters and high-flyers in Nigeria before the war. Against that background, this work further examines the Anioma group within the context of the Mid-West and the larger Nigerian community from the inception of colonial rule in Nigeria. It examines the pre-colonial advances of Europeans into Anioma territory; the incorporation of the Anioma into colonial Nigeria; the advantages conferred on the Anioma by its early contact with forces of Western education as well as Anioma strides in post-colonial Nigeria before the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra war. It also demonstrated how the Anioma were quite visible within the pre-war Nigerian socio-political milieu.

INTRODUCTION

THE ANIOMA GROUP IN MODERN NIGERIA is relatively small but quite significant in relation to other groups in the Nigerian polity. The ancestral land of the Anioma is the predominantly Igbo-speaking region on the western bank of the Niger River in Delta State. Today, the area is referred to as Aniomaland. The people are also known as Anioma people. They have been quite influential among the forces that shaped Nigerian history, particularly in the decades leading up to the Nigeria-Biafra war. The critical role some Anioma-born personalities and the Anioma group came to play in modern Nigeria was shaped and caused by the early contact of the Anioma people with western education and other ingredients of western modernization. In other words, colonialism gave them a head start that propelled them above many groups and placed them in what

Odigwe Nwaokocha *is an associate professor in the Department of History and International Studies at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.*

appears to be a special class. That Anioma-born military officers got so involved early in the Nigerian armed forces as officers is a throwback to this early contact with Europeans. That the Anioma territory became a major battlefront in the Nigeria-Biafra war; witnessed some unique experiences like being marked out for harsh treatment and the fact that certain family houses and compounds were targeted for destruction during the war are also traceable to who the Anioma became and came to represent in modern Nigeria. This work x-rays the Anioma people in the Nigerian state and society up to the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1967. This shall involve looking at how the Anioma were incorporated into modern Nigeria, and their general strides in the Nigerian socio-political scene, particularly in the fields of education, politics, and the armed forces. It looks at the army personnel of Anioma extraction involved in the Nigeria crisis of 1966 and their fate from the January 1966 military coup down to the coup of July 1966. It also attempts an examination of some Anioma experiences of the pogrom that befell the Igbo group in Nigeria in 1966. This will also include the roles the Anioma played in the sparks of the Nigerian crisis, which started in 1966 and culminated in the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra war on July 6, 1966.

The story of how the people of the old Mid-West (where Aniomaland is located) got involved with Europe stretches back to the fifteenth century when Portuguese traders and Christian missionaries visited a part of what became the Mid-West and interacted with the Itsekiri and Benin kingdoms in the process. However, it took another four centuries for Europeans to visit the Anioma area. It started with the European attempt to understand the course of the River Niger. This commenced around the Fouta-Djallon Highlands, where the Niger has its source and reached the Anioma area when the Lander brothers reached Aniomaland on the Niger on their way to the Mouth of the River Niger in November 1830. European success in subsequently reaching the area where the Niger empties into the Atlantic opened the hinterland of the Niger area to European traders and missionaries. Between 1832 and 1834, Macgregor Laird, a British merchant, had established preliminary contacts with Aboh.[1] The first European Christian missionary party reached Igboland and Aniomaland in 1841 when a Church Missionary Society (CMS) evangelizing party on its way to Lokoja stopped briefly at Aboh.[2] European Christian evangelizing enterprise in Aniomaland effectively took off in 1875 with the establishment of a CMS station at Asaba.[3]

The very large picture of the origins of how the Royal Niger Company chattered by the British Crown acquired the area and eventually sold the same to the British, who eventually administered the area directly as a colonial power is well-documented in a book by Sanche de Gramont. The company was headquartered in Asaba on the western bank of the Niger

in Aniomaland complete with a supreme court, central prison, and the main fort for the five-hundred-man constabulary from where it ran the affairs of Nigeria.[4] That Christian missions of the Anglican (1875) and Catholic (1884) communions planted their missions at Asaba in the early days of European enterprise on the lower Niger is well-documented. That the presence of those missions combined with that of the company to produce multiplier effects that took the Anioma to higher heights has been well highlighted in a work by Augustine N. Ndili.[5] The introduction of western education was a major factor that propelled the Anioma to unassailable heights in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. The advantage this afforded the Anioma has been an issue that attracted the attention of Daniel Olisa Iweze in a work on the Anioma on the eve of the Nigeria-Biafra war.[6]

On the possible connection between Igbo public ascendancy in modern Nigeria and the Nigeria-Biafra war, Paul Anber's "Modernisation and Political Disintegration; Nigeria and the Ibos," is stimulating and remarkable. A very thorough study, it provided very handy historical data on the subject. It presented statistics on how the Igbo (of which the Anioma is a part) led other Nigerian groups in nearly every index of modernization, including education up to 1966.[7] For this work, this is important for a deeper understanding of the seeming omnipresence of the Igbo in the Nigerian public scene, including the armed forces up to 1966. The work forms a solid background to an understanding of the ordinary Igbo in modern Nigeria who became a victim of narrow-mindedness on account of the general upward movement of his group within the Nigerian setting. When it is understood that interpretations given to the Igbo dominance in the public sector attracted loathing and accusations of plotting to dominate Nigeria to the exclusion of other groups and that the animosity that bred towards the Igbo in Nigeria was instrumental to the prelude to the civil war, the significant nature of Anber's work comes into clear focus. None of the works interrogated above dealt with the role of colonialism in giving the Anioma an apparent strong voice within the Nigerian setting prior to the Nigeria-Biafra war. The current work is an attempt to focus on that by seeking to explore the connection between colonialism, western education, and the Anioma visibility in Nigeria up to the outbreak of the war.

ASCERTAINING WHO THE ANIOMA PEOPLE ARE

The Anioma people live on a section of the lower reaches of the western bank of the River Niger in modern Nigeria. They are essentially an Igbo sub-group separated from the majority of the Igbo groups who live on the eastern bank of the Niger in the former Eastern Region by the River Niger.

At different times in their history, they have also been called 'Ika Igbo', 'Western Igbo', when they were a part of the Western Region from 1946 to 963; 'Mid-Western Igbo', when they were in the Mid-West between 1963 and 1976; 'Bendel Igbo' as part of Bendel State, when the old Mid-West was renamed, from 1976 to 1991. From 1991, when Delta State was carved out of Bendel State, some refer to them as 'Delta Igbo'. The Anioma tag for them has a history of its own. In fact, it was first employed as a term for the people around 1976.[8] Most of them essentially speak three different dialects of the macro-Igbo language. There have been contentions about their identity.[9] But they are generally regarded as an Igbo group.[10]

THE ORIGINS OF THE ANIOMA CONTACT WITH EUROPE AND COLONIALISM

In relative terms, the Anioma came into early contact with the powerful forces that eventually produced the building blocks of colonial Nigeria. Their early contact with European explorers, traders, and missionaries was facilitated by the fact that a large section of them live on the western bank of the River Niger's lower reaches. This contact was responsible for sweeping a section of the Anioma community into the network of very early relationships with Europeans. This conferred some advantages on the Anioma group within the context of modern Nigeria. The earliest contact the Anioma had with elements that eventually resulted in ties with explorers and the agents of European trading companies was through the River Niger. In this connection, Asaba and Aboh played very crucial roles. Both of them lie on the western bank of the Niger River. Sponsored European explorers had been on a mission to discover the source and explore the full course of the river for the purposes of using the Niger as a highway into the African hinterland. For them, the exercise was necessary in their efforts to establish trade ties with African territories in the interior. The search for Niger's source and mouth had lasted from 1788 to 1831 with the Lander brothers (Richard and John) finally reaching the point at which the magnificent Niger empties into the Atlantic Ocean.[11]

After this 'achievement', there was a floodgate of European activities in the hinterland of what eventually emerged as Nigeria. The River Niger was a major artery in this enterprise. In fact, the British had established a Consulate in Lokoja in the lower Niger area which they closed in 1869. A merger of three rival European firms in the area soon produced the United African Company in 1879 under the leadership of George Goldie, otherwise known as George Taubman Goldie. In 1882, the company was reorganized and renamed the National African Company. Rivalries between the French and the English in the lower Niger got the British government to establish a protectorate over the Niger Delta in 1884 but had

no money to pay for its administration. Goldie got his request that his agent on the Niger be given consulate status approved by the government. With that, the company was now able to make treaties for England and advance its commercial interests in the lower Niger area. At the Berlin African Conference, Britain insisted on administering the area Goldie's company had carved out in the lower Niger. That is how the Anioma people came into the picture and became part of the Nigerian state that evolved from that contact between Europe and people in the lower Niger area. The British got into most of Anioma territories through their initial trading contacts with the Anioma towns directly on the Niger and later, the hinterland. It was from such ties that British influence spread into the hinterland. This exception to this general trend will seem to be the Agbor axis where British penetration of the hinterland came immediately following the bloody Benin-British encounter in 1897. The British had entered Anioma territories first as explorers, traders, and missionaries. These activities eventually led to a successful attempt on the part of the British to call the shots in the concerned territory. The result was the colonization of the different Anioma communities by the British. This signaled the beginning of British control over Anioma territories. Under some agreements, Anioma communities and their rulers were cajoled into opting for 'protection' under British rule and monopoly of trade in their territories. In 1884, Asaba came under British attack and surrendered with a treaty of 'protection', friendship and peace.[12] The British government established a protectorate over the Niger Delta the same year.

For further understanding the place of the Anioma area in the emergence of modern Nigeria, it is instructive to note that the administrative capital of the Royal Niger Company was set up in Asaba between 1886 and 1900.[13] There, it had the Supreme Court, Central Prison, and the main garrison for the Royal Niger Company's Royal Constabulary. The relics of Asaba's old romance with being Nigeria's administrative headquarters: the seat of the Royal Nigeria Company, the U.A.C House, the old Court (now renovated), the oldest county club in the country (the Asaba Club), and the old staff quarters are still there in the town's old G.R.A. With Asaba as a beacon of the company's powers, British imperial light was beamed on the hinterland. In 1897, the leading chiefs of Ibusa were compelled to sign the treaty of friendship and peace with the British under the seal of the Royal Niger Company.[14] Aboh had earlier signed a treaty of friendship and trade with the British in 1841 before the advent of the Royal Niger Company.[15] The same process of treaty-signing was replicated all over the Anioma hinterland by the British. At the end of the nineteenth century therefore, the Anioma area had been secured for British imperial exploration by the Royal Niger Company.

It must be stated that the relationship between the Royal Niger Com-

pany and the Anioma people was not always smooth sailing. This is even though the topmost ruling classes among them had been coerced into signing the so-called treaties of friendship with the company and the British crown. British influence was spreading among the Anioma people in all ramifications. Christianity was already introduced by European missionaries but was being stoutly challenged by the adherents of the indigenous religion. In some cases, local chiefs who converted from the indigenous Anioma way of worship to Christianity faced titanic battles with their communities. As we shall see shortly, even those suspected to be friendly with or sympathetic towards Europeans and their ways were considered enemies. The Anioma group resolved to attack Christian churches and stores owned by the Royal Niger Company, identifying both as sources of a new scourge brought upon their land by Europeans. They loathed it all and sought ways of degrading and doing away with everything European completely. As a corollary to the first, the Ekumeku movement erupted to restore the Anioma country to the ways of their ancestors. Anyone who was on the side of the European cultural imperialists was considered a saboteur and a foe. For instance, the paramount ruler of Ebu, Chief Emina, was sanctioned by the Ebu people for receiving the Reverend Father Carlo Zappa in his house. Zappa, the moving spirit behind the spread of Catholicism among the people of the old Aniocha Division (now comprising the Aniocha and Oshimili Council Areas) had reached Ebu in 1879 only to be fought off and sent away by the people. On his second attempt, he was received by Chief Emina. Thereafter, as a way of demonstrating their opposition to what had transpired between their Chief and Father Zappa, the people sent word to Chief Emina that his visitors should not extend their activities beyond his compound. They subsequently rejected his summons for meetings. He continued his friendship with the Catholic missionaries, however, and gave a piece of land on which the modern Oja Model Primary School, Ebu is situated, to the catholic mission.[16] His (Emina) lineage is about the most educated and prominent in Ebu today. At Ibusa, the first Eze titleholder to convert to Christianity was Obi Ajufo of Umuehea Quarter. He paid for that decision in the short run. His children refused to work on his farms; his eldest son threatened him with an axe and his twelve wives threatened to sleep outside his compound if he did not go back to the religion of their ancestors and turn away from his embrace of the foreign ways.[17] Today, the Ajufo family is armed with all sorts of professionals and prominent people. An Akwukwu-Igbo Chief was also said to have been visited by some indigenous anti-Western partisans and warned that he would be shot if he did not wash off the water he was supposed to have received on his head on baptism.[18]

Finally, the Ekumeku warriors stepped into the picture. In a series of

events after another, they resisted and defied the activities of the missionaries; rejected the authority of the Royal Niger Company and defied the government it represented. This they demonstrated in campaigns of destroying churches and sacking the company's trading stations between 1883 and 1914.[19]

THE FIRMING UP OF BRITISH COLONIAL DOMINATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW ELITE CLASS IN ANIOMALAND

By 1914, the Ekumeku uprising had been quelled and British colonial rule was effectively established in Aniomaland. Despite the quarrels of the Anioma with the new scheme of life being introduced to them by the British government, they eventually, albeit reluctantly, embraced the new schools being introduced by the missionaries who went on establishing more and more of them. Before the colonial rule was established in Aniomaland despite the armed opposition of the Ekumeku uprising, Aboh had been the first Anioma town to receive missionaries in 1841, when Obi Ossai received three Church Missionary Society representatives: J. F. Schon, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, and Simon Jonas, a Sierra-Leonean ex-slave of Igbo extraction, on their way to Lokoja. Jonas was left behind by the party at the request of Ossai. The party eventually fetched him on their way back after a short stay at Aboh preaching the Christian Gospel.[20] However, Aboh was not to be the center of very serious Christian activities in the Anioma area. That Asaba was to be, may is not unconnected with the fact that the Royal Niger Company moved its headquarters to Asaba in 1886. The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) got to Asaba before any other Christian group, having established its first mission there in 1875. However, if Asaba came to be the nerve center of Christian enterprise on the lower Niger and the fulcrum on which modern developments around Anioma turned, it was the Catholics that made it so. The establishment of schools in the Anioma area was kicked-off by the Catholic Church in Asaba in 1888, two years after Asaba became the headquarters of the Royal Niger Company and by extension, that of the emerging Nigerian nation-state. From there, it quietly spread to other areas of Aniomaland.

As pointed out earlier, Reverend Father Carlo Zappa of the Society of African Missions (S.M.A.) was the moving spirit of the evangelization around Asaba and a huge section of the Anioma hinterland. Though the Catholic Church had been late in arriving in the Anioma area, Zappa threw a lot of energy into the work of the church, including the establishment of schools. Soon after arriving Asaba in 1884, he established the first primary school in the town, Saint Joseph's Primary School. It was the very first primary school in the whole of the Mid-West area. In 1890, the Church Missionary Society also established a primary school in Asaba,

Holy Trinity School. In 1895, the Catholic Mission established the Convent School, Asaba specifically for girls. Boarding facilities were made available in the school which was run by the Congregation of Our Lady Queen of the Apostles.[21] It was rare at that time to have schools dedicated wholly to the education of the girl-child. Asaba and Aniomaland had that distinction quite early in colonial Nigeria. Beyond teaching normal reading and writing, the school also offered courses in domestic science. It attracted pupils from as far as Etsakoland in today's Edo State in Nigeria.[22] Together, these schools and many more that followed them in the Anioma area came to have a multiplier effect in Aniomaland. Their graduates became seed apostles of an education revolution that spread through Aniomaland and beyond as they became teachers and catechists in many places, particularly around Aniomaland.[23] The colonial government established its first school in Asaba in 1901. In 1907, the Anglican Church opened a primary school in Akwukwu-Igbo in the interior. The Catholic mission again opened another school at Ibusa, the Sacred Heart Primary School, in 1909. To show how fast the opening of schools caught on in Aniomaland, Ubulu-Unor, a place still considered to be in the interior even today, got its first primary school in 1913.

It is very noteworthy that the very first post-primary institution in the old Mid-West was established by the Anglicans at Asaba. One of the most prominent Nigerians who schooled there is Obed Azikiwe, the father Of Nnamdi Azikiwe. The school was later moved to Awka in modern Anambra State.[24] It is not remembered by many. The educational institution that is remembered as the first post-primary school in the whole of the Mid-West, the famous Saint Thomas' Teachers' Training College, Ibusa, was established by the Catholic Church in 1928. This school eventually supplied teachers to catholic primary schools scattered around Nigeria. In the words of Bola Ige, former Governor of Oyo state and former Attorney-General of Nigeria, who grew up in Kaduna, St Thomas' College, Ibusa '…for many of us catholic pupils in the North, was the 'University' from which all our good teachers and headmasters came.'[25] In 1944, the Catholics opened a secondary school in Asaba. That was and remains Saint Patrick's College, Asaba. In 1946, the American Baptists established the Baptist Girls' High School at Agbor.[26] It has also been established that the very first catholic seminary for the training of Catholic priests in Nigeria was established at Asaba. It was later moved from there and is today at Ibadan as SS Peter and Paul Major Seminary. The last alumnus of the school to depart the earth is the late Monsignor Pedro Martins of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos.[27] Within the Mid-West outside the Anioma area, Edo College had been established in Benin City in 1937. What eventually became Government College; Ughelli had been established in 1945 as Government Secondary School and later Warri Col-

lege, Warri and Warri College Ughelli. A deeper peep will show that there were five post-primary institutions in the Mid-West by 1946 and three of them were in the Anioma section.

The early contact the Anioma had with western education in colonial Nigeria gave them a head-start in terms of the opportunities offered by the phenomenon thrown up by the establishment of the Nigerian state by Britain. Armed with education, which a lot of other Nigerians lacked, Anioma elites fanned out in different sections within the larger Nigerian society. They got exposed to other places and cultures, thanks to their education. Some statistical figures produced by a government-sponsored survey on the various southern peoples living in different southern provinces will be useful here. We shall focus specifically on the Anioma whom the report referred to as 'Ika Ibo'. Figures tabulated from some statistical data provided by P.A. Talbot show that by 1926, there were 92,834 Anioma (Ika Ibo) persons living in other provinces in Southern Nigeria outside their Anioma homeland.[28] The extent to which the Anioma had moved out of their homes to other places in Nigeria can be demonstrated by similar statistics from the other surveyed Mid-West ethnic groups. There were 34,359 Bini people living outside their province then. For the Esan, it was 55,979. The Kukuruku (Afemai) had 57,237 while the Sobo (Urhobo) had 32,577.[29] As further evidence of how the Anioma had left home in colonial Nigeria, they were very much involved in the colonial service, where their prevalence was quite high. By the 1930s, there were at least four produce inspectors in Nigeria's colonial service from Ibusa alone. These are Julius Nmei, Nwanze Gbalahor, Benedict Okeleke Elege and Louis Abuah.[30] Another source corroborated the high visibility of Anioma indigenes in the colonial service by asserting that there were many of them in the colonial Public Works Department (PWD) as masons, bricklayers, painters, plumbers, carpenters, and electricians. The informant who speaks fluent Hausa said she lived with her husband, Gabriel Ilechie, the Ogwashi-Uku-born and bred bricklayer in many parts of Nigeria, including Malumfashi, Sokoto, Katsina, Funtua, and Benin City in colonial times.[31] By the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war, the Anioma had a lot of retired colonial public and civil servants. This was particularly true of Ogwashi-Uku, Ibusa and Asaba. Some of these retirees were killed by federal troops in their onslaught against the Anioma people during the Nigerian civil war. It is also interesting to note that virtually all the Anioma military officers in Nigeria before the war were children of these Anioma colonial workers.

These Anioma pioneers in colonial Nigeria may not have been very well educated by modern standards. The little education they got, however, was a catalyst that propelled them to great heights. For instance, Chukwuma Nzeogwu's father, James Okafor Nzeogwu who was educated to standard six and joined the Anioma dispersal to Kaduna, was to

produce an elitist child in Major Patrick Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, whose place in Nigeria history has become almost indelible. As time went on, however, building upon the achievements of those who had cleared new paths for them, the Anioma elite class produced top professionals in all fields in colonial Nigeria. The first West African to be ordained a priest of the Catholic Church was the Ezi-born Paul Obodoechine Emecheta who was ordained in1920 at Asaba. Equipped with just standard six education, Father Paul worked his way up to the prestigious priesthood of the Catholic Church as a pioneer Nigerian priest. The first lawyer in the Benin province was also of Anioma origin. Barrister Nwajei hailed from Ibusa and by dint of hard work and personal sacrifice qualified as a lawyer around 1940.[32] He spent virtually all his working life as a lawyer in Kano, where he became the National Legal Adviser to the Northern Elements Progressive Union (N.E.P.U.).

THE ANIOMA RESISTANCE TO BRITISH COLONIALISM, THE ELITES, AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW IDENTITY

The point with the Anioma and their role in modern Nigeria goes beyond having had early contact with western education. It was the use to which they put that advantage that catapulted them to the top of the social ladder in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. They simply seized their opportunities with both hands and pressed home their advantages. In a way, they made their early contact with western education count by putting it to good use. They were not the most advantaged people at the beginning of colonial rule. They had resisted British rule at a very heavy cost. Besides the Ekumeku movement which is very well-known and principally centered around the old Aniocha Division and its environs, the Ika and Kwale groups had also created resistance movements of their own, though not on the Ekumeku scale. The reaction of the British to the Anioma on account of these uprisings was to place them at some peculiar political disadvantage in the Nigerian state that emerged from British conquests around modern Nigeria. Owing to what they considered to be profound and detailed opposed reservations about the British colonialism, particularly the way the British district commissioner, Captain O.S Crewe-Read understood his authority, the Owa people revolted violently in 1906, killing the District Commissioner, S. O. Crewe-Read, at Owa-Nta in the process. In retaliation, the British had fallen on Owa which they sacked militarily.[33] In two separate uprisings in 1905 and 1914, the Kwale people revolted against British rule. The colonial government's emissary had been flogged and driven away at Ezionum. This attracted British military attacks and the conquest of Ezionum and Amai in 1914.[34]

Arising from the many troubles which the British felt the Anioma had

given to them, efforts were made to keep them in check in post-1914 Nigeria. Joseph Egwu has hinted that the British decided to employ a policy of keeping the Anioma separate in two different provinces in order to manage them in a way that suited the colonial government. This he pointed out, forced the British into consigning the Anioma (though one people) into two separate provinces.[35] The truth of the matter is that the Anioma were gerrymandered into two different provinces. The Asaba and Ika divisions were lumped with the Edo group in the Benin Province while the Ukwuani Division was forced into Warri Province to co-habit with the Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Isoko. This made the Anioma political and numerical minorities in both places.

It is important to point out that the Anioma did not seem to have allowed this obvious disadvantage to weigh them down. It did not stop them from seeing themselves as one. In 1939, Anioma elites that had spread out from their ancestral home in the provinces of Benin and Warri to different parts of Nigeria got together to form a group pronouncing their oneness. This was the Western Ibo Union that brought together nineteen Anioma town groups under a pan-Anioma umbrella group.[36] Their coming together was a defiance of the artificial division the colonial Nigerian state had attempted to impose on their aspirations as a group. They saw themselves as one despite the way the colonial state classified them.

This Anioma solidarity was to be a major factor in their collective push for what they felt was theirs in colonial and even post-colonial Nigeria. It was with this united vision that the Anioma group asked for a separate province for themselves in 1954. The push for a law that would have removed the Aboh Division from the Warri Province as well as Asaba and Ika divisions from the Benin Province to form a new West Niger Province was spear-headed by frontline politicians from the four modern political sections of Anioma. Chief Dennis Osadebey represented Oshimili; Aniocha was represented by Chief F.H Utomi, Ika by the Obi of Akumazi, and the Ukwuani people by Chief Oputa Ututu. All four were members of the Western House of Assembly.

ANIOMA STRIDES IN THE MID-WEST AND PACE-SETTING ROLES IN NIGERIA

This demand for a province of their own will seem to have presaged the role Anioma sons and daughters eventually played in the micro-politics of the Mid-West as well as that of Nigeria and their many accomplishments. Prominent Anioma sons and daughters plunged seriously into the politics of Nigeria both at the micro and macro levels. As leader of the National Council Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) opposition in the Western House of Assembly and the arrowhead of the NCNC in the Mid-West, Chief Den-

nis Chukwudebe Osadebey was one of those who carried the burden for the demand for the creation of the Mid-West Region. He became the head of the Mid-West State Movement while the Oba of Benin, Akenzua II held the honorific title of the Leader of the movement. It is also instructive to note that the very first time the idea of creating a new state out of the Western Region was officially raised at a meeting, it was almost an Anioma show all the way. This was a meeting of the leaders of the Benin Province held at Ogwashi-Uku in 1952 chaired by the Oba of Benin and addressed by the Resident, H.L.M. Butcher. At the meeting, a motion for the creation of a Central State was moved by Chief J. I. G. Onyia and seconded by Chief F.H. Utomi.[37] Both were retired educationists from Asaba and Ogwashi-Uku, respectively. Again, the inaugural meeting of the Mid-West State Movement was held at Agbor on May 5, 1956.[38] Such prominent Anioma personalities as Dennis Osadebey, Opute Ututu, F. H. Utomi, Ogeogbunem Dafe, Afam Mordi, Mrs. B. U. Kerry, and Mr. Mark Uzorka played quintessential roles in both the creation of the Mid-West and its eventual administration. As the leader of the leading party in the Mid-West area and of the NCNC Parliamentary Caucus in the Western Region, Osadebey emerged as Mid-West Administrator and eventually as Premier when elections were held in the Mid-West later in 1963.[39] The creation of the Mid-West showed how far advanced the Anioma were compared to other areas of the Mid-West in producing professionals. In the political field, apart from Osadebey who sat atop the government of the Mid-West as Premier, the Anioma section produced the following in the very first Mid-West Cabinet inaugurated in 1964: Chief Ogeogbunem Dafe was Minister of Finance, Chief F.H. Utomi was Minister of Education and Chief F.U. Osuhor served as Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Justice Chike Idigbe became the new Chief Judge of the Region. He had been the most senior judge from the Mid-West in the former Western Region. Besides that, a large bulk of the senior civil servants who had returned to the Mid-West from Ibadan was of Anioma origin.[40] These included F.C. Esedebe, Chukwujekwu, E. C. Halim, F. C. Halim, Israel Amadi-Emina, George Orewa, Isaac Okonjo, and P.I.G. Onyeobi among others. They all became permanent secretaries in the Mid-West. Of the first set of twelve permanent secretaries in the Midwest, nine were of Anioma extraction. On its creation in the new Mid-West, the region's Ministry of Health had nine medical doctors. Eight of them were of Anioma origin.[41] Some of these were Dr. Patrick Ofili, Dr. Francis Ogeah, Dr. R.O. Nkeaka, Dr. Ngozi Allanah, Dr. J.B. Azinge, Dr. B.O. Azinge and Dr. Eugene Akwule. As a result of this, the Central Hospital in Benin City was also dominated by medical doctors from the Anioma section of the Mid-West.

If the Anioma group was in a dominant position to call the shots in

Midwest affairs, it was not because they conspired against other Midwest groups. It was their education and consequent attainments that took them to what will tend to have facilitated their general prominence in other fields within the Nigerian space both in colonial and post-colonial times. A few examples will suffice here. The first Nigerian to be commissioned into the Nigerian Army was Lt. Ugboma, an Ukwuani man of the Anioma group. The first Nigerian cadet-trained officer in the Nigerian Navy is Commander O. Z. Chiazor of Atuma. He obtained a combined Honours degree in Chemistry and Physics in 1954 before gaining a commission into the Royal Canadian Navy. He joined the Nigerian Navy in 1958. By the time of Nigeria's independence on October 1, 1960, the Anioma had ten officers out of a Nigerian officer population of fifty-seven in the Nigerian Army. This eleven excludes the pioneer Nigerian officer in the Nigerian Army, who had left before then. If we include him in the count of Nigerians who had been enrolled into the officer cadre of the Nigerian Army before independence, then the Anioma produced eleven out of an officer population of less than sixty in the Nigerian Army. After independence more Anioma officers were added to this list. This includes the first female officer in the Nigerian Army, Josephine Okwuekeleke-Tolefe. Trained in England as a professional nurse, she has her ancestral roots in Umudei, Ogwashi-Uku, and was commissioned into the Nigerian Amy as a Second Lieutenant on 7th May 1961.[42] All of them and many other Anioma officers who got commissioned after them between 1961 and 1967, with the exception of Alabi Isama and Iweze, lost their commissions as most of them were dismissed from the Nigerian Army at the end of the war.[43]

In addition, the first Nigerian cadet officer in the Nigerian Police Force is Josiah Okwuraiwe of Asaba. The first Nigerian to serve as a nurse in Jos was Leo Okogwu, the father of Maryam Ndidi Babangida (Nee Okogwu). Rev. Nwadei Martin of Issele-Uku was the first Nigerian graduate of a U.S. University. Born in 1875, he traveled to the U.S.A. in 1895 and returned to Nigeria in 1922.[44] Today, a street (Wadei Martins) is named after him in Nigeria's premier University, the University of Ibadan. The first Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Warri is the Ibusa-born Lucas Nwaezeapu. He was enthroned in 1964. Nigeria's independence Beauty queen was Rosemary Anieze (later Anieze-Adams) who hails from Ugbodu in Odiani clan. Peter Anieke of Ibusa was an ace footballer with Stationery Stores of Lagos and later was among the first set of Nigerian footballers to represent Nigeria in the Olympics at the Mexico Games of 1968. Sidney Asiodu, an Asaba indigene, was a champion athlete from his Igbobi college days down to the University of Nigeria Nsukka. He ran for Nigeria at the Olympics. Violet Odogwu (later Odogwu-Nwajei) was also an athlete who won many laurels for Nigeria. She hails from Asaba. In 1965, Mrs. B.U. Kerry of Owere-Olubor had emerged as a Senator for the Anioma

people in the Nigerian Senate. With that, she became the second woman in Nigerian history to be a member of the Nigerian Senate.[45] In the world of music, the Anioma group had also given the world the Asaba-born ace-trumpeter, Zeal Onyia, and the much-beloved and celebrated Akwukwu-born but Lagos-bred high-life crooner, Eddy Okonta. In a way, it will be fair to say that the Anioma people contributed greatly to putting the building blocks that built up Nigeria from the inception of the colonial state right into the post-colonial era.

To a great extent too, the Anioma had attained some distinction in the Nigerian society before the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war. They may not have been at the very top, but they were holding their own *vis-à-vis* other Nigerian groups. They were thus not a group to be easily overlooked. Without even realizing it, the Anioma group was already playing at the very top of the Nigerian power game. Their entrenchment in the armed forces, particularly the Nigerian Army, gave them a level of visibility that was not to be taken for granted. They had emerged as a key group within Nigeria and controlled the government machinery in the Mid-West, a region that linked the East and the West of the country. The importance of the Anioma area for Nigeria was further strengthened when a bridge was constructed by the federal government to link Asaba in the Mid-West with Onitsha in the East. It was a very powerful link and connected west and east in a flow of commerce, people, and culture. This bridge was commissioned on January 4, 1966, by no less a person than the Federal Prime Minister Tafawa-Balewa. It was and still is the only bridge across the Niger in southern Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

On the eve of the Nigeria-Biafra war, the Anioma group had become a critical stakeholder in the Nigerian project. Her elites got into vantage positions mostly on account of their relatively early contact with the forces of western education. They had scored many firsts and provided Nigeria with powerful blocks, beams and pillars in her nation and state-building processes. Her people had gone far and wide all over Nigeria. They also occupied very key positions in civil and military establishments. They enjoyed privileged positions in many fields of human endeavor on account of their early contact with western education, and their push and determination. They had worked hard and earned the fruits of success. When the Nigeria-Biafra war came, however, their territory became a major battlefront. The result was cataclysmic for them and their privileged position within the Nigerian setting. At the end of the war, the influential Anioma group became victims of the struggle for power and influence in Nigeria. They lost out and have been playing catch-up ever since.

NOTES

[1] Obaro Ikime, "The Western Niger Delta and the Hinterland in the Nineteenth Century" in Obaro Ikime, ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980), 267.

[2] Ikime, 267.

[3] F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-185* (London: Frank Cass, 1971), 46-49.

[4] Sanche de Gramont, *The Strong Brown God: The Story of the River* Niger (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1975), 271-319.

[5] Augustine N. Ndili, *Asaba, 187-2006: Reflections on Her Growth and Development* (Asaba: His Bride Ventures, 2008), 74-84.

[6] Daniel Olisa Iweze, "Anioma (Western Igboland) on the Eve of the Nigerian Civil War" in Nana Akua Amposah, ed., *Beyond the Boundaries: Toyin Falola and the Art of Genre Building* (Trenton: Africa World Press/The Red Sea Press), 473-495.

[7]Paul Anber, Modernisation and Political Disintegration: Nigeria and the Ibos, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 1&2 (1967), 163-179.

[8] See Emma Okocha, *Blood on the Niger: An Untold Story of the Nigerian Civil War*, (Washington DC: U.S.A. Africa, 1994), xv.

[9] See for instance, J. O. Ijomah, *Igbo Origins and Migrations* (Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers, 2010), 13-18; K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 25-26; Kunirum Osia, "Anioma Ethnic Identity," in Kunirum Osia, ed., *Anioma in Contemporary Nigeria: Issues of Identity and Development* (Ibadan: Bookbuilders, 2012), 1-22.

[10] Emma Okocha, *Blood on the Niger: The First Black-On-Black Genocide* (New York: Gomslam Books), 2012; P. A. Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, 4 Vols. (London: Frank Cass, 1969 edn); Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 16; F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1971), 166-175; F. A. Onyekpeze, *An Outline of the Culture and Socio-Economic Interest of the Ika Nation* (Agbor: Krisbec Publications, 2003), 14-27; Ben Nwanne, ed. *Ika: The Land and its People* (Lagos: Up and Doing Publishers, 2004), 294-375; C. A. Akeh-Osu, *The History of Great Isi-Ile-Uku (Issele-Uku) Kingdom* (Onitsha: Etuokwu Press, 1992); Lambert U. Ejiofor, *Igbo Kingdoms, Power and Control* (Onitsha: Africana Publishers, 1982); Adiele Afigbo, "The Beni Mirage and the History of South-Central Nigeria," *Nigeria Magazine* , 37, (1981), 17-24; Don C. Ohadike, *Anioma: A Social History of the Western Igbo People* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994); Dan Olisa Dieyi, *The Realities and Values of the Anioma Identity* (Lagos: Danfejim International, 1992); Joseph Nnabugwu Egwu, "The Marginality of the Anioma in Nigeria," *Anioma Essence*, 1, 5 (January 2009), 18 & 21.

[11] See de Gramont, 63-191

[12]Asaba Development Association, *Asaba History and Development* (Benin City: Manilla Enterprises, 1978), 11.

[13] See Stanley Okafor, 'Community Mobilization and Development: The Asaba Development Association,' in Alex Honey and Stanley Okafor, eds., *Hometown Associations: Indigenous Knowledge and Development in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Sam Bookman Publishers, 1999), 55; Emma Okocha, *Blood on the Niger: The Untold Story of the Nigerian Civil War* (Washington D. C.: U. S. A. Africa), xiii

[14] Don C. Ohadike, *The Ekumeku Movement*, 183-189.

[15] Ibid., 171-181.

[16] Jokey Lumi Emina, 'History and People of Ebu,' *Omania Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April/May 2011, 30-31.

[17] Don C. Ohadike, *The Ekumeku Movement*, 103.

[18] Ibid.

[19] See Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 131-136; Don C. Ohadike, *The Ekumeku Movement*, 61-166 and F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1904* (London: Frank Cass), 167-175.

[20] See Don C. Ohadike, *The Ekumeku Movement*, 63-69; F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland,* 2-3.

[21] Ndili, 75; Okafor, 55.

[22] Ndili, 75.

[23] Ndili, 76.

[24] Ndili, 38.

[25] See Bola Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria, 1940-1979* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1995), 8.

[26] B. O. Akwukwuma, "Education in Ikaland: Past, Present and Future", in Ben Nwanne, ed., *Ika: The Land and its People* (Lagos: Up and Doing Publications, 2000), 214; F.A. Onyekpeze, *An Outline of People, Culture and Socio-Economic Interest of the Ika Nation* (Agbor: Krisbec Publications, 2003), 135.

[27] Rev. Fr. (Prof.) A.D. Nzemeke, age 70, Benin City, interviewed on 20/09/ 2005.

[28] P. A. Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria* , Vol. IV, (London: Frank Cass 1969), 44.

[29] Ibid..

[30] Obi Gbonu Ajumeze, age 78, Farmer, Ibusa, interviewed on 16/04/2008

[31] Madam Susan Mgboude Ilechie, Community Leader, age 102, Ogwashi-Uku, interviewed on 01/01/2012

[32] Obi Nwanze Nwaobi, age 87, Ibusa, Community Leader, interviewed on 03/01/2004

[33] Don C. Ohadike, *The Ekumeku Movement*, 148-155.

[34] Ibid, 155-158.

[35] See Joseph Nnabugwu Egwu, 'The Ekumeku Movement', *Anioma Essence*, 1, no. 4, 2008, 57.

[36] NAI, Z/1CC 248/49 Western Ibo Union, 1940.

[37] Emma Okocha, *Blood on the Niger*, xv.

[38] Ibid.

[39] David Abernathy, 'Nigeria Creates a New Region,' *Africa Report*, 9, no. 3, (March 1964), 8-9.

[40] Chief F. C Esedebe, age 80, Retired Permanent Secretary, Ibusa, interviewed on 29/12/ 2010.

[41] Emma Okocha, *Blood on the Niger*, 2.

[42] See *Vanguard* (Nigeria), December 10, 2011.

[43] Odigwe A. Nwaokocha, "Post-War Reintegration, Reconstruction and Reconciliation among the Anioma People of Nigeria", *UFAHAMU: A Journal of African Studies*, Vol 42, Issue 1, 2020, 1-22.

[44] See Chris Afumata Akeh-Osu, *The History of the Great Isi-Ile-Uku* (Issele-*Uku*) *kingdom* (Onitsha: Etuokwu Press, 1992), 32.

[45] See Stella Effah-Attoe, 'Nigerian Women in Top Political Positions 1923-2007: The Journey So Far,' *Calabar Journal of Liberal Studies*, 11, no. 1, (April, 2008), 109-139.

Igbo Studies Review 9, (May 2021): 17-34

BUCHI EMECHETA'S FEMINISM OF SELFHOOD: SELF-CONCEPT, GENDER, MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

ADA UZOAMAKA AZODO

Abstract: Today, there is a multiplicity of intriguing, complicated and complex feminisms in the globe that has resulted from individual women's search for answers to their peculiar experiences, advocacy for general improvement in women's conditions, as well as search for models of women's empowerment to counter power differentials between males and females. This essay will focus on Buchi Emecheta's Feminism of Selfhood inherent in her 1988 Stockholm pronouncement on gender, her notions of self-concept and self-identity, and her consequent, complex views on homosexuality, same-sex and heterosexual marriages. The entire body of Emecheta's writings, along with her penchant for the literary device of irony for heavy emphatic effect, will constitute materials and sources of investigation. Also to be examined are the complexities that have arisen from critics' unawareness or misunderstanding of the impact of lived experiences on the author's writings and interviews, which have colored her feminist ideology and opinions on sexuality. Ultimately, this essay will posit that Emecheta's Feminism of Selfhood motivates the eminent author's support for the betrayed, victims of social, political, cultural and economic injustices wallowing in poverty, not the least of whom are women and females, everybody's fools that she urges subtly by her personal example to stand up for their human rights and their social and economic interests, and thereby assume their own agency for change, freedom and power.

Keywords: Feminisms, advocacy, empowerment, power, freedom, change, gender

INTRODUCTION

> I am a feminist with a small 'f'.' I love men and good men are the salt of the earth. But to tell me that we should abolish marriage like the capital 'F' women who say women should live together and all that. I say No. Personally I'd like to see the ideal, happy marriage. But if it doesn't work, for goodness sake, call it off. [1] -- *Buchi Emecheta*

CLEARLY, BUCHI EMECHETA'S FEMINISM OF Selfhood comes from her own lived experiences, as well as her interest in the inner lives and

Dr. Ada Uzoamaka Azodo *is currently Associate Faculty in French and Francophone Studies, African, African American and African Diaspora Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies, and affiliated with Indiana University Northwest and Purdue University Northwest.*

struggles of women she knew closely and with whom she interacted. Her travails in her marriage to a man that gave her five children, but did not brook her desire for liberty to achieve self-fulfillment, guided her reaction and teachings to several distressed women.[2] Her husband had burned the manuscript of her first novel, declaring that a woman under his roof was not allowed to write. By his stance and gesture, Emecheta's husband denied her inalienable rights to her body and spirit, her right to the pursuit of happiness in whatever way she chose to do so, and forced her to strike out as a single mother alone with her five children. First, she separated from her husband, and then she divorced him, affirming that a lack of marriage was better than a bad marriage, and adding that a broken home was a stigma only if you decided that it was. Curiously, her determination to take her destiny into her hands took her husband by surprise. As their son, Sylvester Onwordi, reported, "She surprised him with a separation and set about raising her five small children alone while studying at night for a Sociology degree and working by day as an administrator at the British Museum."[3] In assuming her agency to end a marriage that was not working for her, Emecheta turned her impediments into hope and strength for herself, becoming thereby a model for other women in similar predicaments in her indigenous setting and beyond. Furthermore, she demonstrated that women needed their own money and their own house to be able to challenge situations attributed to them that they did not like.

Hence, the individual more than the collectivity has the power to carve out a place for self in life. Marriage is not good, if it is a one-way situation that paid the man in good dividends, but left the woman empty-handed, affirms Emecheta. She connects the ills of patriarchy and sexism to social injustice, male domination, and women's subordination and economic inferiority, violence, and abuse. Without economic means, she further notes, women cannot ward off violence towards them in the society, let alone the attendant sexual abuses of rape and incest in domestic spheres. Indeed, the controversies about Emecheta's life, her artistic presentation of characters in her writings, and her pronouncements in general at interviews and other outlets mirror her affirmation that women need to be empowered to stand up for themselves, their rights and interests.

In the excerpt at the beginning of this essay, Emecheta formally proffers her controversial views on gender, marriage, hetero- and homosexuality, and same-sex marriage at the Second African Women's Conference in Stockholm, Sweden. Thereafter, her feminism would challenge conventions, acknowledge that biological determinism is unshakeable, while still observing that there exist various degrees of maleness and femaleness beyond intersex children, meaning, those not clearly born with the male or the female sex organ. Therefore, division of labor along sex lines with-

out due consideration of the gender factor is a mistake, she affirms, a mistake that is the root cause of violent interactions between men and women in the institutions of family, workplace, and systems of government. She argues that males and females have the ability to cross gender lines when necessary and should also be countenanced and supported. Nonetheless, she affirms intriguingly that same-sex relationships and intra-gender sexual desire (read homosexuality), are deviances. Observe that Emecheta's life history mirrors this misnomer as well, for she lived the better part of her adult life as a female head of her family, meaning, a *de facto* male. This apparent incongruity in the author's self-identity, and this ambiguity of her life as a female-male, what her Igbo people would call an Agụnwanyị, has proven difficult for many an unaware critic to properly understand. At her death in February 2017, Niyi Osundare surmised, lauded thus her rich but complex and conflicting life:

> The world has just suffered the sad, irreplaceable loss of a woman who willed herself into significance; a writer who literally wrote each work with blood from her veins. Buchi Emecheta pressed the abundance of life's challenges into the richness of art, producing some of the most frequently cited works in contemporary literature.[4]

Emecheta's biography states in part that in the 1960s when she was growing up in Nigeria, women had few rights as daughters, wives or mothers. Orphaned early, and thrown from one extended family member to another in Lagos, she found solace in the company of a fellow student, Sylvester Onwordi, who was six years older than her. Onwordi later went to England for higher education. When he sent for Emecheta to join him, she went happily. They married and started a family right away, making a baby literally every year, to the extent that by her twenty-second birthday the couple already had all their five children. Trouble started when Onwordi's ego got in the way; he could not brook her independence as a working wife pursuing higher education and writing. The last straw that broke the camel's back was when the jealous husband burned the manuscript of what would have been her first novel. Emecheta decided that she had had enough of domestic problems and strove to free herself from her unhappy marriage. She struck out, taking all their five small children with her. In that radical stance, biography met activism and the narrative eye turned a true-life story into fiction. Buchi Emecheta's second child and first son, Sylvester Onwordi (named after his father), states in a Tribute to his mother at her death:

> She used to tell us as children that if you believed in yourself strongly enough then you[5] could make any dream come true. It was almost an

> article of faith with her, one that made her the forceful character she became, but which also rendered her impatient with people who were less driven than she. When her schoolteacher beat her in front of the class for announcing that she wanted to be a writer, she bore the pain in silence and became more determined than ever to make her dream a reality. Years later, in the UK, when her husband burned the handwritten manuscript of her first novel, she again quietly determined that she would find her own way.[6]

Emecheta's autobiographical trilogy, *In the Ditch* (1972), *Second-Class Citizen* (1974) and *Head Above Water* (1986), portray the writer's difficulty understanding how women are so complacent about their self-concept, self-esteem and dignity that they take all insults and abuses with submission. The first two novels, In *the Ditch* and *Second-Class Citizen*, would later be republished as *Ada's Story* in 1983 by Allison and Busby. A large part of *In the Ditch* had earlier serialized in the *New Statesman* magazine the story of a young and single mother in London raising her children alone and in poverty. The sequel, *Second-Class Citizen*, continues the travails of the heroine, Ada, fighting poverty, gender discrimination and racism in a society that seeks to label her and her family as a problem family, due to their dependence on social welfare benefits to make ends meet. And in *Head above Water*, the third novel, Emecheta disapproves of the double enslavement of the African woman, who "stooped and allowed the culture of her people to enslave her, and then permitted Christianity to tighten the knot of enslavement!"[7] Dogged, Emecheta later reconstructed the burnt manuscript and published it as *The Bride Price*, which won the New Statesman/Jack Campbell Award and the Sunrise Award for the Best Black Writer in the World.

Eventually, Emecheta's writings enlarge in their scope beyond herself, becoming universal stories of women in the world facing the problems of poverty and oppression. The longer the black women from various countries of the world reside abroad away from their original homes the more identical their problems become, for there is not much difference between the situations and conditions of African and Caribbean women in London. In *Gwendolen* (1989), for example, the eponymous heroine suffers racism and unresolved self-identity, due to her West Indian origin in a neighborhood of predominantly white people in London. Then, Kehinde of the novel *Kehinde* (1994), is doubly betrayed by her husband, who leaves her in London, goes back to Nigeria, and marries another wife that is more to his taste, a wife that is docile, weak, and submissive.

At a time when men wrote mainly, not women yet, they saw women consistently as weak and property to men in their writings. *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta's novel with an ironic title taken from the end of

Flora Nwapa's first novel, *Efuru*, deplores the unfair gender oppression of women. Emecheta criticizes marriage by compulsion and motherhood as the only female way to fulfillment as a human being. She celebrates womanhood freed from the yokes of wifehood and motherhood. The heroines Nnụ Ego and Adaku of *The Joys of Motherhood* are often cited by critics as divergent mirrors of women's travails under the yoke of rigid traditions and customs, not to mention puns in the game that men construct to benefit themselves. In Ibusa of those days, a man dies and the younger brother of the dead man inherits his sister-in-law in a levirate customary marriage. The widow, anxious to keep all her children in the family, allows herself to be married a second time to her brother-in-law. Then, intra-female hostility between the senior wife and the younger newcomer wife ensues, as Charlotte Bruner narrates in an excerpt from *The Joys of Motherhood*, ironically titled "A Man Needs Many Wives."[8] Adakụ is the much younger woman that comes up from Ibusa to Lagos after the death of her husband determined to be inherited by her brother-in-law Nnaife, the husband of Nnụ Ego. Beautiful and abraisive, Adaku had lived a life of submission to her dead husband and his extended family in Ibusa. On the contrary, the rather independent wife, Nnụ Ego, residing in the modern city of Lagos, shares the family financial burden with her husband. Overnight, she faces the intolerable situation of having to share her husband with another woman, according to Ibusa custom. She does not want to go against custom or appear to be a "bad woman" that does not share what she has. As the communal lifestyle demands, she should always be seen to be a "good woman," which appellation includes being ready to share her husband. Emecheta minutely captures all the emotions in flux as a result of this sordid situation between the militant and forceful Adakụ and the subdued and reflective Nnụ Ego. The climax of their saga in the dying paragraph of the excerpt is when Nnụ Ego in spite of herself must give up her bed to her rival and husband to consummate their levirate marriage. Nnụ Ego must try to sleep through this ordeal, knowing that Nnaife her husband and Adakụ her new rival are surely laughing at her for her loss. Nnaife could hardly wait for Nnụ Ego to settle down before he pulled Adakụ into the only bed in the one-bedroom flat. The narrative voice states:

> It was a good thing she had prepared herself, because Adaku turned out to be one of those shameless modern women whom Nnu Ego did not like. What did she think she was doing? Did she think Nnaife was her lover and not her husband, to show her enjoyment so? She tried to block her ears, yet could still hear Adaku's exaggerated carrying on. Nnu Ego tossed in agony and anger all night, going through in her imagination what was taking place behind the curtained bed. Not that she had to do much imagining, because even when she tried to ignore

> what was going on, Adaku would not let her. She giggled, she squeaked, she cried and she laughed in turn, until Nnu Ego was quite convinced that it was all for her benefit. At one point Nnu Ego sat bolt upright looking at the shadows of Nnaife and Adaku. No, she did not have to imagine what was going on; Adaku made sure she knew.
>
> When Nnu Ego could stand it no longer, she shouted at Oshia who surprisingly was sleeping through it all: "Oshia, stop snoring!"
>
> There was silence from the bed, and then a burst of laughter. Nnu Ego could have bitten her tongue off; what hurt her most was hearing Nnaife remark: "My senior wife cannot go to sleep. You must learn to accept your pleasures quietly, my new wife Adaku. Your senior wife is like a white lady: she does not want noise." Nnu Ego bit her teeth into her baby's night clothes to prevent herself from screaming.[9]

We have quoted the above excerpt at length partly to show that the perceptive narrative voice did not miss any part of Nnụ ego's lament and partly to bear witness to Emecheta's profound knowledge of the sufferings of women she knows and to whom she consistently gives voice to tell their stories. Nonetheless, she reiterates that many men are constrained to be inhuman by immoral customs and traditions that sanction violence, abuse, and brutality. Her writings bring admirably to the fore themes of suffering, abuse and violence. Added to her ability to capture the subtlety of emotions is her advocacy for women to put on their cloak of strength and boldness as individuals and enlightened persons and find a new and comfortable way for themselves. They must not merely seek to survive, as Nnụ Ego tries to do. On the contrary, they must also seek to endure as Adakụ does.

Clearly, in the past women had few rights, had low self-esteem and lacked self confidence, bogged down as they were by the customs and mores of the traditional cultural system that did not allow them to strive for their self-fulfillment. Emecheta argues that there is no reason for the status quo to continue unabated. She empowers individual women to support and improve themselves and challenge oppressive traditions and customs. *The Slave Girl*, for example, encourages women to be bold and brave enough to leave a marriage with a man that fails to support their human dignity and integrity. Employing her characteristic literary device of irony, the author jabs at the custom of marriage that posits the woman as a trophy to be won by the man. Unless a critic is attentive and reading between the lines he or she might miss the irony embedded in this so-called explanation of how and why Nigerian men embrace polygyny, with good reason:

> But years later, Nigerian men solved the problem themselves. A woman could be taken to church and a ring slipped on her finger as easily as a piece of string round a man's cattle to mark it out from another person's. But that did not mean that the man could have only her. What if he has enough money and could afford more wives, or if the first one married in church had no child? So men would simply take wives when they felt like it; while women on the other hand, must have one husband and only one.[10]

It is with such a writing style that Emecheta strove to hide the fact that is only too glaring to the insightful critical reader that she is a feminist.

Certainly, from this angle of vision, Emecheta's feminism is not minuscule by any means. Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie has criticized Emecheta, and by extension some other early African women writers, for their timidity to take the risk of proclaiming their feminism at the time. For denying their feminism, even when their life's work were intrinsically feminist, Leslie opined:

> Put this down to the successful intimidation of women by men over the issue of women's liberation and feminism. Male ridicule, aggression and backlash have resulted in making women apologetic, and the term "feminist" a bad name. Yet nothing could be more feminist than the writings of these women writers, in their concern and deep understanding of the experiences and fates of women in society.[11]

Observe that Ghanaian Ama Ata Aidoo, for her part, has attempted to reclaim herself in an interview by Maria Frias, pointing out that feminism and lesbianism are not the same, are different from each other:

> I cannot understand why people think that if you write about women you should be a feminist. Now that I have been called the foremost African feminist, it is a bit awkward for me when African critics who do not want to take that I am a feminist write such things about me because really, that is wishful thinking. They don't want to say I'm a feminist, and I suspect that is because people have not clarified the whole issue of lesbianism, and where it impinges on feminism. And I genuinely think that when they say I am not a feminist, they are saying: Oh, she cannot be because feminists are lesbians. It is there, unspoken. Because how more loudly should I declare my feminism? But I always make it clear that feminism is an ideological view point. Lesbianism is a sexual orientation, and the two should not be mixed at all. But people do not want to deal with the dichotomy, the difference. In

> Africa people just cringe, but feminism has nothing to do with lesbianism.[12]

It is noteworthy that Emecheta raises a vital issue about sexuality, sexual orientation and marriage connected to the afore-mentioned feminism-lesbian dichotomy in an epoch when such ideas were not yet openly discussed. First, by justifying her stance on marriage as a complementary relationship that can take place only between a man and a woman, she opens a Pandora's Box . Second, implicitly, she denies thereby the possibility of same-sex marriage, and sees same-sex romantic relationship as unnatural and a choice that one makes.[13] Observe that Buchi Emecheta is not an exception among those that hold a similar opinion, for many schools of thought still do see homosexuality as an aberration and a deviance. Lately, some other indigenous African feminist theorists have accounted in their different ways for women's conditions in particular situations in their cultures, countries and genders.[14] Evidently, gender and sexuality are fluid constructs, which can change every day and throughout the days of one's life.

Emecheta's creative writing embraces a male culture, in the sense that she uses her pen and paper to canvass for women's liberty and freedom from oppression. Just as in the past when men only wrote, her writing would become a platform for and a means of struggle for the improvement of the living conditions of females and women. Indeed, her creative writing links women's concerns to a form of activism:

> I am just an ordinary writer, an ordinary writer who has to write, because if I didn't write I think I would have to be put in an asylum. Some people have to communicate, and I happen to be one of them. I have tried several times to take university appointments and work as a critic, but each time I have packed up and left without giving notice. I found that I could not bring myself to criticize other people's work.[15]

In *The Bride Prize*, a novel that deals with traditional issues facing women and men, both Chike and Akụnna suffer under traditional customs and mores established along rigid sex lines that limit and demean them as human beings. They spend the entire space of the novel struggling to break free and regain their freedom and independence. Akụnna is oppressed in her heterosexual marriage to Chike. Chike, though a man, is also oppressed. It is noteworthy that Buchi Emecheta's personal journey, from a married mother of five to a single mother fending for herself and her children, alone, demonstrates her belief in the fluidity of gender. Akụnna and Chike, therefore, have a chance to emulate the author and

remedy themselves, through abandoning a marriage that is not working for either of them.

Buchi Emecheta also connects the ills of patriarchy to militarism. At the beginning, Western feminism tended to exclude women from other regions of the world, particularly Third World women, who could not identify with this movement as it was affirmed by mostly white women at the time. Third World feminists at the time saw a big rift between them and the other groups of privileged and influential women, whose domineering stance and penchant for speaking for and to the Third World women were akin to their male counterparts subjugating women under the umbrella of patriarchy and through other sexist behaviors.[16] Emecheta is averse to Western feminists' thinking that no one else had heard about and performed feminism before them.[17] That was the moment she, a feminist of the small "f" differentiated herself from the Western Feminists of the big "F"! Living in England opened her senses to the evils of racism, sexism, patriarchy, and all sorts of gender discriminations and oppressions. Elsewhere, Ada Uzoamaka Azodo has clarified Third World women's predicament at the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and colonization and its effects.[18] Continuing, Azodo opines:

> Buchi Emecheta had a good laugh on a man who thought he knew Nwapa very well as a serious woman who did not want to wallow into the feminist debate, when Buchi knew that feminists were paying for Nwapa's visits to London to give talks. Even then, Buchi described herself as a feminist with a small f.[19]

Implicitly, Emecheta acknowledges that there are a variety of forms of feminism to suit individual agendas.[20] Ironically, almost sarcastically, she asks, while disapproving of many African men's attitude towards their women:

> How can a woman hate a husband chosen for her by her people? You are to give her children and food, she is to cook and bear the children and look after you and them. So what is there to hate? A woman may be ugly and grow old, but a man is never ugly and never old. He matures with age and is dignified.[21]

It is unfortunate that critic Olawale Taju Ajayi completely misses the point here; he misconstrues Emecheta's ironical jabs at men who arrogate to themselves the titles of Lord and Master as an endorsement of men's patriarchal feelings and practice of superiority:

> In Emecheta's view, 'the ideal happy marriage' is the one in which a woman bears children and looks after them and in which the man looks after the welfare of both mother and children. But if the man, for reasons beyond his control, is unable to provide for his family the way he should, the woman comes in to play a supportive role. However, Emecheta does not really support Matriarchy.[22]

Olawale Taju Ajayi totally misses the authorial irony, when he says the exact opposite of what Emecheta means and would like to see happening between men and women of Ibusa. The truth of the statement is that Emecheta ridicules the so-called 'idela happy marriage' in which the man has it all and the woman comes away with literally nothing. Observe that through the mouth of her persona, Nnụ Ego, Emecheta at once condemns and ridicules the kind of men that Nnaife portrays. Nnaife - sends back - meagre sixty pounds to support his family over a period of three years during his posting as infantry soldier in Burma. Gone are the real men that our writer and author knew, men like Amatokwu and Agbadi, men who farmed the land and hunted in the forests for bushmeat to feed their families, men whose productivity was measured by their ability to feed their families as farmers rather than as soldiers killing people in a foreign war. A fact that Ajayi also misses is that Nnaife himself in the excerpt with an ironical title, "A Man Needs Many Wives," is also a victim of patriarchal traditions and colonialism, which are in a sense two sides of the same coin. Ajayi does not see either that Nnụ ego is uncomfortable with her new status and disapproving of her lot as a senior wife. Emecheta's radical feminist brand may not proclaim itself from the rooftop, however, it is there implicitly and subtly for the intelligent and deep thinker to perceive. Through the use of irony, and given the times in which she wrote, she made attempts to minimize her advocacy for women's rights and gender equality and equity.

In the novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta takes head-on motherhood. She does not endorse motherhood as the be-all-and-end-all of a woman's life. The reader learns that Uhamiri, the Goddess of the River, gives beauty, fame, and wealth to women, but not children. This is despite the fact that in actual life, where she is worshipped in Oguta, the goddess is married and gives children to women. Obviously, Nwapa's fictionalized version of Uhamiri is not married and does not give children, because the writer sees husbands and children as encumbrances for women. By the same token, the principal character, Nnụ Ego, suffers exceedingly for her utter devotion to her husband and children. In the end, she loses everything, to the point that she dies of heartbreak in the middle of a village pathway, having been abandoned by all, even the two sons she spent her entire life raising with devotion. She had been so engrossed in

motherhood that she failed to make friends for herself. First, she is abused and abandoned by her husband. Then, her two boys go abroad for higher education and little by little forget her, too. It all begins with their letters that are no longer as frequent as they used to be, until they stop completely, because the two sons marry white women in Canada and are not in the least enchanted about returning with them to Ibusa. They do not remember their mother anymore. Emecheta castigates the institution of marriage that makes children forget their parents, when she asks, with her tongue in cheek, of course, "Have you heard of a complete woman without a husband?[23] A little later, now empowered, Nnụ Ego responds eloquently to her own question, by claiming equality with her man, whereas at the earlier part of the novel she is portrayed as a weak and subjugated wife and mother. Now she speaks from a position of strength, no longer of weakness. In one of her unguarded moments, she taunts Nnaife in a statement that one can only attribute to a person with a radical feminist leaning, saying, "I am only waiting for my share of your pension money. I worked for it as well. After, if you don't want me, I can go back to my people."[24] Nnụ Ego has finally learned her lessons. Take note that her mother, Ọna, never married her father, although she had children for him. Ọna's father, Nwokọcha Agbadi, had decreed that her daughter would not stoop to any man in marriage, for marriage invariably turned a strong daughter into a weak wife and mother. Head-strong Ọna, despite Nnụ Ego's father's entreaties, does not bow to marriage with Nnụ Ego's father. What is more, in spite of her status as a concubine, she makes love to him so noisily in the Obi that the women married in the compound hear her amorous carryings-on with their common husband. This is quite contrary to expectations with traditional women, to say the least.

Evidently, Emecheta's feminism does not brook the abuse of women in any form or shape. Nnụ Ego's stance in *The Joys of Motherhood* can be seen as her example that ordinary women can use to stand up to abuse and endeavor to get on with life when one cannot take it anymore. This is progressivist feminism, a brand of feminism that embraces advocacy for women. Nnụ Ego speaks on this issue:

> I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood. Is it such an enviable position? The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die. That's why when I lost my first son, I wanted to die, because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life, my father and my husband and now I have to include my sons. But who made the law that we should not hope in our daughters? We women subscribe to that law more than anyone. Until we change all this, it is still a man's world, which women will always help to build.[25]

Emecheta's progressivist ideas, when extended internationally beyond Africa, embrace Womanism and other forms of feminism in the global world. Emecheta states:

> I am just an ordinary writer who has to write. Being a woman and African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African woman I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist, then I am an African feminist with a small f. I do believe in the African kind of feminism. They call it Womanism.[26]

Emecheta continues to distance herself from Western Feminism, though, reiterating that she is rooted in Africa and African women. Her Womanism caters to the African woman, and takes into account her culture, religion, economic status, power and gender relations in her living environment. As Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi earlier opined, it is a commitment to the survival and wholeness of males and females in the society.[27] From that angle of vision, Womanist concerns also dovetail into postcolonial preoccupations and African issues in modern times.[28] For example, Nnụ Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood* loathes the very idea that her husband cuts grass as a manual laborer at the railway for a living. She thinks it is a form of slave work for white masters who pay him a paltry monthly salary. Then, she attributes his flabby physique, like most Ibusa men in Lagos in service to white colonialists, to the wasting away of Africa continent, symbolized by African manhood by the white colonialists. African men in Lagos pale physically when she compares them to the wiry men in form and physique of the village of Ibusa, farmers and hunters that do manual work for themselves and to feed and maintain their families. The feminization of African men in Lagos must stop, seems to opine Emecheta, while she sings praises to the Ibusa man in the village:

> He belonged to the clear sun, the bright moon, to his farm and his rest hut, where he could sense a nestling cobra, a scuttling scorpion, a howling hyena. Not here. Not in this place, this square room painted completely white like a place of sacrifice, this place where men's flesh hung loose on their bodies all day long.[29]

After this demonstration of poetic eloquence in comparing and contrasting the Ibusa men of the city and the village, no critic may rightly argue that Emecheta does not care about the male condition, in addition to her criticism of the treatment they mete to the womenfolk. In other words, the women and their men are all victims as well of the imperial exploitation.

The novels with eloquent titles, *Kehinde*, *In the Ditch* and *Second Class Citizen*, chronicle their heroines' sordid ordeals at the hands of their men in the foreign lands of the West. Clearly, Emecheta has moved on from her early beginnings, for in postcolonial times, women have their own identities and opinions on issues of national concern. Ada in *Second Class Citizen* is aware of her abuse at the hands of her husband, through mingling with middle-class white women in London. She loathes the part that Christian missionaries play in keeping women down and subjugated: "Those god-forsaken missionaries! They had taught Ada all the niceties of life. They had taught her by the Bible that a woman was supposed to be ready to give in to the man at any time…!"[30] Then, Adah finds herself "in the ditch," after she is forced to abandon her matrimonial and abusive home andstrike out alone to fend for herself and her children. She encounters racism and sexism at the petty jobs she does to make ends meet, while also taking evening classes in sociology at university to prepare for a better future for herself and her children. In *Kehinde*, the eponymous heroine shuttles between the West and Africa, and finds the practice of polygyny abhorring and demeaning to women. Later on, Gwendolen in *Gwendolen* would extrapolate on the black experience in London within the Jamaican neighborhoods. There, men are used for white amusement and benefit. In a vicious cycle typical of the oppressed, the Caribbean women are also used by the lower working-class black men in their lives. As Emecheta insinuates in a biting irony, the black men themselves are also abused:

> Life would have been easier if they were all kept that way, in picturesque ignorance from which they could be called upon to display their physical agility in sports or to wail their fate in low haunting melodies, for the amusement of all.[31]

The non-Igbo names that Emecheta gives to the heroines of these later novels, such as Gwendolen, Kehinde, and Debbie in *Destination Biafra*, exemplify women's strong sense of self, for the names represent the writer and her personas' courage to assume other identities they feel comfortable with, not just what they were born with ethnically or what they assumed as they experienced life in their own locale, as did Ada. In *Destination Biafra*, women at war in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict dare to dream of a utopian Biafra that will succeed as an independent Republic from Nigeria; they mirror a yearning for justice, fairness, and freedom from oppression. In the autobiographical *Head above Water*, Emecheta does not understand how women are so complacent about their self-identity esteem and dignity, just how a woman "still stooped and allowed the culture of her people to enslave her, and then permitted Christianity to tighten the knot of enslavement![32] Whereas the male, the man is in the center as a person, a sub-

ject and an agent, even the Alpha and Omega, the Lord and Master,[33] the female, the woman cast as the "Other" is in the periphery as an object of verbal, sexual and physical abuse, a non-person, a non-subject and a non-agent. According to custom, she is dismissible, diminished, belittled, subjugated and subordinated.[34] After all, she is a "woman," the opposite of a "man." She has no worth or value[35] and so is to be denigrated. As a feminine person, she is lesser than a masculine person. The male is expected to work and often goes off on adventures far away from home, bringing back money and goods. On the contrary, the female hovers around the home, producing and rearing children, and occasionally earning a support salary from petty trading in candles, matches, soaps and blue, peanuts and bread, kerosene in a kiosk, all day long and into the night in front of the house, as Nnụ Ego does. Her role is to support her husband in a marriage relationship where the power position is separated and effective (or ineffective) as the Poles and the Antipodes. Real power resides with the male as a man. He controls the social, economic, and political spheres, dispensing of the female at his whim and caprice. The female or woman must not seek personal laurels or successes for herself.

Feminism for Buchi Emecheta, therefore, is not just a metaphysical issue, for she condemns the male view of the self and reclaims female identities. She conceptualizes the self as a dynamic individual relating to her unconscious desires, as well as attempting social prescriptions of her culture of origin at the intersection of several and multiple layers of phenomena. In a way, Buchi Emecheta chronicles Igbo foremothers in her stories and reenacts what women all over the world go through in their own particular situations in their own locales.[36] It is difficult to understand why such a writer whose titles of books, ironical or not, speak eloquently of her passionate and psychological preoccupations would attribute the epithet of smallness to her feminist identity when her feminist ideology is anything but small. Emecheta may not have written theoretically or shown exclusive concern for females, yet her writings are decidedly feminist. She presents society and cultures as they truly are. She describes her writings as her children, adding that she has no favorites among her books. Furthermore, she states, they are merely a means for expressing her culture to those who know little or nothing about its customs and mores: "Apart from telling stories, I don't have a particular mission. I like to tell the world our part of the story while using voices of women."

CONCLUSION

Clearly, Buchi Emecheta felt fulfilled practicing her profession as a creative writer, much more than she did as a critic;[37] she fought and advocated for women and men. Her Feminism of Selfhood is the struggle for self-

worth and value as human beings on behalf of women. She fought domestic violence in her personal life and, through the characters she created in her fiction, promoted social justice, women's economic empowerment, women's health and reproductive rights.[38] Emecheta fought for women's economic power, so that women could choose not to remain in abusive marriages.[39] She fought for gender equality in the home, in the workplace and in the public and political spheres, to liberate women from the yoke of patriarchy. She fought for women to earn wages and hold political seats in government, to lighten the load of poverty on them. Men must be persuaded, she argued, to give up some of their power and to join the struggle to empower and dignify more women.[40] She did not believe that women should be treated as property or as pariahs. She did not condone seeing women who protest their subordination and oppression and those who refuse to be mere objects of sexual pleasure of the men as radicals to be avoided or never to be married. From that angle of vision, Emecheta was an androgynous personality, a perfect blend of feminine and masculine qualities thatflowed effortlessly with fluidity and ease, aggression and nurturance, as the situation dictated, from male to female tasks and back. Emecheta was, indeed, a model for many a female and woman to emulate.

POSTSCRIPT

A prolific writer of more than twenty novels and the publisher of Ogwugwu Afọr Publishing Company,[41] with a B.Sc in Sociology in 1972 and an M.Phil in 1976 from London University, Emecheta received several literary awards,[42] including The Daughter of Mark Twain Award for *Second-Class Citizen*, New Statesman/Jack Campbell Award for *The Slave Girl*, Sunrise Award for the Best Black Writer in the World, and also for *The Slave Girl*, and the Best British Writer's Award for *The Joys of Motherhood*. In 1979, she became a member of the Home Secretary's Advisory Council on Race. In 1983, she was selected as one of the twenty Best of Young British Writers by the Book Marketing Council. She lectured in the United States throughout 1979 as Visiting Professor at a number of universities and returned to Nigeria in 1980 as Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Professor of English at the University of Calabar. In 1982, she lectured at Yale University and the University of London. In 1982, her Ogwugwu Afọr Publishing Company provided a platform and financial support for Black artists. From 1982 to 1983, she was a member of the British Arts

Council and was a regular contributor to the *New Statesman*, the *Times Literary Supplement* and *The Guardian* before her death. In 1986, she held a fellowship at the University of London. Upon Emecheta's death, British-Nigerian novelist Bernardine Evaristo described her as "an incredibly important" figure in the history of British literature. *The Joys of Motherhood*, she opined "is a scorching portrayal of a woman's life in pre-independence Nigeria," adding that Emecheta "should be up there as the female, feminist counterpart to Chinua Achebe's celebrated and widely taught novel *Things Fall Apart*." In *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*, Editor Marie Umeh states that "Emecheta's treatment of sexual politics in her society is grounded in Igbo women's protest against retrogressive cultural norms, such as clitoridectomy, women as baby machines, the prioritising of boys at the expense of girls, and widow inheritance." With the British society, the African continent and the African Diaspora vying for ownership of Florence Buchi Emecheta, with just reasons, future scholarship on Emecheta might well be to decipher whether she was a Nigerian writer or a British novelist. No matter on which side the scale tilts, Florence Onyebuchi Emecheta was an Africulturist that understood African cultures and the place of the African woman in them. She encouraged women to break out of their shackles and fetters, not merely to survive, but to endure as agents of their own freedom andsalvation.

NOTES

[1] Kirsten H. Peterson, "Criticism and Ideology,) Second African Women's Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, 1988. (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988): 173-181.

[2] Sylvester Onwordi was her husband's name.

[3] Remembering my mother Buchi Emecheta, 1944-2017 (newstatesman.com) Accessed 06/27/2022.

[4] "Buchi Emecheta (1944-2017). *Sun News Online*, February 3, 2017. Buchi Emecheta (1944-2017) – The Sun Nigeria (sunnewsonline.com) Accessed 06/27/2022.

[5] Remembering my mother Buchi Emecheta, 1944-2017 (newstatesman.com) Accessed 06/27/2022.

[6] *New Statesman* Magazine, January 31, 2017.

[7] Buchi Emecheta, *Head Above Water*, Chapter 3.

[8] Charlotte H. Bruner, ed. *Unwinding Threads: Writings by Women in Africa*. "A Man needs Many Wives" by Buchi Emecheta: pp. 49-61.

[9] Charlotte H. Bruner, Ed. *Unwinding Threads: Writings by Women in Africa*. "A Man needs Many Wives" by Buchi Emecheta, 61.

[10] *Slave Girl*, 173.

[11] Olawale Taju Ajayi,. "Buchi Emecheta: Beyond the Task and the Mask. *In the Perspectives of Language and Literature: Essays in Honour of R.U. Uzoezie The Guardian*, 1983.

[12] An Interview with Ama Ata Aidoo: "I Learnt my First Feminist Lessons in Africa" by Maria Frias. Edited by Lourdes Lopez Ropero and Isabel Diaz Sanchez.

Special Issue on *New Literatures in English. Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses,* No. 6, November, 2003: 30.

[13] Ada Uzoamaka Azodo, and Maureen Eke, *Gender and Sexuality in African Literature and Film*, (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2007).

[14] Ada Uzoamaka Azodo, "*Feminisms in Africa and the African Diaspora: Ideology, Gender, and Development,*" Special Issue. *OFO: Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol 5, Nos. 1 & 2, (2015).

[15] Buchi Emecheta (Essay Date 1988) Source: Buchi Emecheta, "Feminism with a Small 'f'!" In *Criticism and Ideology: Second African Writers' Conference*, edited by Kirsten Holst Petersen. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988, pp. 173-85.
"In the following essay, Emecheta discusses her artistic concerns and feminist perspective. As Emecheta illustrates, African feminism differs significantly from Western feminism due to the distinct cultural values and sexual identity of African women." (Research Emecheta, Buchi | Feminism in Literature (bookrags.com) Accessed 06/28/2022.

[16] Ada Uzoamaka Azodo, "Feminisms in Africa and the African Diaspora: Ideology, Gender and Development," *OFO: Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2, (2015): 28.

[17] Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi. *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality and Difference*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 35-72.

[18] Ada Uzoamaka Azodo."Marxist feminism grapples with the triple oppression of women in matters of gender, race and class, but not always with success given the variety of women in the world concerned, women who are not all at the same economic status or have had other and same experiences of life. No wonder many African women writers have distanced themselves from feminism as such, even when what they do is clearly feminist. Flora Nwapa, for example, rejected the label, contenting herself with defining herself merely as a woman who knows something about the lives of women she writes about." (*OFO: Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2, 2015: 28-9).

[19] Ada Uzoamaka Azodo. "Di-Feminism, an Indigenous Feminist Theory with Broad Claims for Ndi Igbo." In: *OFO: Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2, 2015: 13-63.

[20] This is a similar opinion to Buchi Emecheta's. According to Virginia Wolfe, there is "No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself."

[21] The *Joys of Motherhood*, 71.

[22] Ajayi , Olawale Taju. "Buchi Emecheta: Beyond the Task and the Mask." In: *The Perspectives of Language and Literature: Essays in Honour of R.U. Uzoezie*: p. 371.

[23] The *Joys of Motherhood,* p. 158. In such circumstances, how could Ajayi have thought that Emecheta approved of women's submission to men and the traditional mores that limited the woman's usefulness and fulfillment to her wifehood and motherhood?

[24] The *Joys of Motherhood*, 206. Again, how could Ajayi have thought that Emecheta approved of women's submission to men and the traditional mores that limited the woman's usefulness and fulfillment to her wifehood and motherhood?

[25] The *Joys of Motherhood*, 187.

[26] Buchi Emecheta, "Feminism with a Small 'f'!" In *Criticism and Ideology: Second African Writers' Conference,* edited by Kirsten Holst Petersen. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988, 173-85. See also (Pandurang 118)

[27] *Womanism* 72. "Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideal of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom. It

concerns itself as much with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structures that subjugate the blacks…its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing that one sees in the positive, integrative endings of womanist novels".

[28] Ashley Dawson, "Beyond Imperial Feminism: Buchi Emecheta's London Novels and Black British Women's Emancipation", in *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*, University of Michigan Press, 2007, 117.

[29] The *Joys of Motherhood*, 46.

[30] *Second Class Citizen*, 30.

[31] *Gwendolen*, 160.

[32] *Head Above Water*, 3.

[33] *The Joys of Motherhood*, and an excerpt from the novel, "A Man Needs Many Wives."

[34] In *The Family,* Gwendolyn is raped first by a fatherly neighbor Uncle Johnny and later by her own father Winston, in the absence of her mother Sonia. She becomes pregnant and would not reveal her child's father, for he was the breadwinner of the family and everyone and everything depended on him.

In *Kehinde,* Kehinde restores her individual self-worth by returning to London to live on her own, after finding out on her return to Nigeria that her husband had taken a second wife, to live in her own house, making her son realize that he may own it after her, but while she was alive the house was hers to keep.

[35] *The Family* attacks the devaluing of women, by treating rape in the family.

[36] Speaking about his experiences in London as an African woman, Buchi Emecheta defines her stories as: "Stories of the world … (in which) … women face the universal problems of poverty and oppression, and the longer they stay, no matter where they have come from originally, the more the problems become identical."

[37] She held visiting appointments in Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University, Yale University, University of Calabar, University of London, etc. She often abandoned her secure teaching jobs in universities to return to story writing.

[38] Gwendolen, in *The Family*, who was raped and became pregnant by her father, was confined in a mental health facility to help her regain herself.

[39] See Adaku, the inherited second wife through levirate marriage in *The Joys of Motherhood*. She would leave Nnaife and Nnuego, after destroying the peace of their family before being inherited, to become a contractor earning enough money to send her two children to school.

[40] Observe the dignity and grace with which Nnụ Ego acquiesced to a life as a senior wife that she did not in earnest fancy, when her husband's dead brother's wife, Adakụ, barged into her home in Lagos meaning to be inherited by her husband, Nnaife.

[41] Emecheta owned with his first son, Sylvester, the Ogwugwu Afor Publishing Company in London.

[42] Emecheta's Awards and Recognition include Jock Campbell Award for the *Slave Girl* in the *New Statesman*; 1983 list ing in theBest of Young British Novelists; Member, British Home Secretary's Advisory Council of Race in 1979; Listed among 50 Black and Asian Writers in 2004 at the British Library for contributions to contemporary British Literature; Order of the British Empire (OBE) for literature in 2005, and in 1992 an Honorary Doctorate degree in Literature from Farleigh Dickinson University.

Igbo Studies Review 9, (May 2021): 35-53

NOLLYWOOD AND WOMEN: READING GENDER IN NIGERIAN CINEMA THROUGH 'SNAIL-SENSE' FEMINISM

CHIJIOKE AZUAWUSIEFE

Abstract: From its inception in the early 1990s, Nollywood, the cinema of Nigeria, has complicated the representations of women in popular media, expanding, in the process, Nigeria's discourse landscape for scholars, filmmakers, media practitioners, and the public to engage gender and feminism questions. This paper deploys the "snail-sense feminism" of Akachi Ezeigbo to interrogate how contemporary indigenous African feminisms can be engaged in the reading of Nollywood melodrama. Using a critical discourse analysis of two films, Glamour Girls (1994) and Fifty (2015), it examines not only the performances of gender in Nollywood films, but also how these performances bear out the multiple and varied iterations of the indigenous feminisms by Nigerian feminist scholars who continue to question the dominant patriarchal normative order within the Nigerian society. Where Glamour Girls reveals, for instance, Nollywood's first framings of women from its early days, Fifty sheds light on how those portrayals have continued to be interrogated in Nollywood's present-day films. Highlighting the pushback on patriarchy (albeit sometimes understated and non-verbalized) by female characters in these films, the paper contends that rather than being an aberration, subversion of gender relations by women has been Nollywood's intended objective from the start.

Keywords: Nollywood, African Feminisms, Snail-Sense Feminism, *Glamour Girls*, *Fifty*

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian cinema took a popular turn when it embraced the video-filmmaking technologies in the early 1990s. To speedup sales of a large stock of blank videocassettes, electronic wares merchant Ken Nnebue decided to record melodrama on the cassettes. He teamed up with an out-of-work film graduate and they produced the now pathbreaking movie, *Living in Bondage* (1992). That venture launched Nollywood, an industry that quickly became the world's second largest film industry by volume, pro-

Dr. Chijioke Azuawusiefe *is a lecturer in the Pastoral and Communication Studies Department at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, Nigeria. He researches the interplay of media, religion, and culture in local and transnational contexts, especially of Africa and African Diaspora and with emphasis on Nollywood, the cinema of Nigeria.*

ducing, at its peak by the mid-2000s, more than a thousand video-films annually. From inception, Nollywood has complicated the representations of women in popular media, expanding, in the process, Nigeria's discourse landscape for filmmakers, media practitioners, and the public to engage gender and feminism questions. Today, its scope has become transnational, extending to other African countries and the African Diaspora.

Leading Nollywood scholars, like Jonathan Haynes (2016) and Onookome Okome (2014) have noted how central Nollywood films have become to Nigeria's self-representation, making any discussion about the country's place in the world difficult without reference to the films. That representation, however, has not always been fair to women. Early Nollywood films portrayed them primarily as docile and submissive good wives or as home-wrecking prostitutes. In the last decade, however, through what some industry practitioners and scholars are calling the 'New Nollywood' (characterized by high quality feature length films shot for the large screen), more positive images of women are beginning to emerge in the films. One key factor influencing this new trend is the increasing number of young and talented Nigerian female filmmakers. Another factor is the rate at which feminism discussion permeates popular discourse in contemporary Nigeria.

This paper interrogates how contemporary indigenous African feminisms can be engaged in the reading of Nollywood melodrama. Employing a critical discourse analysis of two films, *Glamour Girls* (1994) and *Fifty* (2015), it examines not only the performance of gender in Nollywood films, but also the multiple and varied iterations of indigenous African feminisms by African feminist scholars who continue to question the dominant patriarchal normative order within the Nigerian society. Where *Glamour Girls* reveals Nollywood's first framings of women from its early days, *Fifty* sheds light on how those portrayals have continued to be interrogated in Nollywood's present-day films. Both films are women-centered; but while the one presents an obvious moral message that condemns women who exercise their independence by choosing what they make of their bodies as people not to be trusted, the other portrays, as a normal existence, the life of financially independent middle-aged women, who negotiate their existence and interaction with the world on their own terms, thereby complicating gender relationships and subverting patriarchal authorities.

Haynes (2016, 64) might have understated the extent of subversion, then, in early Nollywood films when he writes, for example: '*Glamour Girls* is set up to demonize its characters in obvious ways, but *subversive* understanding and sympathy may creep in' (emphasis added). This paper contends that subversion is not only intended in that film but has been

integral to Nollywood's objective all along in its portrayals of women. The paper derives its usage of subversion from Antonio Gramsci's (1985) conception of cultural hegemony, the ideological power structure inherent in every society. A dominant order, like patriarchy, hegemony implies, maintains the status quo by controlling, oftentimes, subliminally, every facet of society and culture. Subversion functions as counter-hegemony, but not always in a Marxist sense that effects forceful political changes within society (see Ledwith 2009). Following Gramsci, postmodern and poststructural scholars, particularly feminist writers among them (Simone de Beauvoir, Naomi Wolfe, and bell hooks, for example), have advocated for 'a very broad form of subversion' that transcends the concern with sabotaging the realm to focus instead on preeminent cultural forces like patriarchy and individualism (Allison, 2020). Subversion, then, as used in this paper, refers to any counter-hegemonic measure that undermines an established order. Even when it appears subtle in Nollywood films, it is, nonetheless, significant in that it continues to hint at the clamor for gender rethinking within the Nigerian society. It demonstrates, as Onookome Okome (2004, 5) puts it, 'that contemporary society is deeply concerned about the changes in the traditional image of women in Nigeria's post-colonial framework.'

'Women,' as used in this essay, sometimes functions as a synonym for 'gender,' which has undergone extensive development from its binary distinction with 'sex' in the 1960s and 1970s' Gender Studies (with 'sex' representing biological differences between females and males and 'gender' denoting historical and religiously-reinforced socio-cultural constructions of women and men) to the current multiple theories and often complicated analyses of its performance and discourse (King 2005). If as Teresa de Lauretis (1987, 5) argues, gender is 'both a sociocultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning … to individuals within the society,' then the production of its representations remains a process that can be acted upon by the same individuals. Women in the films discussed in this chapter constitute themselves in ways different from the normative rendering of gender within the Nigerian society. The essay reads that alternative constitution as subversion and, so, employs, within that context, feminist theory, as appropriated by African feminist scholars, in its discussion of women and gender disruption in Nollywood melodramas.

The paper's focus on cis-gendered people does not imply non-recognition of notions of gender-nonconformity or non-heterosexuality. On the one hand, the emphasis derives partly from the awareness that snail-sense feminism, like a host of other continental African feminisms, theorizes gender from cis-women's perspective. In her critique of Alice Walker's (1983) womanism' and its emphasis on women's love and wom-

en's appreciation of other women and their sexuality, for instance, Mary Kolawale (1997, 15), argues that 'to the majority of ordinary Africans, lesbianism is a non-existent issue …' A focus on such a 'completely strange' concern, Kolawale contends, is 'at the heart of the rejection of feminism, not only by African women but by many Third World and non-Eurocentric women' (15). While it may be difficult to support Kolawale's claim that lesbianism was a 'non-existent' problem in Africa at the close of the last century (although silence or lack of public acknowledgement and open discourse do not equate non-existence; see Green-Simms [2016]), the realities of contemporary Africa continue to challenge her rigid stance, as additional voices demand inclusion not only in the contemporary popular expressions of gender and sexuality on the continent, but also in their scholarly articulations and discussions. On the other hand, the essay's accent on cis-gendered women partly stems from the fact that majority of Nollywood films, particularly the ones analyzed in this essay, question gender normativity of cis-gendered people. While few Nollywood films like *Emotional Crack* (2003) and *Love Police* (2015) explore the questions of sexuality beyond heterosexual relationships, fewer films like *Abba* (2016) and *Bobrisky in Love* (2019) have dwelt on transgender lives—even though the Nigerian government prohibits gay relationships and the country's film censor board does not approve movies made about such affinities (Onuah 2014, Augoye 2019).

GLAMOUR GIRLS, *FIFTY*, AND FEMALE INDEPENDENCE IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

Nollywood melodramas present women who re-appropriate the mediums of their subjugation, subvert those mediums, and then re-center the discourse with the resources available to them. They do not always succeed in effecting large-scale change of mindset within the system, but they nonetheless introduce new voices into the discourse, questioning patriarchal normative structures within society. *Glamour Girls* demonstrates that much. Whatever else the film represents and despite the emphasis Nollywood scholars have placed on its unflattering portrayal of women as voiceless tools manipulated by men, the movie at its core grapples with how women, forced to navigate their concerns and social expectations for marriage within a culture that weights their values based on their marital status and perceived puritanical lifestyle, subvert that same culture in order to survive. Five women, four of whom are friends, navigate this labyrinth their way, albeit each desiring to have a man complete her through marriage. 'Oh, how I wish I could be married to a rich guy like you,' call girl Helen (Barbara Odoh) tells a male client (J.T. Tom West) who has taken her home for the night.

Released in 1994, the movie engages the socioeconomic accoutrements of the period (a military-ruled society reeling from the IMF and World Bank-imposed crippling Structural Adjustment Program at the wake of an oil boom that ended a decade earlier) to drive home its message. Traditionally, marriage guaranteed women access to economic power and social status, since women married at an early age and acquired recognition through and in the name of their husbands. But in a post-independent, globalizing economy where women no longer get married as early as they did in the past, where many of them need to acquire education beyond the secondary level, find employment, and begin to fend for themselves before marriage, the independent-minded, city-dwelling woman has to renegotiate her terms of engagement within a society that does not always provide her an enabling environment to succeed on her own. *Glamour Girls* offers one such possibility: to succeed, women have to leverage their intelligence, street smartness, and sexual appeal. As these women in the movies navigate their way through 'a world that is controlled by money, power, and sex,' they, explicitly or implicitly, deploy sex as 'a factor both as power and as a commodity of exchange' (Makarushka 1995, 145). From the start of the film, however, the movie score, which croons the line 'glamour girls don't fall in love; they do crime,' prejudices the viewer's take on the 'glamour girls.'

The movie opens with a timid Sandra (Jennifer Okere) arriving from out of town and being overwhelmed by the luxury and opulence of the city. Her life has been 'miserable,' she tells her friends, Doris (Gloria Anozie) and Thelma (Ngozi Ezeonu), for she has 'worked hard as a strong lady' since they left the university but has not been able to save any money. Getting a paid employment has not been easy because 'every man wants to sleep with [her] before they [even] listen to [her].' But she soon learns the ways of the city 'top class ladies' from her friends. Nollywood films often portray women who go into prostitution to seize control of a situation that otherwise exploited them in the hands of men who would rather take advantage of them than help them (see *Light Will Come* 2017). Doris points Sandra towards that philosophy of using what she has to get what she wants. She informs Sandra that that is the one sure way to play the game. Unlike Sandra who has failed to 'hook' a man after she has 'shown men [her] best behavior [and] cooked for them with all [her] money,' Doris tells her that a 'husband is no longer the prime issue in a woman's life.' What she should be thinking about instead is how to make her own money, for once she does that, she 'can buy [herself] a husband.'

Unlike *Glamour Girls*, *Fifty* (2015) presents four female friends who seek fulfillment not primarily through marriage but through their careers and other meaningful relationships, no matter how troubled or unbalanced the latter may be. Director Biyi Bandele centers his representation of

these women around the ambiguity of being successful and single at fifty, as the film begins and ends with snap shots of these high-flying, successful career women negotiating their individual lives as they approach 'the big number.' They navigate their existence interdependently but also individually, as each asserts control over particular spheres of her life but loses that power over other spheres. Lizzy (Ireti Doyle), for instance, holds it together as a topnotch gynecologist, but cedes control of her sexual life to a much younger toy boy Sammy (Emmanuel Ikubese). However, she does not hesitate to exercise that power and to send him packing when he brings another woman into her bed. Maria (Omoni Oboli) operates at the highest level at her architecture firm but fails to respect the boundaries of not dating a married man, Kunle (Wale Ojo), who also happens to be Tola's husband. Tola (Dakore Egbuson) is the first-rate television host whose obnoxious treatment of her colleagues and staffers, the viewer finds out later, reveals a traumatic childhood of a rape by her wealthy father. Again, to preserve a veneer of marriage, her mother refused to discuss that scarring experience with her as a child and when, in her adult life, Tola raises it with her, the mother blames her for running around naked in the house. Society has conditioned her to be a 'good wife' who finds excuses for her husband's injurious act even on her own innocent and defenseless daughter.

While Kate (Nse Ikpe-Etim), the only married one among the four friends, appears to be the weakest link in the group due to her simple approach to life, she turns out to hold the tension of their friendship in balance. As she battles breast cancer, unbeknownst to her husband and friends, she also manifests elements of socio-religious conditioning within her milieu to cede one's agency to religious authorities (who, more often than not, are men). At first, in denial of her life-threatening illness, Kate surrenders herself to God. 'I do not have cancer,' she tells her pastor, 'There must be a prayer you can say.' So, she prays for a miracle, combining Catholic and Pentecostal modes of worship. The viewer first encounters Kate at a vigil service in a Pentecostal church, offering a simple, general, and altruistic prayer of 'Father, I ask for blessings for my family.' It will not be until much later in the film that the real reason for spending most of her time in the church is revealed. Meanwhile, the pastor at the vigil invites the congregation, 'Children of God, it's time for a miracle tonight. Stand on your feet, open your mouth, and speak to your father right now.' Here, as in a case of *Glamour Girls,* where Sandra soliloquizes upon waking from a dream, 'I think God has revealed Dennis to me,' is a Pentecostal-charismatic approach to God—personal, direct, bold, goal-oriented, and acquisitive. Rooted in this tradition, Kate's prayer becomes more assertive, 'Father, I receive healing from you, in the mighty name of Jesus.'

Kate gets home from that vigil service as the dawn breaks, revealing her neighbors leaving for their day's activities, and goes straight to a Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, and Joseph) altar in her sitting room. She kneels down, lights the candles, and intones the Hail Mary. Her desperation for divine healing also manifests a religious obsession typical of Nigerian Christians who believe that no matter the hopelessness of their predicament, God will always intervene to turn their lot around, through their faith and in spite of what expert medical knowledge says to the contrary. Hence, when, as she lies in bed and reads her bible after her post-vigil morning devotion, the husband inquires, 'when are you going to get your priorities right,' Kate ripostes, 'my priorities are right. God is first.' And because God is first, rather than starting her cancer treatment, Kate tells the pastor, 'the doctor is wrong; I'm convinced that he's wrong,' even though she acknowledges that rather than getting better like the pastor promised, her life 'is falling apart.' But then, 'what can a doctor do that God cannot?' she asks the pastor. After all, she has faith and goes to church regularly; so, it does not make any sense why God is 'unhappy' with her. There must be a prayer the pastor can say to make everything right again. More than a prayer, the pastor has the right sense of mind to insist that Kate seek medical solution to her illness.

AFRICAN FEMINISMS: INDIGENOUS ITERATIONS AND INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER

A reading of films like *Glamour Girls* and *Fifty* benefits from indigenous iterations of feminism by African feminist scholars. Understanding African feminisms as theorized by these scholars will help shed more light on the larger sociocultural questions of gender that Nollywood engages. Within the African continent and across its diaspora, women of African descent have always confronted problems and challenges of gender (and its later manifestations in feminism) as a relevant approach toward grasping and finding solutions to their women-related problems. Emerging within the third wave of the feminist movement in the 1980s, African feminisms benefitted enormously from the feminist theoretical foundations laid by the preceding era.

Riding the third wave of women's movement that champions 'post-feminism' feminism and its celebration of multiplicity of feminisms in its poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial outlooks, African feminist scholars draw inspiration from the experiences of their African lives to theorize African feminisms. They criticize the 'one sisterhood' of the second wave period for not accommodating the differences of race, nationality, culture, class, ethnicity, age, gender, and status. Scholars like Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1981, 1994), Obioma Nnaemeka (1998, 2004), and

Akachi Ezeigbo (1996b, 2012, 2019), emphasize the pluralism of feminisms as well as note the significant differences in the African and Western approaches to the subject, collectively arguing that Africa offers a unique context for any meaningful analysis of feminism on the continent. They have theorized multiple African feminisms that are, as Nnaemeka (2004, 377) puts it, 'built on the indigenous.' But then to ensure that African feminists do not fall into the same monolithic pitfalls as their Western counterparts, Ogundipe-Leslie (9) also cautions that 'there is no such thing as 'the African woman.' Her identity and reality are complex and as such she cannot be essentialized as one. Within the cross-cultural perspective of her existence, then, the African woman 'represents much diversity in terms of nationality, class affiliation, generational differences, and particular historical experiences' (Chioma 1981, 7).

Alice Walker's (1983) 'womanism' becomes the first of the African feminisms to address this diversity against the backdrop of Western feminism. Critiquing the racism in white feminism theories as well as the sexism in patriarchy within black communities, Walker advocates womanism as a commitment to wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing of all humanity, inclusive of all females and males, which does not champion the hatred or exclusion of any gender by the Other. That standpoint not only holds femininity and the culture within which it exists in equal importance, it also rejects the term 'feminism' as used by white women of the second wave as well as contrasts with bell hooks' (1984) 'black feminism' and its demand to move the black feminist discourse from the margin to the center.

A decade after Walker's work, Clenora Hudson-Weems (1995) advanced a separatist 'Africana womanism' (from white feminism, black feminism, and African feminism) in her book, *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. According to her, neither gender nor race makes one a feminist. Neither does an association with women's issues. Given their pro-family leanings, women of African descent can only identify as womanists, rather than as feminists. Unlike the white feminist who is engaged in 'an age-old battle with her white male counterpart for subjugating her as his property,' Hudson-Weems (1995, 155) maintains, 'the Africana woman does not see the man as her primary enemy.' That men are not the Africana women's primary enemy, it bears noting, does not mean that Africana men have always maintained an equal relationship with the women, given the unbalanced relationship between the two genders in the patriarchal African cultures. Besides, it is not clear how the 'unique expressions, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women' espoused by Hudson-Weems (1998, 155) differ from the concerns of the African women that African feminists advocate for, other than in the scope of the geography of Africana womanism. While African feminism focuses on the continent

and Black feminism concentrates more on the United States, Africana womanism is concerned with the women of African descent on the continent and in diaspora.

Indigenous African feminisms have continued to further the gender discourse that speaks to the reality of life of African women, albeit from particular understandings of these realities. Starting with Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi's 'Black womanism' (1985), a number of indigenous African feminisms have emerged. Okonjo-Ogunyemi (1996) later narrows her 'Black womanism' down to 'African womanism,' steeping it in African communalism and setting it apart from Walker's and Hudson-Weems's with her Four Cs: consensus, conciliation, collaboration, and complementarity between African women and men. Other popular African feminisms include Ogundipe-Leslie's (1994) 'Stiwanism' (STIWA: Social Transformation Including Women in Africa), Catherine Acholonu's (1995) 'Motherism' (emphasizing African value for motherhood), and Nnaemeka's (1998) 'nego-feminism' (negotiated feminism). More recent theories include Chioma Opara's (2005, 190) 'Femalism' (foregrounding the female body as 'the systemic site of discourse and hermeneutics'), Ezeigbo's (2012) 'Snail-Sense Feminism' (conciliatory and cooperative attitude toward men), and Ada Uzoamaka Azodo's (2019) 'Di Feminism' (inclusive, aware, and assertive gender engagement).

The multiplicity of their approaches to engaging the question of feminism indicates how committed African feminist scholars are to tackling such a complicated subject. Their diverse theories problematize any attempt at articulating a one-size-fits-all feminism that addresses the concerns of women of African descent. Even when one acknowledges the risk of these many attempts at theorizing feminism degenerating into a multiplicity of 'my feminism' in the face of the varied individualized approaches, the particularity of indigenous African feminisms, nonetheless, responds to specific regions and avoids generalizations.

Nnaemeka (2004, 380) builds her theory of nego-feminism on the idea of the 'African women's willingness and readiness to negotiate with and around men even in difficult circumstances.' She outlines the areas of divergence between African feminism and Western feminism and then contends that the identity of the former is rooted in its resistance to the latter: resistance against its radical feminism, harsh stance on motherhood, disruptive language that eschews negotiation and compromise, inordinate concern with sexuality, exclusion of men, and universalization of Western concepts of feminism (Nnaemeka 1998b). Unlike Ogundipe-Leslie who premises her treatment of gender on class, race, and sexual orientation, Nnaemeka (1998b, 7) argues that while those categories still matter, African women are more concerned with the 'basic issues of everyday life

[and as such want to] address such issues first as they configure and relate to their own lives and immediate surroundings.'

Ezeigbo (2012, 27), whose theory constitutes the backdrop against which this essay analyzes the films, further addresses those basic issues of everyday life that confront African women through her 'snail-sense feminism'—the 'conciliatory or cooperative attitude' that women should adopt in their relationship with men. This attitude, she argues, enables the snail to 'crawl over thorns with a fine and well-lubricated tongue.' As the snail hauls along 'its house on its back without feeling the strain,' Ezeigbo (2012, 27) maintains, 'if danger looms, it withdraws into its shell and is safe.' In this application of the snail's shell metaphor, however, Ezeigbo does not clarify how African women would ever successfully confront the challenges that patriarchy places before them if they keep withdrawing into their shells. Nonetheless, she insists that since a snail 'goes steadily forward … [and] does not confront objects but negotiates its way past any obstacle … a woman cannot but behave like a snail in [the African] patriarchal society.'

Whereas Ezeigbo's feminism advocates for a silent negotiation on the part of women, the female characters she creates in her novels and short stories approach feminism in more vocal and assertive ways. In 'The Departure,' for instance, with a voice 'quivering with anger,' she writes, Muta demands of her husband, Awa, who has woken her up so she will serve him dinner: 'Am I your wife or your slave in this house?' (Ezeigbo, 1996, 21). Awa, who has been doted on all his life under the protection of a patriarchal culture that normalized his male privileges, flees the bedroom 'like a defeated warrior fleeing the scene of battle'—the first time ever Muta his wife puts her foot 'down squarely on the ground' to challenge his disregard for her as well as his insensitivity and sense of entitlement (Ezeigbo 1996, 21).

Such is the strong character of Ezeigbo's female protagonists. To theorize a different image of women in her feminism suggests a creation of two worlds, one fictional, the other real, as well as separates both worlds from each other in the kind of order and structure she assigns to them. It would appear that Ezeigbo, then, is saying, almost two decades after creating the character of Muta, that the world and reality that Muta demands of her life has become unattainable by the real women whose life hers mimics and which Ezeigbo's indigenous feminism tries to capture or articulate.

Azodo (2019, 32) contends that Ezeigbo's feminism is impracticable given that it 'sacrifices women's respect and freedom at the altar of practicality and functionality.' Ezeigbo's solution, Azodo avers, contains the very gender inequality that African feminism sets out to address. 'The image of a woman as a crawling snail, bending, bowing, cajoling, conced-

ing, and negotiating her survival, her destiny, with sharp thorns that symbolize the men, is not an acceptable strategy of dialoguing from a position of strength' (Azodo 2019, 32). Azodo is not alone in disagreeing with Ezeigbo. At a 2018 conference in Chicago, Ezeigbo's reference to snail-sense feminism in her paper on Flora Nwapa's literary legacy drew some disapproving remarks from other Igbo female scholars present who objected to Ezeigbo's approach.

Ezeigbo (2012, 31) had made reference to the part of her theory that concludes thus: 'if women of the past adopted the strategy of the snail to survive, today's Nigerian woman should do no less as she negotiates and re-negotiates her way in her dealings with the men and society at large.' Evaluating an earlier version of Ezeigbo's theory, Nnaemeka (1998b), in her introduction to *Sisterhood: Feminism and Power*, makes reference to the challenge of engaging feminism in Africa on Ezeigbo's terms, despite acknowledging the strengths of her method. The female scholars at the conference raised a similar concern, calling attention to the fact that Ezeigbo's metaphor in itself is problematic. To raise the image of the African woman as a snail as well as to privilege her foremothers as yardstick for her gender relationship in contemporary times is to neglect the age-long sociocultural and religious load that has burdened her all her life, the scholars (Ada Agbasimalo and Azodo among them) argued.

One can read the scholars as saying, it is high time African women jettisoned both the load and its anachronistic image. It is high time they stood up and asserted themselves rather than keep retreating into their shells, for any situation that continues to put them in spaces where they need to thread carefully in order to survive is not worth taking up as a survival standard for women. It is such retreating that has continued to empower the oppressors of women, who perpetuate unfair treatment of women, knowing that the women would rather retreat than speak up and challenge the oppressors.

In her defense, however, Ezeigbo (2019) points out that focusing on the physical representation of the image of the snail misses the point of her theory, a symbolic meaning of the snail: carefully and doggedly navigating dangerous terrains and having a thick skin to retreat (she insists) in the face of a danger to its life. It's all a survival mechanism. In a 2019 essay, 'Unity in Diverse Indigenous Feminisms,' she further clarifies that the Igbo philosophical thought that undergirds her snail sense theory does not place the snail in any position of weakness from which it negotiates. Rather, the snail 'is at par with the objects it encounters on the way … [and, no matter the obstacle,] must have its way' (Ezeigbo 2019, 72). Ezeigbo's clarification, however, conflates the snail having its way with it finding its way. That the snail eventually maneuvers its way away from obstacles in

its course does not mean that it finally has its way. If anything, the obstacle, whatever it is, has its way instead.

Nevertheless, Ezeigbo (2019, 72-73) anchors the strength of her theory on her 'strong belief in dialogue or negotiation as the best means of achieving societal equilibrium or harmonious relationships between genders,' insisting that the 'virtues of sensitivity, resilience, negotiation, dialogue and self-empowerment' constitute the mechanism women need for their survival in a patriarchal ordered society. Hence, one can then locate the emphasis on Ezeigbo's snail-sense on 'sense' rather than on the structure of the snail.

Some of the female scholars at the Chicago conference, even though they disagreed in theory with Ezeigbo's approach, acknowledged that in practice her approach remains a reasonable one. One scholar cited an example of a colleague who survives in an environment where an insecure, unlettered spouse asserts his dominance by always putting his professor wife down and not even allowing her any option to express her opinion on family matters, in addition to constantly reminding her that although she might be educated, he paid for that education. The snail-sense approach, while it might not be ideal, the reporting scholar said, becomes the only survival mechanism available to her colleague, even with her academic achievements. Note, however, that nowhere in this account of controlling and constraining marriage is the option of quitting the said union muted. The emphasis remains on the preservation of the marriage.

"DANIEL IS MY HUSBAND, BUT I AM THE BOSS": NEGOTIATING MARRIAGE

Nollywood, no doubt, parades countless movies which, in line with what critics fault Ezeigbo's theory on, generally depict women as a passive and exploited group—wives, mothers, sisters, and girlfriends, used mainly as props to advance the narratives of their male counterparts who exercise power within a patriarchal society (Garritano 2000; see also Johnson and Culverson 2016). This paper, however, maintains that through the use of melodrama, Nollywood also presents women who, using varied subtle and overt means, subvert those representations that render them invisible and voiceless, as they constantly question the normative traditions that support such representations. The essay's interrogation of gender in Nollywood films follows in the feminist film scholarship approach of analyzing the representations of gender, women, and feminism in cinema. Championed by theorist Laura Mulvey and influenced by the psychoanalysis theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacaues Lakan, this insightful engagement continues to inform contemporary explorations of those categories particularly in the melodrama genres like Nollywood's.

In bemoaning her hard luck with finding a man to settle down with, for instance, Sandra, in *Glamour Girls*, might have been misled by a mindset that ties her worth as a woman to marriage, even at the cost of playing dumb and wasting her money on undeserving men, but Doris tells her not to worry. She can buy herself a husband instead. Better still, she can get a more generous older man, who is equally more considerate than a younger one, to pick up her bills, even when, like Doris, she is married. If the game is power and the exercise of it for influence, the 'Glamour Girls' are definitely pulling the strings. Men know this, as Doris tells Sandra: 'The problem with top class ladies is that men are scared of us.' This fear often masks itself as tradition, social mores, or gender shaming in order to control women. But Nollywood presents women who subvert the system by mastering the game.

Old habits persist and according to Caroline Walker Bynum, et al. (1986, 9), symbols, more than just being impacted, are often appropriated 'in a dialectical process [and made] subjective reality,' thereby making it difficult for one gender to let go of a worldview it appropriated and internalized based on the symbols constructed by a culture run by the other gender. Sandra does not think her social and material empowerment should be divorced from marriage. 'Who will marry you after all this?' she asks Thelma in reference to the latter's lifestyle. Sandra's query touches on the ever-present question of marriage that preoccupies many Nigerian women. Nigerian feminist scholars, like Ezeigbo, have theorized their feminisms within the parameters that assume the importance of marriage. Ezeigbo, as stated above, insists that dialogue and negotiation are central to her 'snail-sense' feminism. Even while she does not privilege marriage as the context for both dialogue and negotiation, it is difficult for one to imagine marriage being absent from or not playing a central role within the Igbo world in which Ezeigbo situates her feminism. Nnaemeka (1998b, 7) insists that African women are concerned more with the 'basic issues of everyday life.' Marriage constitutes an essential part of the concerns of that every day. Hence, Jane's (Liz Benson) statement confirms this: 'I've made it,' she tells Thelma, 'Desmond has promised me marriage.'

Many Nollywood films foreground marriage and the myriad burdens it places on Nigerian women: desire to marry, pressure and harassment from relatives to marry early, anxiety because of late marriage, the agony of a childless marriage, desperation for a male child, an overbearing mother-in-law, interference from either spouse's families, unjust treatment of widows, infidelity, domestic abuse, rape, et al. 'Glamour Girl' Jane's next move further buttresses the consuming concern that women have of marriage in Nigeria. Desmond (Sola Fosudo) plays a benevolent, gracious, and caring fiancé to Jane after discovering that she has a ten-year-old son.

He has no issues with that, yet Jane is troubled he might change his mind regarding his marriage proposal. He has no reason to, after all he 'picked [her] from the street,' Jane says through her tears. The tears dry out, however, as soon as Desmond reassures her that he will still marry her, no matter what. Desmond's appears the only profession of love in the movie not designed to manipulate the beloved. But then, the unstated control of his love is hidden in plain sight, as it is a love that 'picked' Jane from the street and brought her into his home to be made his own alone.

Unlike Desmond, Daniel (Ernest Obi) does not conceal his intent to check his woman. 'I am a man and I will always be in control,' he assures his friends to allay their fears about his relationship with a much older Doris. But Doris flips that script of male control in a man-woman relationship. She makes the money and pays the bills; and she lets Daniel know that—to keep him in check. While a patriarchal-ordered society might be weary of such a woman like Doris, Jane, however, professes her admiration for Doris's single-mindedness in going after what she wants, even if that has made her a control freak since their university days. She is one of a kind, as Jane points out: 'It's not every woman that needs someone to boss them around.' Society is changing and the women are applying the wisdom of the Igbo proverb that says that once the beat to a dance changes the dancer too must adjust their dance steps. Hence, to Sandra's 'the men should always be in charge. That's always the way it's meant to be,' Doris counters that 'things don't always go the way [they're] meant to be.' Even while maintaining her mistress's relationship with Alhaji when she is married to Daniel, Doris tells Alhaji, 'Daniel is my husband, but I am the boss.' She equally refers to Daniel as 'my prisoner.' To indicate a symbolic cultural humiliation of a man powerless before his woman, she makes Daniel wash her underpants, highlighting, in the process, how a culture has turned into an act of shame and indignity what ordinarily should be a sign of mutual respect, endearment, and love.

Doris hides her fear of being taken advantage of by her younger boyfriend, who might in the end elope with another woman of his own age. This concealed fear manifests in her control and unpleasant treatment of Daniel. Where, however, Doris succeeds or enjoys the good fortunes of luck in her control of Daniel, her friends Sandra and Jane do not. Sandra gambles with ceding control to boyfriend Dennis (Pat Attah) and loses. Dennis absconds with all the money she finally makes by dating an older man. Alex swindles Jane of her fiancé's money and cars by sweet-talking her into abandoning Desmond in the hospital for a promise of becoming a first lady of the country and traveling to America with Alex when he becomes president. Meanwhile, Desmond sustained his injuries from a car accident he has while traveling to take care of Jane's ill mother. 'God! How did you create women?' Desmond asks on his sick bed after reading Jane's

divorce papers. Nevertheless, no matter how evil Jane is portrayed to be here, she, like every other character in the movie, is leveraging her opportunities for her selfish ends. It is worthy of note that Alex's smooth operation on Jane structurally echoes the Nigerian advance fee fraud (locally known as 419, after a penal code) at its peak in the 1990s, a precursor of today's Internet scam. One notorious aspect of this is the love scam that women from across the globe continue to fall for today—making the desire for a loving relationship, if not marriage, a universal human need that can be easily exploited.

While marriage preoccupies the everyday existence of Nigerian women both in real life and in the characters that Nollywood creates, it is within the same marriage, as Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1994, 75) argues, 'that the Nigerian woman suffers the most oppression.' First, she loses her daughter/sister status and other rights within her birth lineage and becomes 'a client or possession … voiceless and often rightless in her husband's family, except, in some cases, what accrues to her from her children.' Second, she loses a great deal of her personal freedom, a part of which she can only regain at an expensive price to herself by accommodating the existence of her husband's other women (wives and/or mistresses). Third, she submits to the husband's dominance 'or face execration and blame from the total society' (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994, 75). Nevertheless, the woman is, at the same time, expected to 'stoop to conquer' by quietly accepting her subjection and subjugation in order to succeed. In a sense then, Ezeigbo's snail-sense feminism which encourages women to negotiate their way gently through marital challenges in order to survive, although original in its articulation and insight, draws from a general common notion of survival mechanism deployed by African women in the realities of their daily existence. Doris, for one, refuses to play by such a rule.

Unlike their counterparts in *Glamour Girls*, the women of *Fifty* do not need men for their financial sustenance. *Fifty* reverses the *Glamour Girls*' trend: women make their own money and their men do the spending. Kate's husband and Lizzy's toy boy live off their women. Tola makes the point clear that she makes enough money when she screams at her stylist, 'how many times will I say it, money is not my problem, but how to spend it,' as she expresses her disappointment for the 'cheap' clothing items the stylist brings to costume her as the host of the 'Rich and Fabulous Tola' show. Her dressing, she insists, should scream 'class, style, glamour.' Tola might have a billionaire father, but she works hard to make her own money as a successful television host. The phrase 'money is not my problem' harkens back to a statement made by a former Nigerian military head of state who, in the heyday of Nigeria's oil boom in the 1970s, said that the country's problem was not money, but how to spend

it. But like Kate tells her 'self-employed entrepreneur' (read, unemployed) husband, everything was fine until he 'started being reckless with [her] money.' Nigerian had it together until it began spending money with a reckless abandon on unsupervised white elephant projects that became pipe drains for embezzlement and corruption.

While unflattering images of women still abound in Nollywood films, a film like *Fifty* also reflects a similar problem of representing women in the Hollywood melodrama. As Irena Makarushka (1995, 142) puts it, the women's film genre has often portrayed women as 'marginal personality types … who suffer from a wide variety of 'women's troubles.'" Depicted as 'depressed, unstable, incompetent, and weak,' Makarushka adds, women so represented 'become objects of male scrutiny and power.' Nevertheless, even while this paper contends that both *Glamour Girls* and *Fifty* consciously aim to subvert subservient images of women maintained through patriarchy by presenting strong female characters, these women oftentimes 'fall under the care of men' for being 'perceived as lacking the ability to control their emotions' (Makarushka, 142).

In *Fifty*, for instance, Maria's uncle intervenes and insists that she goes home to sort out her life, after Tola barges into Maria's construction firm's board meeting to confront her for being pregnant by her husband. Jamal (Timini Egbuson), Tola's son from her rape ordeal, stops her from slipping into a self-pity alcohol binging after she finds out he already knows that she is his real mother. The family has passed him off as her brother. Meanwhile Kate pleads with her male pastor to ask God to intervene in her health issue, even when she can and is encouraged to make that prayer directly to God. Towards the end of the film, as Lizzy crosses paths with a young boy on the stairs of the building where Tola hosts her birthday party, she contemplates making him a new boy toy to whom she will hand over the control of her sexual satisfaction. One might argue that since these female characters inhabit a world made up of men and women, their lives, by necessity, must interweave with those of the men. Hence, these strong, successful career women are bound to navigate the reality of their lives within this patriarchal world.

CONCLUSION

Beyond the narratives of *Glamour Girls* and *Fifty*, the boldness of what the films attempt remains fascinating. Nollywood reflects a new development where, like *Fifty*, its films signal a future filled with equal opportunities for women. That indication in itself also demonstrates developments in contemporary Nigeria, as women continue to advocate for equal recognition in society. Although no single indigenous feminism wholly encapsulates Nollywood's portrayals of women, the paper privileged Ezeigbo's snail-

sense feminism to highlight the complexities of that reality. Women's everyday lived experiences in Nigeria and Africa, as portrayed in the films and indicated by Ezeigbo's theory, contrast in multiple ways with the ideals of feminism, spotlighting the freedom of cinema to operate in the vanguard of exploring novel ideas and options. However, as the films illustrate, whereas the ideal feminism and equal gender relations might not yet be fully attained, African women continue to challenge patriarchal structures that undermine their existence and efforts at realizing that end, as they continue to subvert and re-engage these structures.

FILMOGRAPHY

Abba. 2016. Directed by Okey Zubelu Okoh. Nigeria. VCD.

Bobrisky in Love. 2019. Directed by Ken Steve Anuka. VCD. Nigeria. Nollywood Namaste.

Emotional Crack. 2003. Directed by Lancelot Imasuen. VCD. Nigeria. Remmy Jes.

Fifty. 2015. Directed by Biyi Bandele. Nigeria. EbonyLife Films. DVD.

Glamour Girls. 1994. Directed by Christian Onukwufor. Nigeria. NEK Video Links. VHS.

Light Will Come. 2017. Directed by Tchidi Chikere. Nigeria. FilmBaba Entertainment. VCD.

Love Police. 2015. Directed by Desmond Elliot. Nigeria. Denziot Production. VCD.

REFERENCES

Acholonu, Catherine O. 1995. *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism*. Owerri: Afa Publications.

Allison, Lincoln. 2020. "Subversion." Oxford Reference Online. Accessed March 5, 2020. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20120106123502387

Augoye, Jane. 2019. "Nigeria: Homosexuality - 'Bobrisky in Love' Movie Against Nigerian Law - Censors Board." *Premium Times*. May 24, 2019. https://allafrica.com/stories/201905240465.html

Azodo, Ada Uzoamaka. 2019. "Di-Feminism: Valorizing the Indigenous Igbo Concept of 'Agunwanyi.'" In *African Feminisms in the Global Arena: Novel Perspectives on Gender, Class, Ethnicity, and Race*, edited by Ada Uzoamaka Azodo, 7-61. Glassboro, New Jersey: Goldline & Jacobs Publishing.

Bynum, Caroline Walker, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman. 1986. *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Chioma, Filomina. 1981. *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman.

de Lauretis, Teresa. 1987. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Ezeigbo, Akachi Adimora. 1996. "The Departure." In *Rituals and Departures*. London: Karnak House.

Ezeigbo, Akachi Adimora. 1996b. *Gender Issues in Nigeria: A Feminist Perspective*. Lagos: Vista Books.

Ezeigbo, Akachi. 2012. *Snail-Sense Feminism: Building on an Indigenous Model*. Lagos: University of Lagos monograph Series, no. 17.

Ezeigbo, Akachi. 2019. "Unity in Diverse Indigenous Feminisms." In *African Feminisms in the Global Arena: Novel Perspectives on Gender, Class, Ethnicity, and Race*, edited by Ada Uzoamaka Azodo, 64-75. Glassboro, New Jersey: Goldline & Jacobs Publishing.

Garritano, Carmela. 2000. "Women, Melodrama, and Political Critique: A Feminist Reading of *Hostages*, *Dust to Dust*, and *True Confession*." In *Nigerian Video Films*, edited by Jonathan Haynes, 165-191 Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1985. *Selections from Cultural Writings*, edited by David Forgas, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, and William Boelhower. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Green-Simms, Lindsey. 2016. "The Emergent Queer: Homosexuality and Nigerian Fiction in the 21st Century." *Research in African Literatures* 47 (2): 139-161.

Haynes, Jonathan. 2016. *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres*. Chicago & London: Chicago University Press.

hooks, bell. 1984. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: Southend.

Hudson-Weems, Clenora. 1995. *African Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Hudson-Weem, Clenora. 1998. "Africana Womanism." In *Sisterhood: Feminism Power – From Africa to the Diaspora*, edited by Obioma Nnaemeka, 149-62. Asmara & Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Johnson, Elizabeth and Donald Culverson. 2016. *Female Narratives in Nollywood Melodramas*. New York: Lexington Books.

King, Ursula. 2005. "Gender and Religion: An Overview." *Encyclopedia of Religion*.
https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs- transcripts-and-maps/gender-and-religion-overview

Kolawale, Mary E. M. 1997. *Womanism and African Consciousness*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Ledwith, Margaret. 2009. "Antonio Gramsci and Feminism: The Elusive Nature of Power." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41 (6): 684-697.

Makarushka, Irena. 1995. "Women Spoken For: Images of Displaced Desire." In *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American Film*, edited by Joel W. Martin and Conrad R. Ostwalt, Jr., 142-51. Boulder: Westview.

Nnaemeka, Obioma, ed. 1998. *Sisterhood: Feminism Power – From Africa to the Diaspora*. Asmara & Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Nnaemeka, Obioma. 1998b. "Introduction: Reading the Rainbow." In *Sisterhood: Feminism Power – From Africa to the Diaspora*, edited by Obioma Nnaemeka, 1-35. Asmara & Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Nnaemeka, Obioma. 2004. "Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing and Pruning Africa's Way." *SIGNIS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, 1 no. 2 (Winter): 359-385.

Nwapa Flora. 1998. "Women and Creative Writing in Africa." In *Sisterhood: Feminism Power – From Africa to the Diaspora*, edited by Obioma Nnaemeka, 89-99. Asmara & Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Ogundipe-Leslie, Molara. [1981] 1994. "The Representation of Women: The Example of Soyinka's *Ake*." In *Recreating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations*, 101-110. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Ogundipe-Leslie, Molara. 1994. *Recreating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Okome, Onookome. 2014. "A Nollywood Classic: *Living in Bondage* (Kenneth Nnebue, 1992/1993)." In *Africa's Lost Classics: New Histories of African Cinema*, edited by Lizelle Bisschoff and David Murphy, 152-160. London: Legenda.

Okonjo-Ogunyemi, Chikwenye. [1985] 2006. "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English." In *The Womanist Reader*, edited by Layli Phillips, 21-36. New York: Routledge.

Okonjo-Ogunyemi, Chikwenye. 1996. *Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Women and Critical Transformations*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Onuah, Felix. 2014. "Nigerian President Signs Anti-Gay Bill into Law." *Reuters*. January 13, 2014. https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-gay/nigerian-president-signs-anti-gay-bill-into-law-idUSL6N0KN2PP20140113

Opara, Chioma. 2005. "On the African Concept of Transcendence: Conflating Nature, Nurture and Creativity." *M&Lintas* 21 (2): 189-200.

Walker, Alice. 1983. *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*. New York: Harcourt, Inc.

Igbo Studies Review 9, (May 2021): 55-74

ONYE AGHANA NWANNE YA: TRADING BOUNDARIES FOR BRIDGES: A STUDY OF EDGELL'S *BEKA LAMB* AND JOHN'S *UNBURNABLE*

ADAOBI MUO

Abstract: One of the primary markers of the Igbo nation is the belief in the necessity, potency and supremacy of the group. The Igbo person draws essential identity, value, support and nourishment from a functional group. The establishment, attachment to, and dependence on, community illustrates the concept of *ohaka* as it repudiates unadulterated individualism and exclusion. It also operationalizes and rationalizes the popular pan-Igbo maxim; *onye aghana nwanne ya*. *Onye aghana nwanne ya* is a philosophical statement which underscores the practice of inclusion and communality enshrined in the Igbo interpersonal and group relationship structure. Therefore, this paper represents an intellectual attempt at building further solidarity with Igbo diaspora societies, represented in this context by West Indian Igbo communities of Belize and Dominica, using Edgell's *Beka Lamb* and John's *Unburnable* as principal channels of discourse. The research derives its primary analytical insight from Adamson and Demetriou's (2007) notion of Diaspora as a society beyond a state boundary and which maintains a connection with its homeland. Furnished with these, it identifies Belizean and Dominican Igbo communities, mainly through religious beliefs and practices like funeral rituals, ancestors, gods and goddesses, masquerades, and magic. It further interprets these as mechanisms and methods of sustaining an essential oneness and constant communion with an original motherland. Finally, the research maintains that until the Igbo society at home becomes one, symbolically speaking, with her diaspora kinsmen and women, it does grievous injustice to the animating spirit of commonality aptly articulated in *onye aghana nwanne ya*.

Key Terms: Igbo, diaspora, territoriality, communality, cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

> When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Everyman can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so (Achebe 1958, 118).

Dr. Adaobi Muo teaches at the Institute of Nigerian Languages, Aba, Nigeria

The Igbo functional relationship structure is conceptualized and constructed upon the group, as a principal agency of existence, identity, legitimacy, stability, and solidarity, for its members. Thus, the Igbo world exhibits an individuality that is deeply grafted into the group which is in turn crafted out of individuals. The belief in the supremacy of the group, on the one hand, licenses, regulates and activates cohesion and, thus, endorses the *oha ka* and *anyi bu ofu* tendencies. On the other hand, it proscribes and disables separation, unadulterated individualism and exclusionism, embossed in *onye na nke ya, onye na nke ya*. The consciousness, configurations and protocols of such commonality, and its inclusionary ethos, are axiomatically uttered in the Igbo term onye aghana nwanne ya; literally 'let no one abandon his/her brother/sister.' It is important to note that among the Igbo, the concept of *nwanne* (brother/sister) displays flexibility as it is broadened to accommodate those outside the usual boundaries of blood and marriage. This research exploits the enlarged idea of *nwannehood*, which is defined by the bonds of ethnicity and is often demonstrated wherever the Igbo are, at home (rural and urban spaces) and in the diaspora.

The diasporisation of the Igbo is one of the major consequences of involuntary, and to a lesser degree, voluntary dispersal of Africans globally, especially through the notorious Trans-Atlantic slavery. Therefore, Trans-Atlantic Slavery compels a little more attention within the context of this study. The event, which formally ended in the nineteenth century, began in the middle of the fifteenth century with the Portuguese while the "most important development" occurred in the sixteenth century (Rodney 1970, 3). Establishing the precise number of Africans transported and enslaved in America and the Caribbean is almost an impossible task but it is estimated that more than fifteen million Africans were involved (Rodney 1970). Chambers (2019, 5) notes that by scholarly consensus, based on available statistics derived from 1662 and 1867 voyages, ten to twelve million Africans were shipped from Africa to the Americas and the Caribbean, to supply slave labor in gold and silver mines as well as agricultural plantations of sugar, cotton, tobacco and timber. Migrant-sending regions include West Central Africa, Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, and Bight of Biafra. Slaves from the Bight of Biafra were from Ibibio, Ijo and Igbo groups of present Nigeria. Igbo society was "one of the greatest exporters of slaves" and, thus, a significant percentage of slaves "belonged to the Igbo tribe" (Rodney 1970, 19; Patterson 1969, 143).

For Igbo, Trans-Atlantic Slavery caused an irreversible severance of an essential symbiotic link, geographically, between the diaspora population and their original home, in present Nigeria. For humanity, it also engendered an extensive reconfiguration of the human population and racial constitutions, particularly in slave-receiving societies of America and

the Caribbean Islands. The slavery-induced dispersal initially bifurcated Africans into two differently structured but culturally similar groups - "territorially concentrated" (Coakley 2016, 1) majority at home and "territorially scattered" (Nimni 2013, 13) minority abroad. The trade, therefore, marked the formal beginning of diaspora societies of Africa, exemplified by Dominican and Belizean Igbo societies. Consequently, Africa takes the "center of any discussion of the Diaspora" (Chambers 2019, 1). Over the years, the diaspora communities consciously maintain identifiable and analyzable cultural systems and patterns, which demonstrate propinquity to speech, cuisine, arts and sciences, world view and especially religion, of identifiable ethnic groups, like Igbo, in Africa. The subsisting cultural systems express diaspora subjects' profound desire for rootedness. Such yearning is externalized in the popular Black-American Pastor, T. D. Jakes's "indescribable" feeling at the revelation that his "ancestors were Igbos" from West African Nigeria and admission that it provides "something … black Americans don't have, which is roots" (n.p.). These similitudes are concrete illustrations of "the shared history … historical connection" between territorially separated Africans (Achebe 2012, 98-99). The unmistakable African influences survive into the present twenty-first century and testify to the pertinacious cultural linkages between Africans at home and in the diaspora.

The robust and multi-dimensional corpus of literary and non-literary Diaspora literature demonstrates an extensive politicization and intellectualization of the diaspora reality, condition and experience, as well as the attendant territoriality (deterritoriality and reterritoriality). In other words, the diaspora has persistently engendered a "tenuous debate" within academic and popular contexts (Chambers 2019, 1). Waterbury (2010, 131) notes a substantial rise in the number of countries "constructing ties" to their Diaspora populations as well as a "concomitant explosion of academic interest" in those relationships in the past two decades. Indeed, a review of studies available to this research manifests primary and tangential interests in the subject of diaspora and from different perspectives; ethnicity, geographical, historical, cultural, and religious. For example, Honychurch (2014) and Caryl Phillis (2012) discuss the slavery dimension and attendant place and displacement in West Indies and Hall (2001) calls attention to the indispensable role of religion in understanding black culture in diaspora societies.

Furthermore, Adetugbo (2001) establishes cultural, historical and linguistic proximity between Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups in Nigeria and the Caribbean countries of Cuba and Jamaica. Again, Nwadike's (2008) undertakes a linguistic and historical study of the cultural connection between West Indian and Nigerian Igbo. Anyanwu (2019) explains the role of the diaspora Igbo in the survival of the Igbo nation but disregards the

contribution of literary productions to that cultural project. These attempts partially or completely, disregard certain significant aspects. King-Aribisala (2012) bemoans the inadequate attention accorded to religious properties copiously present in black American and West Indian literature and thus expresses the observation of this research, in relation to the marginalization of religion and literature in the diaspora discourse.

Diaspora study, which is primarily interested in the historical, cultural, connectivity, and identity, cannot afford not to assign a central position to a major cultural production like literature. This is because literature is, indubitably a vital instrument for "expressing identity" and stimulating social transformation and writers "within small groups" perform within the "institutional level" (Broomans 2015, 9). Thus, fictional reinscriptions of communal recollections and visions of small groups, like the West Indian diaspora Igbo, need to be centrally involved in a study as this. Ogundipe (in Ajeluorou 2012, 37) summarises it thus:

> Literature is very important; we have to value our memory, as part of Africa society in perpetuating continuity … The Africa Diaspora has preserved a lot of things for us. We're actually connecting. We try to keep literature to keep culture; literature carries culture and it preserves values … we in Africa have to find our way back to who we really are.

Attempts at providing for this apparent lacuna are observed in critical essays. For example, Kia-Parsons (2016, 5) and Misrahi-Barak (1997, 133) individual analyses of *Beka Lamb* note "Belizean ethnic hierarchy" peripheral position of creoles and the need to maintain their "rich cultural heritage," as well as the character and communal essence of Wake, as part of that heritage. Renaud (2018, 130); Newson (1999, 186); Brooks (2010, 1); Hillhouse (2006, 1) respective examinations of *Unburnable* observe that the author's narrative authority originates from "oral tradition" and marginalized West African "folk culture," including Nine Night, religion, spirituality and history. Nevertheless, a careful examination reveals similar total disregard or inadequate attention to ethnicity, internal social cohesion and cultural linkages, especially from religious and Igbo perspectives in several readings of both primary texts.

The conversation with selected diaspora literature, although very insightful and invaluable, suggest significant under-utilization of critical ethnic, communality, cultural, religious and connectivity elements of diaspora which find heightened articulation in literary representations of West Indian societies hosting Igbo communities. Considering the huge population of Igbo in the diaspora, especially in the West Indies where historical records tell of Igbo communities, and attendant cultural, espe-

cially religious, remnants, the ethnic group deserves more attention within the context of Diaspora discourse. In addition, due to the enormous potential of cultural productions in scholarship, Diaspora discourse cannot afford to assign a subordinate status to that imaginative category. This research, therefore, becomes necessary.

METHODOLOGY AND MOTIVATION

To achieve its objectives, this research primarily employs two West Indian novels, *Beka Lamb and Unburnable*, respectively set in the twentieth century countries of Belize and Dominica, to provide a comprehensive and comparative basis for the necessary analysis. The choice of texts is guided by thematic and setting (place and period) dynamics. Again, both West Indian authors, individually, lived in Eastern Nigeria and are, as such, immersed in the Igbo culture at home and its remnants abroad. The research engages in a close reading of both texts and analysis is primarily based on settings and cultural/religious contents. Though the texts' attention to the religious includes evil forest, kola nut, scarification, orality (tales and chants), arts and architecture, for manageability, examination concentrates on belief in ancestors, afterlife, masquerade, gods and goddesses as well as Obeah. It pays attention to origins, status, functions and imports of those, in terms of how they express the spirit of *onyeaghananwanneya*, through internal social cohesion, connectivity with an identifiable homeland and suggest developmental, particularly collective, opportunities and possibilities.

The study is principally motivated by Adetugbo and Ngugi's call to researchers, in relation to African continuities in migrant-receiving societies. Adetugbo (1972, 7) challenges researchers to "find out more about ourselves before the sources of information dry out." Ngugi insists that 'we must find … the most enduring links between us and all our brothers scattered over the world. We can then build on these links' (Ngugi 1972, xix). This research is a means of participating in the intellectual attempts at discovering, identifying, classifying, analyzing and building on such cultural links between Ndigbo at home and their West Indian diaspora kinsmen and women, before the extant veritable and invaluable sources go extinct.

THEORETICAL COMPASS

Due to its crucial position and function within the context of this research, Diaspora needs to be properly situated. Derived from the Greek 'diasperein,' which means 'disperse,' it initially referred to the sixth to eighth century BC dispersal of the Jews outside Israel and then adopted to de-

scribe the dispersion of people, including Africans, outside their original homelands, especially through Slave Trade. With the end of the trade in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the term acquired a practical and precise implication as it designates geographical spaces occupied by descendants of African slaves in the western worlds. The twentieth century political activism and quest for racial equality politicized the concept. Influenced by globalization, it acquires a tremendously intensified attention as a "social-political and ethnocultural phenomenon" (Askhat 2017, n.p.). The present twenty-first-century scholarship exhibits a consistent commitment to Diaspora and among scholars that display unwavering and extensive engagement with the concept are Adamson and Demetriou.

Adamson and Demetriou's concept of the Diaspora is proposed in the scholars' 2007 study of the relationship between practices and politics of contemporary diaspora and state structure and technique, using the United Kingdom Greek-Cypriot diaspora and German Kurdish diaspora, as entry points. Their assumption delineates "two differently structured organizational forms … (1) deterritorialized and network-based collective identities, such as diasporas (2) … territorially defined and institutionalized collective identities, such as nation-states" (491). Both are linked by comparable national, cultural and or other identity markers. The concept notes that the link between home and diaspora societies are "largely ignored" until lately when "growing awareness" of its implications motivates researchers' interest (500 and 501). This identifies the research potential and contemporary relevance of such a connection and as such validates researches as this. Adamson and Demetriou's postulation adds that the term is a method of constructing "conceptual links between migration-sending and migration-receiving states" (504). In defining it, they assume that:

> A diaspora can be defined as a social collectivity that exists across state borders and that has succeeded over time to (1) sustain a collective national, cultural or religious identity through a sense of internal cohesion and sustained ties with a real or imagined homeland and (2) display an ability to address the collective interests of members of the social collectivity through a developed internal organizational framework and transnational link (497).

By encoding and emphasizing the territorial/geographical, time, cultural, cohesive, connective, ancestry, and political contours of diaspora, the concept provides a holistic framework for identification and examination of the relevant diaspora communities. The comprehensiveness of their conceptualization undergirds its acceptability within scholarship. For

instance, Koinova (2010, 150) "adopt(s) a definition used by Adamson and Demetriou" as it encompasses "both positivist and constructivist elements." According to McDowell et al. (2018, 8), the concept has "proven useful" because it emphasizes distinctive and group values. These positions explain the adoption of Adamson and Demetriou's concept of Diaspora by this study.

Furthermore, Adamson and Demetriou's theorization note that Diaspora, as a concept, has been broadened to include "ethnically defined groups" as ethnic groups are becoming progressively diasporised due to increasing global migration and associated longing for "connection with the homeland" (498). The scholars' statement is illuminated by Anteby-Yemini and William's interpretation of the longing as attempt at preserving their "ethnic tradition (and) a strong feeling of collectiveness" (2005, 262). Moreover, the scholars note the development of migration-induced "transnational communities," with regional boundary-resisting existence, identities and relationships. For them, such oversea "co-ethnic populations" effectively transform separate spaces into one community and contribute to the development of both (2005, 501 and 502). Thus, the notion identifies the obligatory migration/dispersal elements of diaspora, push to the front burner the ethnic/communal, and associated identity-constructing and linking dynamics as well as the strategic relationship essentiality, all explored by this study from the Igbo angle.

Adamson and Demetriou's hypothesis, for a number of reasons, can bear the analytical burden of this study. First, its postulation on migration and subsequent development of transnational communities explains the existence of Belize and Dominican diaspora Igbo of the primary texts. Second, the ethnic perspective facilitates the identification and classification of the communities as Igbo, based on the dramatized cultural/religious heritages, like worship of gods/goddesses, belief in ancestors, eschatology, masquerades, Nine Night and Obeah. Third, its attention to internal social cohesion and cultural connection offers a robust conjectural basis for an examination of the communality and connectivity expressed in such cultures and their supporting architectures. Last, the concept's interest in strategic relationships between home and diaspora groups provides an explanatory framework for the conclusion of the need for trading geographical boundaries for cultural bridges.

ONYE AGHANA NWANNEYA

The heterodiegetic narratives, *Beka Lamb* and *Unburnable*, individually, participate in African diaspora discourse, by their portrayal of West Indian communities with religious cultures that exhibit correspondence with those of the Nigerian Igbo ethnic group. The eponymous and bildungs-

romanic *Beka Lamb*, set in mid-twentieth century Belize under British colonial rule, begins from the end, like *Beyond the Horizon* by Armah Darko. Events in *Beka Lamb* heavily depend on flashbacks and so the story possesses recollective merit, mostly dependent on Beka's reminiscences. It thematizes socio-political and cultural issues including racial and class discrimination, education, ethnicity, community, and religion/spirituality. *Unburnable* presents a more extensive picture of the West Indies through its past and present two-level narrative pattern that covers early, middle and late twentieth-century Dominica. It discusses family lineage, ethnicity, migration, revenge, racial and class intolerance, community, ancestral tradition and religion and spirituality. Consequently, *Unburnable* discusses "almost every aspect of the African Diaspora" (Doig 2006, 1). The texts' communities are archetypal ethnic-based diaspora settings.

Beka Lamb's Belize is characterized by racial and ethnic plurality. It is constituted by "at least six races with their roots" in Africa, the West Indies, Central America, Europe, North America, Asia, and others (11). Parsons (2016, 14) classify the six as "ethnic groups" and holds that their racialization exhibits Edgell, and her "speech community['s] … hypersensitivity to 'difference'" *Unburnable*'s comparable historicization records the occupation of Dominica's towns and villages of Roseau, Colihaut and Noir, from the 1600s, by Europeans, Africans, Americans, Lebanese, Chinese, and the extensively decimated aboriginal Caribs (*Unburnable* 31). The hybridity and identity dimensions undergird Hall's delineation of West Indian islands as, each, containing "elements of other ethnic cultures [and] the first, the original and the purest diaspora" (2001, 283-4). Both novels accentuate the raciality, migration (involuntary for Africans and voluntary for Europeans), ancestral and historical components of diaspora by identifying Belizean blacks as descendants of "African slaves" (*Beka Lamb* 68), tracing the "tribal identity" of most Dominican Blacks to West Africa and 1600 and 1796 influx (*Unburnable* 134). Consequently, the two narratives respectively emphasize the migration reality upon which the condition of diaspora is erected and account for the beginning of diasporisation of Africans.

Deepening the racial dimension, as color is a concomitant quality of race, both texts make most of their diaspora conversations using black characters, families, and communities. In *Beka Lamb*, the protagonist, fourteen-year-old Beka, is a "black girl" from one of the two "black families" on Cashew Street, and Granny Straker was a member of a black community (147, 8, 20-21). On the pages of the text are also found a "black policeman," Gordillo "a big black man" and an "absolutely black" old masseur, Mr. Rabatu (14, 39, 144). The textual world of *Unburnable* equally employs a black protagonist, Lillian, and her boyfriend, the black African American Teddy, Pope, "an illiterate black … black washerwomen …

(and) ordinary black people" and Sylvie's pure black grandfather (212, 117, 190). In *Unburnable*, the politics of colour is explicitly intensified in the "infinite blackness" (of) very black' Matilda's breasts and in her unadulterated Noir Village (56, 222). Matilda parallels other fictional blacks like Fisheye's great-grandfather who is an unblemished black man directly from Africa, in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*. The setting portrays gradability and variability of blackness in the text's categorization of the entire Noir population as completely "dark-skinned, black … not African-American kind of Black," using the verbal report of a police inspector (260-261). The observable instrumentalization of color depicts acute racial consciousness, which is a recurring decimal in black American and West Indian imaginative literature. The authors' attempt at reminding blacks of their common source performs a deterritorialization function. Again, it represents attempts at reinterpreting and reconstructing the substance of their blackness and diasporanness to portray attendant rootlessness. The foregrounding of Africa, through race and color, provides the platform for the dramatization of African communities in Belize and Dominica.

The race and color narratives provide a form of backdrop for the texts' reproduction of racially/ethnic conscious communities. In *Beka Lamb*, British settlers and African slaves "established residence" on Belizean island to aid in timber harvesting (45). In addition, African slaves escaped from the plantations to St Vincent where they "established towns and villages" and mixed with Caribs whose cultures they assimilated without losing their "African traditions" (68). Edgell's creativity here suggests that Ndigbo should, obligatorily, preserve their culture even in the face of contemporary westernization and globalization. This is very a critical issue, especially as the 1995 *UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages* includes Igbo. Similarly, John's narrative regresses into the past to excavate Noir village modeled after an eighteenth-century African village. Noir is a maroon community established by women abandoned by their men after the British raided their black camp known as Jacko's Flats (281, 272). It is exclusively populated by off-springs of slaves, of uncontaminated African lineage who, for two hundred years, resisted British domination (275, 282) and situated within the larger Dominican Colihaut society populated by Europeans and other racial and ethnic groups. The dense diaspora temperament of the setting is ingeniously expressed by Phillip's definition of the West Indies as "an artificial society … where Africa met Europe on somebody else's soil" (1992, 10). Again, the self-sustaining Noir Village interrogates Africa's socio-political and economic dependence on the West. It equally demonstrates what Africa, and Igbo, can achieve as a corpus. The British-sponsored and supervised demolition of Noir tends to be remedied in the recently simulated seventeenth-century Igbo village, of mud houses, in Staunton, Virginia USA, by American Igbo diasporas,

from Anambra State of Nigeria. This dramatizes the relationship of reciprocity between arts and life. The Virginia phenomenon demonstrates the possibility and importance of physical, and even virtual, memorabilia for historical and cultural purposes. It also flays the conspicuous absence of history, as a subject, in Nigerian schools. The deterritorialized collectives of the texts are based on ancestry and social condition. The embedded communality evinces a strong sense of brotherhood and performs an identitarian function. It says '*anyi bu ofu*' *and* projects the *onye aghana nwanneya* mentality as an essentiality for the survival of the Igbo nation, at home and in the diaspora.

Furthermore, the ethnic essence of diaspora is invoked in the texts' individual fictional conversations. *Beka Lamb* portrays "people … known as red Ibos" and assigns an Igbo religious nomenclature for God, "Chuku," abbreviated to "Chuks," to Beka's brother (11, 12 and 25). Nnedi Okorafor's creativity, in *What Sunny Saw in the Flames* (2011, 5), borrows from Edgell's, by its assignment of the name "Chukwu … Supreme Being" to a character. *Unburnable*, using dialogues, asserts that "the Igbos were here (Dominica) for sure" (134) and substantiates the assertion, principally, in Noir. It also locates voluntary migrants in Dominica and America in Father Okeke "from Nigeria … Igbo" and Nigerian women in D.C "mostly Igbos" (238). The cleric, like the red Ibos of West Indies, is accessorized with a reddish-brown face that says '*anyi bu ofu*.' The priest and women, by their social relevance, functions in the identification of globally relevant diaspora Igbo, like Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Philip Emegwali. These Igbo have the capacity to contribute significantly to the development of their two societies. As ethnicity is an indicator of identity (Chambers 2019), the portrayals suggest a deliberate attempt at classifying those communities as Igbo to announce their existence to their kinsmen/women in Nigeria as they express a desire for connection with a lost ancestral origin.

The fictional constructions of Igbo communities in the West Indies are backed by historical accounts of Igbo known as Iboe, Ebo or Eboe, as well as Igbo residential areas called Eboe Town in West Indian and American societies. In fact, John reveals that Noir is an artistic reconstruction of Jamaican and Dominican "maroon communities" in historical accounts of the Dominican Honychurch, (*Unburnable* 'Interview' 298). The village displays correspondence with Honeychurch's account of a "free and sufficient … more equitable community" built out of cultural elements and fragmented remnants of blacks' "ancestral experience" (2014, 16). Notably, the historical reality and experience of marronage gives eloquence to Honeychurch's intellectual productions, including his 2017 book, *In the Forest of Freedom: The Fighting Maroons of Dominica*. Caribbean fiction is characterized by a constant occurrence of marronage as theme, plot and

trope, and is employed by writers, including Edgell and John, as a literary technique for the expression of an identity that goes back across times and spaces to Africa. Marronage facilitates a portrayal of "alternative community [and] fringe cultures and ideologies … extant indigenous values, cultures and beliefs" that interface with dominant, and other subsidiary ones, in the islands (Renaud 129 and 130). By ethnicizing their settings, the novels construct stages for dramatizations of Igbo cultural and religious beliefs and practices, especially belief in ancestors and afterlife, gods and goddesses, masquerade, and magic.

The Igbo communities of Belize and Dominica, represented in the two primary texts, like their kith and kin at home in Nigeria, host an eschatological system with belief in ancestors. The belief manifests in *Beka Lamb*, within the context of a religious Wake convoked for the late Granny Straker by her black community. The traditional and communality characters of a Wake are embossed in its description as "a custom" which, more than several other events:

> Commanded the total attention of the community … In a way, it was a small lesson in a community history, and everyone, … was a diligent scholar … at funerals of the very aged, through the use of innuendos and euphemisms, a feeling was communicated, and this was understood (62-63).

The typical traditional Igbo community of texts like Achebe's *Arrow of God* in its cohesiveness and where anyone's business is everyone's business is reflected in Beka's. Patterson (1969, 198) explains that the religious ritual is found "among the Igbos" and that clarifies the comparability. Notably, in Anglophone Caribbean fiction, exemplified by Cliff's *Abeng*, Edgell's *In Times Like These* and Thelwell's *The Harder They Came,* Nine Night, like Obeah, is a recurring trope. The communal reverential treatment of the dead, and its associated significance, is conveyed in the image of Wake as a "get-together to… pay respect to the dead" and put the spirit of the dead to rest (71 and 66). Misrahi-Barak (1997, 133) describes it as a "traditional form" observed by the entire family and community, on the night of the ninth day, to protect 'the living from the dead' and involves collective eating and drinking, music, and dancing, folk tales and memory of the dead and community. The beliefs in ancestors and life after death are intensified in Aunt Tama and Miss Eila's perception of Beka as a "picture of Mama Straker (whose) spirit will live with Beka" (73), and in a conversation context that dramatizes the process of socialization through orally delivered historical, cultural and folk tales. The eschatological implication is apparent. The Wake goes further to validate the pan-Igbo *ohaka* mindset as Lilla's aversion for the ritual bows before the group en-

dorsement of same. Nine Night is not only a funeral ritual, it is also a celebration of community as it expresses "collective identity … communal memory" and reverence for ancestors (Booker and Juraga 2001, 96). Funeral ceremonies also perform correspondingly in Nigerian Igbo society. Remarkably, Edgell employs the Nine Night to illustrate the eroding impact of time and space on African cultures in the West Indies, project Caribs as models of cultural preservation and advocate the preservation of traditions that "don't do any harm" (67). These areas call for more attention.

Unburnable displays more devotion to ancestors and expands the discourse scope by including worship of gods, hardly touched by *Beka Lamb*. Both heighten the theological temperament of the text. *Unburnable*'s speech on ancestors manifest in Matilda and her people of Noir who "lived in expectation of … their everlasting lives as ancestors" (272). Again, Lillian is welcomed by her ancestors in the defunct Noir and her intended suicide, like the actual mass suicide of her forebears, is motivated by a profound trust in the "role of the ancestors in the afterlife," (John, 'Interview' 6). The implied afterlife submission of *Beka Lamb* is here covertly uttered. *Unburnable* also dramatizes the worship of gods and goddesses and associated sacrifices, pejoratively classified by a Catholic inspector as "he-devils … she devils, devilish idols carved out of wood" (265). The biased interpretation articulates Said and Freud's respective concepts of Othering and Selective Perception and represents a censorial statement on the injury and injustice served the pre-Christian method of spiritual connection of Ndigbo, at home and abroad.

The representations of both novels, *Beka Lamb* more, imply communality and internal social cohesion as they close the spacio-temporal gap between home and diaspora Igbo societies. Remarkably, these portrayals transcend the terrestrial and include the hereafter, in a manner that suggests that the *onye aghana nwanneya* dictum cuts across the three departments of existence known to the Igbo – living, dead and unborn. The religious element, as such, becomes a principal unifying cultural framework that contributes considerably in lubricating group consciousness for the benefit of the living and dead Igbo at home and in the disapora. The eschatological hermeneutics appeal for a reconstruction of the bridge that facilitated "coming and going" (Achebe 1958, 85) between the land of the living and dead. Perhaps, the renditions are atonement sacrifices for the inexcusable negligence of the hitherto revered Igbo ancestors who have been largely replaced by their foreign Western and Christian counterparts termed saints.

The belief in ancestors is accorded an extension in the masquerade polemics contextualized within the carnivals, in both texts. In *Beka Lamb*, the

post-Christmas annual carnival is woven into the Nine Night episode, through Beka's memory, and it encapsulates the masking tradition. The carnival, with its colorful costumes, bells, drumming and dancing, street performances, is traced to escapee African slaves and described as a consciously preserved remnant of the masquerade institution, an aspect of "African tradition," through the voice of Beka's class teacher, Miss Beguche (68).

Unburnable, like *Beka Lamb*, traces the origin of the Dominican carnival to Africa (130). However, it amplifies *Beka Lamb*'s abbreviated commentary on African masking tradition by observing its sacred and secular significance and status in telling that masquerades appear during sociopolitical and religious ceremonies as "embodiment of the gods … representations of the spirits of ancestors, wherein lay the highest authority" (130-1). Then, Alfred Drummond, an elderly white colonial officer, is planted in the heart of the Dominican carnival to provide necessary cultural education on the revenge-seeking Dominican Igbo masquerades. Drummond's migrant experience, including an accidental and clandestine encounter with an uncommon masquerade "somewhere in Nigeria … in Igboland" (141), equips him for his cultural assignment. Thus, Drummond's trained eye observes the raffia costume, whips, drums, "serpent and the bird wooden carvings (as) common theme[s] among the Igbo" (135). In addition, the culturally competent analysis of the colonialist hardly omits typologies and functionalities. He distinguishes "dangerous masquerades … war masks," as instruments of "definite social control," rather than entertainment (138). In other words, songs, rhythms, musical instruments and street appearances are obvious influences of Nigerian Igbo masquerade on its Dominican equivalent. Thus, through the masquerades, the streets of Dominican Roseau embrace the footpaths of Nigerian Igbo land closing the geographical gaps with cultural bridges. The masquerade episode is, arguably, the most pulsating and petrifying scenes of *Unburnable* and is reminiscent of the retaliatory outing of Umuofia masquerades against Christianity after Enoch's abominable unmasking of an Egwugwu in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Drummond's prodigious knowledge of the Igbo masquerade system illustrates the role of cultural immersion in the detection, comprehension, interpretation, and analysis of fragments of Igbo culture in diaspora societies. Moreover, more than any other episode in both texts, the masquerade episode demonstrates the dictum: 'an injury to one is an injury to all,' as their communal planning and vengeful performance is elicited by John Baptist's offence against a citizen of Noir. Consequently, the Igbo masquerade institution is imbued with communal teeth to cater to individual interests of members. It, therefore, functions as part of the *onyeaghananwanneya* bonding and support mechanisms for Belizean and

Dominican Igbo societies of both novels. The event exemplifies the need for the Igbo to stand up for one another, especially in societies where they are, blatantly and or surreptitiously, suppressed and marginalized.

Furthermore, Obeah, like Nine Night and masquerade, contributes significantly in revealing the 'Igboness' in the geographically separated diaspora societies of the primary texts. Obeah "unquestionably develops" from West African religion and originates from Igbo ethnic group (Patterson 1969, 188; Eltis and Richardson 1997, 8). It involves competent deployment of charms, spells, spiritism and herbalism in counseling and consultation. *Beka Lamb* assigns an ancillary space to Obeah within a larger framework of Nine Night and employs a cultural dialogue to emphasize the mutual African source of both, in Lilla's statement that both are "all connected" (66). Thus, Edgell extensively exploits the Nine Night by compelling it to serve as a frame for masquerade and Obeah narratives in a manner that articulates the mutual provenance of the three. *Beka Lamb*'s muted account experiences a noticeable shift in *Unburnable*'s vociferous rendering. The text reconstructs "powerful Obeah practitioners" from Guadeloupe, voodoo priests of Haiti and Santeria priestesses of Cuba (34). Again, through the black Dominican Mrs. Richard's perception, black American Richard Liverpool's interpretation and black Matilda's image, Obeah is represented as an exclusive property of blacks.

Both texts represent Obeah, and its counterparts, as markers of identity and agents of internal cohesion for the represented Belizean and Dominican Igbo communities and Caribbean blacks as it expresses cultural/religious compatibility between diaspora and home Igbo societies. Notably, the religious system, despite the secrecy and hostility attached to it, is robbed in potency and enjoys visibility and prominence in Caribbean literature. Thus, Munroe (1998, 14) describes it as a "focal point and a metaphor for Caribbean cultural experiences." The unapologetic reverberation of Obeah in *Unburnable*, interrogates the progressive marginalization of such religious heritages in African countries like Nigeria. In addition, its celebrated efficacy presents it as a viable option for the spiritual, mental and physical challenges of contemporary Ndigbo. Notably, respective beliefs and practices, as the Nine Night, ancestors, masquerades and Obeah, are valuable in the proposed reconceptualization and reconfiguration of formidable Pan-Igbo macro cultures and structures towards creating a united nation unbound.

No objective analysis can afford to ignore the apparent departures maintained by depicted cultural remnants of Belizean and Dominican diaspora Igbo communities of *Beka Lamb* and *Unburnable*, as well as the suggested areas of attention and collaboration. The modifications are functions of geographical and spatial distances. For instance, in *Beka Lamb*, Miss Janie and Miss Winny's reminiscences suggest that the desirability

and value of wake have diminished over time and hold formal education responsible for such alteration. In *Unburnable*, the judicial system of Noir is operated by masked women when women are totally excluded from the masquerade cult in Nigerian Igboland reflected in texts like Achebe's *Arrow of God*. There are also other modifications in beliefs and practices like evil forest and kola nut. Sister Gabriela's view that "things are taking a different shape" (*Beka Lamb* 116) articulates the conceptualization of such mutations as hybridity and third space, in Homi Bhabha's intellectualization. The implication is that the diaspora Igbo culture represents something close but different, in form and content, from its Nigerian parent. Therefore, the bridge-building agenda should be based on nearness, rather than sameness.

Both novels also suggest arrears of possible collaboration between home and diaspora Igbo societies. These include herbal medical enterprise, oral sources, and re-orientation across territorial borders. For instance, the medical collaborative possibility is recreated in *Unburnable* using African Matilda and Carib Simon's enormously successful medical partnership, based on their "combined knowledge of forest's secrets" as well as specializations and expertise (32). The effectiveness of the practice interrogates our uncritical acceptance and dependence on western healthcare systems. The incident also calls us back to our abandoned and decimated forests in a way that says that Africans do not need to wait for left-overs from the West and China to combat killer infectious diseases, including Ebola and Corona Virus.

In addition, both texts' attention to oral sources, domiciled in very old characters Mr. Ribatu, and Granny Ivy Bird (Beka Lamb) and Bird and Sylvia's grandfather (Unburnable), establishes the cultural relevance of the unscripted and disregarded oral perspectives in the reconstruction of scripted African history. Orality is, thus, invoked and invigorated to facilitate an establishment of a more authentic identity and relationship patterns between geographically separated African societies of the same cultural background. The relevant characters' old ages and death suggest the necessity of harvesting the invaluable "old memories … stories" (*Unburnable* 268) of "time before" (*Beka Lamb* 62) left untapped in our different communities before they go extinct. These literary images also present fertile fields for such studies.

Specifically, the purpose and necessity for urgent intervention is adroitly worked out in Drummond's proposed letter to the British Anthropological Society for "further study [into] the survival of … African masking traditions in the islands of Dominica, including retentions and variations" (*Unburnable* 143). His cultural advocacy is motivated by the preventable cultural ignorance he observes in Dominican blacks, represented by Mrs. Richard and reveals the value John places on remnants of

Igbo cultures in Dominica. Perhaps this type of proposal preceded UNESCO's 2018 donation, in funding, to the University of Zambia towards developing a degree program in Intangible Cultural Heritages, including orality, traditional craftsmanship, knowledge and techniques, rituals, festivals, and even witchcraft. *Beka Lamb* tows the same line using Sister Gabriella's insistence that Beka, representing young black Belizeans, should "understand a little more" about their national and personal identities which are not adequately catered for in the "present curriculum" targeted at "London examinations" (94). To achieve her aim, she established an essay competition that sent her students into the field to make them participants in the cultural project of re-scribing history using orality. Sister Gabriella's conclusion on the British curriculum represents an unmasked indictment of western formal education, and its foreign form and content, in non-western societies like Nigeria, Belize, and Dominica. It suggests that foreign education can hardly develop solutions to indigenous challenges. It calls for a review of such demonstrations of mimicry toward developing a version more receptive to local content. Sister Gabriella's philosophy of time suggests the urgency of the task.

The identified research gaps underscore the immense academic potential of retentions and variations of African culture and its supporting architecture in the West Indies. Both texts also assign that crucial task to educational and research institutions, like National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria, and cultural organizations like UNESCO. This makes the cultural project the primary responsibility of teachers and researchers. The idea also synchronizes Africa and the West Indies as well as Western scholarship and African culture in a manner that suggests that the different civilizations in Black societies are not mutually exclusive after all.

CONCLUSION

Communality is one of the foremost indicators of the Igbo nation wherever they are found. The ardent belief of Ndigbo in strength in unity is figuratively expressed in pan-Igbo sayings like *igwe bu ike*, maduka and *ofu ukwu a naghi awa uzo*. This principle is manifest in literary texts set in Igbo societies of Nigeria and West Indies Belize and Dominica exemplified by *Beka Lamb* and *Unburnable*. The Igbo societies of Belize and Dominica, represented in the primary texts, compellingly demonstrate the presence of Igbo communities outside the territorial boundaries of Africa and Nigeria and the role of slavery in the compartmentalization of Igbo into home and diaspora groups. The imaginative accounts dramatize the establishment of ethnic-conscious residential areas, cultural and religious beliefs and practices, including gods and goddesses, ancestors and afterlife, masquer-

ades and magic, as manifestations of internal social cohesion and solidarity as well as unyielding connection with an original homeland. These suggest the need for establishing a dynamic and strategic interface between specific territorialized and non-territorialized Igbo ethnic groups of the world. The literary discourses as well challenge Ndigbo at home and in the diaspora, to recover their invincibility by embracing the ancient spirit, chant and practice of *onye aghana nwanne ya*.

REFERENCES

Adamson, Fiona B. and Madeleine Demetriou. 2007. "Remapping the Boundaries of `State' and National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing." *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 4): 489-526.

Achebe, Chinua. 2012. *There Was a Country*. USA: Penguin.

----------. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann.

Adetugbo Abiodun. *African Continuities in the Diaspora*. Lagos: Centre For Black and
African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), 2001.

Anote Ajeluorou, "Reimaging Literature for a Developing Society …
Writers, Critics, Politicians' View." *The Guardian*, Jan 13, 2012, 37.

Anteby-Yemini, Lisa and William Berthomiere. "Diaspora: Look at the Concept." Bulletin
du Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem [En ligne], vol. 16 (2005): *262-270*. https://journals.openedition.org/bcrfj/257.

Anyanwu, Chukwuma. "Igbo People in the Diaspora and the Survival of the Igbo Nation: Insights from the Igbo Students Association, Delta State University, Abraka (Onye Biara Ije Ga-ala)." *Jafdis: Journal of African Films and Diaspora Studies* vol. 2, no. 2 (2019): 9-24. DO1: 10.31920/2616-2713/2019/v2n2a1

Askhat, Gulnash and Zhabina, Zh.R. "The Concepts of Diaspora." *Bulletin Abay Kazakh. National Pedagogical University Almaty, 2017.* https://articlekz.com/en/article/18083.

Booker, Keith M. and Dubravka Juraga. *The Caribbean Novel in English: An Introduction*.
Pourtsmouth: Heinemann, 2001.

Brook, Robin. "Teaching Folk Culture: Images of the Nine Night Traditional Ritual in Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb* and Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*." *Digital Library of the Caribbean*. 2010. ufdc.ufl.edu.UF00103096.

Broomans, Petra. "The Importance of Literature and Cultural Transfer – Redefining
Minority and Migrant Cultures." In *Battles and Borders: Perspectives on Cultural Transmission and Literature in Minor Language Areas* vol. 7, edited

by Petra Broomans et al., 9-38. Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing, 2015. www.academia.edu/22039391.

Chambers, Glenn. "The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Origins of the African Diaspora in

Texas: Facts and Figures about the Transatlantic Slave Trade." 2019. https://www.pvamu.edu/tiphc/research-projects/the-diaspora-coming-to-texas/the-transatlantic-slave-trade-and-origins-of-the-african-diaspora-in-texas/.

Coakley John. "Introduction: Dispersed Minorities and Non-Territorial Autonomy."

Ethnopolitics vol. 15, no. 1, (2016): 1-23. DOI: 10.1080/17449057.2015.1101842

Doig, Denise M. "*Unburnable*". Review of *Unburnable*, by Marie-Elena John. *Black*

Issues Book Review, May-June 2006, www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1264/is_1_37/ai_n16346325].

Edgel, Zee. *Beka Lamb*. USA: Harper Collins, 2006.

Eltis, David and David Richardson, eds. *Routes to Slavery*: *Direction, Ethnicity and Morality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. 1st ed. UK: Routledge, 1997.

Hall, Stuart. "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," In *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*, edited by Gregory Castle, 280-292. USA: Blackwell, 2001.

Hillhouse, Joanne. "Author Unleashes Myriad Realities." ***The Daily Observer,*** March 2006, 24. www.myspace.com/jhohadli.

Honychurch, Lenox. *Negre Mawon: The Fighting Maroons of Dominica.* Dominica: Island Heritage Initiatives, 2014. www.academia,edu/8562448.

John, Marie-Elena. "Interview with Author." *Unburnable.* By Marie-Elena John. USA: HaperCollins Publishers, 2006. 297-298.

----------. *Unburnable*. USA: HaperCollins Publishers, 2006.

King-Aribisala, Karen. *Destination Freedom: Vehicle Symbolism in Black Literature.* Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2012.

Koinova, Maria. "Diasporas and International Politics: Utilising the Universalistic Creed of

Liberalism for Particularistic and Nationalist Purposes." In *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, edited by Rainer Baubock and Thomas Faist, 149-166. Amsterdan: Amsterdan University Press, 2010. http://www.aup.nl/index.php.

McDowell, Chistopher., Valentina Aronica, Gemma Collantes-Celador, G. and Natasha De

Silva. *Understanding Transnational Diaspora Politics: A Conceptual Discussion*. Lancaster: *Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats* (CREST).

2018. https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/diaspora-thematic-report-one/.

Misrahi-Barak, Judith. "The Wake in Caribbean Literature: a Celebration of Self-knowledge and

Community." *Alizés: Revue Angliciste de La Réunion, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines* (1997): 131-142. https://hal.univ-reunion.fr/hal-02348349.

Munroe, Andrew Adrain. *The Obeah Woman*. New Jersey: Golden Grove, 1998.

Newson, Adele S. "The Fiction of Zee Edgell." In *Caribbean Women Writers: Fiction in*

English, edited by Mary Conde and Thorunn Lonsdale, 184-201. London: Macmillan, 1999.

Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and*

Politics. London: Heinemann Publishers, 1972.

Nimni, Ephraim. "The Conceptual Challenge of Non-territorial Autonomy." In *The Challenge of*

Non-territorial Autonomy Theory and Practice, edited by Ephraim Nimni, Alexander Osipov, and David J. Smith, 1-24. Oxford: Peter Lang. 2013.

Nwadike, Inno Uzoma. "Igbo Studies: From the Plantations of West Indies to the Forestlands of

West Africa, 1766-2008". 2008. www.unn.edu.ng/2015/09.

Jakes, T. D. "How I Traced My Ancestry to the Igbo Tribe – Pastor T.D Jakes." By Ademola

Olanilua. *Punch* 23 Sept. 2020. n. p. https://punchng.com/how-i-traced-my-ancestry-to-the-igbo-tribe-pastor-t-d-jakes/.

Parsons, Kia-Marie. "Beka Lamb: Meet Beka Lamb." July 7 2016.

www.scribd.com/document/73289906/

Patterson, Orlando. *The Sociology of Slavery*. New Jersey: Associated U. P., 1969.

Phillips, Caryl. "Caryl Philip by Graham Swift" Interview by Graham Swift. *Bomb Magazine* Iss. 38. (Jan. 1 1992): n. p. bombmagazine.org/articles/caryl-philips/.

Renaud, Leighan "Representations of Matrifocality in Contemporary Anglophone

Caribbean Fiction" PhD diss., University of Leicester, 2018. https://hdl.handle.net/2381/43169

Rodney, Walter. "West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade". USA: *Africa Research*

Group. USA: Cambridge, 1970? africanactivist.msc.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=210-808-4549.

Waterbury, Myra A. "Bridging the Divide: Towards a Comparative Framework for
Understanding Kin State and Migrant-Sending State Diaspora Politics." In *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, edited by Rainer Baubock and Thomas Faist, 131-149. Amsterdan: Amsterdan University Press, 2010. http://www.aup.nl/index.php.

Igbo Studies Review 9, (May 2021): 75-93

THE BIAFRA ARMY: A HISTORICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NEXUS BETWEEN WAR AND DIPLOMACY IN IGBOLAND, 1967 – 1970

WILLIAMS EHIZUWA ORUKPE
and
OSORGU AUGUSTINE OBIAJULU

Abstract: This paper examines the nexus between war and diplomacy from a historical perspective. The Igbo people of Nigeria are one of its three dominant ethnic groups. The 1959 National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and Northern People's Congress (NPC) alliance placed the Igbos on a secured ground in Nigeria. It made Nnamdi Azikiwe the first indigenous President of Nigeria and gave Igbos good representation in Nigeria's public and civil service until the fall of the First Republic in 1966. Thus, this paper problematized the post-1966 socio-political misfortunes of the Igbos in Nigeria as the main catalyst for the creation of the Biafran army. Using historical research methodology, the paper corroborates primary and secondary materials (online sources) to demonstrate that the establishment of the Biafran army in Igboland was a secessionist alternative to diplomacy between 1967 and 1970. It finds that the Igbos' perceived threat to the security of their lives was epistemologically responded to through Igbo hermeneutics of the nexus between war and diplomacy. The ephemeral military confrontation that ensued between the fledgling state of Biafra and Nigeria was a continuation of diplomacy by other means. And the collapse of the Aburi Accord which Nigeria signed with the separatist Eastern region, was the diplomatic breakdown that triggered the outbreak of the Biafra war as a diplomatic last resort for salvaging Igbo acrimony. Therefore, this paper concludes that the institution of the Biafran army in the struggle for Biafra perfectly underscored Igbo epistemology of the nexus between war and diplomacy.

Keywords: Igbos, War, Diplomacy, Biafran army, Epistemology

INTRODUCTION

WAR IS EVIL AND DESTRUCTIVE BUT THROUGHOUT history, it is one of the most preferred diplomatic tools used by statesmen. It is desirable as a means to an end in domestic and international relations when diplomacy has failed. In Igboland, indigenous epistemologies and herme-

William Ehizuwa Orukpe teaches in Department of History and International Studies at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
Osorgu Augustine Obiajulu teaches in Department of History and International Studies at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

neutics such as "*Odogu*" meaning brave heart, "*Dike*" meaning warrior, "*Ikenga*" meaning the strongest or head warrior and "*Agu*" meaning fearless as a Tiger used to qualify gallant and battle-hardened individuals are portrayals of the war psychology of the people. They also connote Igbo detest for cowardice and the deep sense of military readiness of some Igbo sons if diplomacy failed. Jaw-jaw and war-war in Igbo indigenous knowledge system mean there is a time for dialogue and a time to go to war. The diplomatic seasoning of the Igbo traditional knowledge system is unmistakable. It is evident in Igbo indigenous proverbs such as "*Oji oso agbakwu ogu, amaghi na ogbu bu onwu*" meaning "A man who rushes into battle does not know that war entails death"; "*Nwata hu ogo egboro egbo osi na ogu atoka*" meaning "When a child sees a fight that is being intervened upon, he will think fight is always sweet"; "*Ukpala okpoko gburu, nti chiri ya*" meaning "The ant that was eaten by locust has shown that it is deaf" and "*Anaghi agwa ochi nti n' agha esula*" meaning "Those who have failed to heed warning will feel the heat when the war starts." These Igbo proverbs are valuable primary sources for unpacking the people's conception of the nexus between war and diplomacy. They directly called for cautious diplomacy even when war is imminent. Nonetheless, in Igboland, the war readiness of the people is evident in their belief that "*Ubuchi amuru dike na mba ka amuru ibe ya*" meaning "When a warrior is born in a town, another warrior is also born in another town."

As a national and foreign policy instrument of last resort, war is strategically regarded as the continuation of diplomacy by other means. This implies that people generally go to war when diplomacy fails, and they return to the diplomatic table after warfare. This nexus between war and diplomacy exists on a fragile balance in domestic and international politics. It is the thin line between love and hate; make or mar in the adjustment of communal or inter-state relations. The tilting of the scale towards the latter usually breeds epochal indigenous military development and social change that greatly transforms the face of human societies.[1] Over time, the inevitability of conflict in human and international relations made the possession of a military organization a domestic and international security imperative. The history of inter-group and international relations had shown that even when there is relative peace and security among groups and nations, the threat of violent conflict is ever-omnipresent. Thus, when the safety of a people as a group is threatened and unsure the observed first response to the realities of war is the establishment of a vigilante, indigenous militia groups, and even an army. In modern Nigeria, the formation of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the Niger Delta, *Amotekun* in Yorubaland, and the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in Igboland as a defensive mechanism and means to an end support this reality.

However, the focus of this paper is on how the precarious situation of the indigenous people of Igboland triggered the establishment of the Biafran Army as a means to achieve secessionism.[2] It complements existing literature on Igbo studies by asserting that the Biafra army was put together as a military diplomatic backup plan in the struggle for the actualization of Biafra when dialogue failed. Therefore, the army was quickly deployed to explore and exploit warfare as a continuation of diplomacy by other means when the Aburi Accord failed. This event was set in motion six years after Nigeria gained independence from Britain. The interface between the January 1966 Igbo coup and the Hausa July countercoup engineered the collapse of the fragile balance between war and diplomacy in the nascent African state. Things fell apart completely when the Muslim Hausas in northern Nigeria began massacring the Christian Igbos in the region. This prompted tens of thousands of Igbos to flee to the east, where their people were the dominant ethnic group. The Igbos then had no vote of confidence in the Nigerian military government's ability to guarantee their peace and security within the Nigerian federation. It was against this backdrop that on May 30, 1967, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu and other non-Igbo representatives of the area established the Republic of Biafra, comprising several states of Nigeria.[3] While in Nigerian and Igbo historiography this phenomenon had been well studied, there are still knowledge gaps on its military imperative in academic literature. Hence, this paper seeks to expand the frontiers of knowledge on the response and adaptation of the Igbos to the imperative of war from 1967-1970.

MILITARY ORGANISATION AND UTILITY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the historical development of human societies and politics, dialogue, negotiation, bargaining, avoidance strategy, third-party interventionism (mediation), and compromise were diplomatic tools used to manage and adjust inter-group, suzerain, and even international relations. As an instrument of statecraft, they were containment strategies deployed to keep war at bay and when they failed, they precipitated war. The imperfection of human societies ensured that their diplomacy often snapped leading to the eventuality of war. Wars, whether it is the battle of attrition, or offensive or defensive wars, distort the fragile balance that exists between it and diplomacy and peace and security when they break out. Hence, statesmen, philosophers, and strategists over time and space sought to protect the ephemerality in the balance between human security and national security through the formation of military organizations. Understandably, Aristotle claimed that man when armed is naturally fitted to exercise wisdom and virtue; and that good rulers do not disarm their citizens. And he

conceived fighting and dying for one's country as the supreme sacrifice citizens are expected to make.[4]

The ancient military state of Sparta was the perfect embodiment of this philosophy. The Spartan army served as the foundation of political and social life in the ancient Greek city-state. In pre-colonial Nigeria, the army also served as a veritable instrument of state and empire-building. To this end, the Oyo Calvary and Benin Army respectively played critical roles in the emergence of the Oyo and Benin Empires in West Africa. The British also used the military to build a vast colonial empire across the globe. The British army in 1897 brought the Benin Kingdom to its' knees and progressively the whole of Nigeria after the collapse of diplomatic maneuvers such as Trade Treaties (the Gallwey Treaty of 1892) with the Benin Kingdom in 1895 and the Treaty of Protection that Jaja of Opobo refused to sign.

Conceptually, the military is generally regarded as the totality of the armed forces of a nation, and this includes the army, navy, air force, and to some extent the police. And the formation of military organizations in modern societies is central to achieving self-determination, secessionism and statehood. Hence, like what was obtainable in ancient societies the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria established the Biafran army as the military face of Biafra. However, in African societies and politics, the military had taken on new political roles contrary to their raison d'etre. Eshikena conceptualized this military regime as a government led by soldiers.[5] Military rule is generally an aberration in governance and a misnomer and negation of best international political practice. Consequently, Joseph argued that military rule is the expansion of the boundaries of soldier barracks to encroach into the boundaries of politics and governance. Therefore, Elaigwu opined that the military has become a political power contestant in Africa's power equation that must be "de-politicized."[6] In terms of the structural organization of the military, it must be noted that the military places a high premium on absolute discipline and loyalty among subordinate soldiers (workers). It is the responsibility of the leader to engender high levels of loyalty and obedience in his "subjects" which are unconditional. The deliberate structuring of the military/corporate hierarchy so that each soldier or employee receives orders from only one superior was specifically developed to complement and allow for this absolute obedience.[7]

BIAFRAN ARMY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

The formation of the British West Africa Frontier Force (BWFF) in 1900 and its reconstitutions as the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) in 1928 as a colonial army to suppress indigenous resistance, protect the

territorial integrity of the British West African colonial enterprise and to collaborate with the colonial police force in maintaining law and order in colonial Nigeria and elsewhere paved the way for military development in the region. In Nigeria, the RWAFF was disbanded in 1960 and its units metamorphosed into the Nigerian army. But the Biafran army on the other hand was arguably built from scratch. The Biafran army was born as a child of necessity. Its speedy formation and battle readiness in a short space of time after the collapse of the Aburi Accord epitomized the Igbos praxis of the nexus between war and diplomacy. The unstable sociopolitical milieu in Nigeria at the time, birthed by its unfruitful national dialogue since 1914, was what set the engine of the Biafran military machinery rolling. And three principal players of Igbo extraction, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Major Timothy Onwuatuegwu, and Major Christopher Anuforo who plotted the January 1966 military coup along with Major Kaduna Nzeogwu (with ethnic roots in Ika-Igbo, Midwest) and Major Adewale Ademoyega (Yoruba, West) accidentally accelerated the rise of the Biafran army. Other key participants in Nigeria's first coup d'état were Major Don Okafor (Igbo) and Major Humphrey Chukwuka (Igbo), Captain Emmanuel Nwobosi (Igbo) and Lieutenant Atom Kpera (Tiv, North). Kpera later served as the Governor of Anambra and Benue states.[8]

This development dovetailed into the Hausa countercoup of July 1966 directed at containing what was perceived as Igbo hegemony in Nigeria and protests in the North. The killing and maiming of Igbos that followed in northern Nigeria whipped up Igbo ethnic-nationalist sentiments and the need for self-defense and self-determination. It was against this backdrop that at 6 a.m., May 30, 1967, the Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Lt. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, made a broadcast declaring the Eastern Region with its continental shelf and territorial waters to be an independent state under the name, Republic of Biafra.[9] Putting this event into proper historical perspective, Solomon Amiara observed that the declaration of the independence of Biafra came after two military coups in January and July 1966 and the subsequent killing of thousands of Eastern Nigerians resident in Northern Nigeria and some parts of Western Nigeria.[10] While the January 15, 1966 coup led mainly by military officers of Eastern Nigeria origin was believed to be a revolution against a corrupt civilian regime, the July 1966 coup was understood to be a direct reprisal attack against the people of Eastern Nigeria by Northern Nigerian soldiers. In a strategic context, these coups were the harbinger of the Biafran war six weeks later.[11]

Biafra's declaration of independence came after efforts to reconcile the Eastern Region with the Federal Government of Nigeria failed. Neither the famous peace talks in Aburi, Ghana nor the mediatory efforts of some prominent Nigerians could restore peace and trust between Eastern Nige-

ria and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Efforts by the British government to promote peaceful negotiation between Eastern Nigeria and the federal government also proved ineffective.[12] Commenting on the secession of Eastern Nigeria, the British High Commissioner in Lagos noted at the outbreak of the war that Eastern Nigerians were "grievously shocked by the massacre of their fellow tribesmen in the North. Biafran leaders presented "Biafra" to the outside world as the "last hope of security to life, to property and the will to exist as ordinary human beings for 14,000,000 people thrown out of Nigeria. Psychologically, Chinua Achebe explained "Biafra" as a "state of mind, a mind free from the pattern of the past.[13] The Federal Government of Nigeria, however, interpreted the declaration of Biafra's independence as a rebellion and tried to prevent the secession by imposing a blockade on Biafra. To quell the "rebellion," Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria's Military Head of State, took what he described as a "police action" against Biafra. The "police action" was meant to be a short disciplinary action against "rebellious" Biafra, but it turned out to be the beginning of a thirty-month war that would attract global attention.[14]

The rigorous enforcement of a blockade by the Nigerian military forces had a debilitating effect on the civilian population in Biafra. There was an acute shortage of food supply from outside Biafra. The cessation of protein food supply (mainly meat) from Northern Nigeria and fish from the Nordic countries began to damage the health condition of the general population, especially children and nursing mothers.[15] The food crisis was most serious in the Northern Igbo region of Biafra which was cut off from the food supply from Northern Nigeria and the relatively richer southern Biafra. The mass movement of about two million returnees from Northern Nigeria to Eastern Nigeria partly accounted for the quick exhaustion of the local food supply after the blockade. When the major areas that supplied food to Biafra were overrun by the Nigerian forces, in May 1968, Biafra began facing the prospect of serious starvation. It was at this point that both foreign missionaries in Biafra and the Biafran leaders launched an appeal to the world for food support.[16]

In a bid to attract the sympathy and support of the international community, the Biafran government hired Markpress, a Geneva-based public relations firm for a publicity campaign. Markpress coordinated Biafra's propaganda campaign in Europe and North America. The public relations firm constantly used genocide and religion as its propaganda themes. The Biafran government accused the Nigerian government of waging a religious and genocidal war through starvation.[17] The allegation of using starvation as a legitimate instrument of warfare against the people of Biafra roused deep feelings in many parts of the world. As people followed the course of the war through the mass media, horrifying images

of starving children elicited sympathy among many television watchers in Europe and North America.[18]

THE BIAFRAN ARMY: ORGANISATION AND WAR STRATEGY

The Biafran army was the main contingent of the Biafran military. It was the Biafran state's supreme fighting force on which all the aspirations and hopes of the Igbos in the Biafra War were based. The Biafra Army was Biafra's main instrument of statecraft and sharpest diplomatic tool for conducting international relations and diplomacy by other means- warfare. At the beginning of the war, the Biafra army had a troop of 3,000 soldiers strong. This number grew as the war progressed, ultimately reaching 30,000. Although the Biafran Army did not get direct official support from Western nations, it clandestinely acquired arms from them. The paucity of foreign military support to the Biafran army informed the Igbo indigenous ammunition development known as the "*Ogbunigwe*." However, in the officer cadre of the Biafran army were some Europeans that secretly served the Biafran cause. They include German-born Rolf Steiner, a lieutenant colonel assigned to the 4th Commando Brigade, and Welshman Taffy Williams who served as a major throughout the conflict.[19] These officers led the Biafra special guerrilla unit, the Biafran Organisation of Freedom Fighters modeled after the Viet Cong and saddled with the responsibility of targeting and destroying Nigerian supply lines. It succeeded in forcing the Nigerian army to redeploy most of its resources to internal security efforts.[20]

At the top of the hierarchy of the Biafran army consisting of 5 Divisions was General Ojukwu. The number of officers in this elite Biafra military caucus was later increased to make it the 11th, 12th, 13th (later renumbered 15th), 14th and 101st Divisions. The Biafran army also had two separate Brigades namely the S Brigade consisting of specially trained Pretorian Guards for the personal security of the Biafran leader, General Ojukwu; and the 4th Commando Brigade (trained and commanded by mercenaries). It was commanded by Brigadier Hillary Njoku and later Major General Alexander Madiebo.[21]

Table 1: Weapons and Equipment Used by the Biafra Army

Type	Origin	Notes
Dane gun	home-made	In service with militias
Lee–Enfield No.4	ex-Nigerian Army	120 to 150 in January 1967
Beretta BM 59	ex-Nigerian Army (captured)	
Vz. 24 rifle	Czechoslovakia (officially	1,860 bought at the be-

	denied)	ginning of 1967
Vz. 52 rifle		820 bought at the beginning of 1967
Vz. 58 rifle		732 bought at the beginning of 1967
MAS 36	Gabon, Ivory Coast, Haiti	300 from Haiti as a gift in 1968
FN FAL/SLR	Parker-Hale (United Kingdom); ex-Nigerian Army (captured)	930 delivered in 1967; some FN FALs captured from the Nigerian Army
CETME rifle	ex-Nigerian Army (captured)	
AK-47	China (Black market)	In service with the militia

Source: Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/15/africa/biafra-nigeria-civil-war, Accessed on 22/04/2021

The Biafran military also had an air force unit. The Biafran air force had trained pilots, but very few aircraft. They had two B-25 Mitchells and one B-26 Marauder, which was captured on the ground as it was unserviceable. Later on, they got another B-26, which during Oct-Dec were used for night raids together with the B-25s and a converted DC-3. The B-26 and DC-3 crashed in the line of duty, while the Biafran B-25s were captured on the ground. One of the relief pilots in 1968 was the Swede Carl Gustaf von Rosen.[22] He saw that Biafra was unable to acquire jet fighters and brought up the idea of Minicoin with General Ojukwu. In the spring of 1969, Biafra was able to assemble five MFI-9Bs in Gabon and painted them with two green colors (Volkswagen car paint) in three large fields. They were equipped with simple sights and two pods for six 68 mm anti-armor rockets and given an extra fuel tank in the fuselage. The newly acquired fleets were named "Biafra Babies". They were at first manned by a squadron made up of three Swedish and three Biafran pilots.[23]

THE BIAFRAN AIR WING

The Biafrans set up a small but effective air force. Biafran Air Force commanders were Chude Sokey and later Godwin Ezeilo, who had trained with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Its early inventory included two B-25 Mitchells, two B-26 Invaders, (one piloted by Polish World War II ace Jan Zumbach, known also as John Brown), a converted DC-3 and one Dove. In 1968, Swedish pilot Carl Gustaf von Rosen suggested the MiniCOIN project to General Ojukwu.[24] By early 1969 Biafra had assembled five MFI-9Bs in Gabon, calling them "Biafra Babies." They were colored green, and were able to carry six 68 mm anti-armor rockets under each wing using

simple sights. The five planes were flown by three Swedish pilots and three Biafran pilots. In September 1969, Biafra acquired four ex-Armee de l' Air North American T-6Gs which were flown to Biafra the following month; but one T-6 was lost on the ferry flight. These aircraft flew missions until January 1970 manned by Portuguese ex-military pilots. During the war, Biafra tried to acquire jets. Two Fouga Magisters and several Gloster Meteors were bought but never arrived in Biafra, being abandoned on foreign African airbases.[25]

Table 2: Chart of Biafra Aircraft

Aircraft	Origin	Number	Notes
MFI-9B "Biafra Babies"	Sweden	5(12)	
Douglas B-26 Invader	USA	2(13)	
North American B-25 Mitchell	USA	2(14)	
de Havilland Dove	USA	2(15)	
Fokker F27 Friendship	Netherlands	1(14)	Ex Nigerian Airways and used as an Improvised Bomber.
Douglas DC-3	USA	1(14)	Improvised Bomber.
North American T-6 Texan	USA	4-6	ex-Armee de l'Air.

Source: Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/15/africa/biafra-nigeria-civil-war, Accessed on 22/04/2021

In August 1968, pilot training was started in Biafra under von Rosen's leadership and with one Swedish teacher. Later, in September, Biafran pilots training abroad, for aircraft it was realized would never arrive, were recalled to Biafra to fly the Biafra Babies. 12 T-6s had been purchased, but they were all in bad condition, so only four could be made to fly. During the transit to Biafra, two were lost. The remaining two were used together with the MFI-9s, of which a total of nine were in service.[26] Normal tactic was to begin attack with 4 - 5 aircraft at a time. The unit was kept together approaching the target, with a separation of 50 m or less, as a larger separation would lead to loss of visual contact between the aircraft. The very low flying altitude was necessary to avoid being fired upon, both over the enemy and own territory, it was found. Radio silence was ordered except during the actual attack when target information had to be passed on. The tactic to ensure that a chosen target was destroyed before any remaining rockets were used on other targets was adopted. The rockets were only fired two at a time. Anti-armor rockets were chosen because it was decided that all attacks would primarily be anti-materiel, and only military targets attacked.[27]

THE BIAFRAN NAVY

The Biafra state had a small, improvised navy, which never gained success in providing runway support for its air force. It was headquartered in Kidney Island, Port Harcourt, and was commanded by Winifred Anuku. The Biafran Navy was made up of captured craft, converted tugs, and armored civilian vessels armed with machine guns, or captured 6-pounder guns. It mainly operated in the Niger Delta and along the Niger River.[28]

Table 3: Ships in Service in the Biafran Army

Ship	Origin	Commissioned	Fate	Notes
BNS Vigilance	ex-NNS *Ibadan*	30 May 1967	Sunk on 10 September 1967	Ford-class seaward defense boat
NSS Bonny	ex-HMS *Gifford*	1968	Preserved at the National Nigerian War Museum	Ford-class seaward defense boat
Kwerre	ex-Nigerian port authority tugboat	1967		Armed with a 105mm howitzer
PC101	ex-Nigerian port authority cutter	1968	Lost in July 1968	Armed with a 6-pounder and Bofors gun
PC202	Nigerian tugboat	1968	Lost in July 1968	Armed with a 105mm howitzer

Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/15/africa/biafra-nigeria-civil-war, Accessed on 22/04/2021.

ENLISTMENT AND COMBATANTS IN THE BIAFRAN ARMY

The enlistment of officers and rank and files in the Biafran army was majorly in two folds. While more of the enlistment officers were soldiers with a military background either in the Nigerian army or in other organized military institutions, Biafran foot soldiers were largely recruited from the villages and towns of Igboland. They even included teenagers who served in the Biafran army as child soldiers. Some of the Nigerian Army officers who left the Nigerian army to support the Biafra war effort later returned to the Nigerian army at the end of the war. However, the brilliant performance of these combatants significantly helped the Biafran army in the war that lasted till 1970.[29] Hence, it is expedient for this paper to briefly present a biographical profile of some of the Nigerian soldiers that pulled out to support Ojukwu's breakaway here. These combatants, in no particular order, are as follows:

Ogbugo Kalu

Ogbugo Kalu (died February 2004) was a former army officer who served in both the Nigerian Army and Biafran Army. Kalu was also the commander of the Nigerian Military Training College (NMTC) in Kaduna following the 1966 Nigerian coup d'état. Before Kalu's celebrated career as an officer in the Biafran Army, he had been serving in the Nigerian Army since 1958. After being given formal military training in both Ghana and the United Kingdom, Kalu joined the Biafra Army as a short-service commission officer, a Second Lieutenant, in November 1959. He was later promoted to the rank of Major sometime during the first half of the 1960s. On the night of January 15, 1966, a coup d'état was set in motion by nine Igbo and one Yoruba army officers[30], but was short-lived and quelled within 48 hours by the Igbo Gen. Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi who then assumed total leadership over Nigeria. Gen. Ironsi appointed Major Kalu commandant of the Nigerian Military Training College in Kaduna because its' incumbent commander, Col. Ralph Shodeinde, was assassinated by a detachment of mutinous soldiers led by Major Timothy Onwuatuegwu on the night of the coup. He was appointed Lieutenant Colonel in May 1966.

On July 29, 1966, a second coup d'état took place after a majority of the Nigerian Army led by 32 army officers rose against Ironsi's dictatorship and assassinated him along with several other Igbo officers and politicians. Kalu hosted an early afternoon meeting at his house in Kaduna where he informed several south-eastern officers about the coup and that their lives were in danger, these officers included Lt. Col. Alexander Madiebo, Major Christopher Emelifonwu, Major Ayodele Ogunro, and Maj. Samuel Ogbemudia. After hearing that both Major Emelifonwu and Major Ogunro were murdered by Hausa-Fulani soldiers in Kaduna, Lt. Col. Kalu made his way to a railroad depot where he managed to stow away inside the water tank of a train destined for south-eastern Nigeria. Ogbugo Kalu, who died in February 2004 was a former army officer who served in both the Nigerian Army and Biafran Army. Along with the other commands held, Kalu was made commander of the Biafran 14th Division with a strict order in a letter written to him by Odumegwu Ojukwu. In the letter, Ojukwu stated that: "*Your role in the Port Harcourt disaster is still fresh in the minds of people. You must clear the enemy from Obinze in 24 hours or submit your resignation from the army.*"[31]

Chukwuma K aduna Nzeogwu

Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu was another Nigerian soldier veteran that crossed over into the Biafran army to serve as an officer. Nzeogwu while in the Nigerian army was given the name "Kaduna" by his Hausa colleagues because of his love for the town. He was an ambitious young mili-

tary officer, but this rebellious attitude led to his arrest after a failed plotted coup. After his release in 1967, he was asked to go into battle on the side of the Biafrans where he was promoted to the rank of a Biafran Lt. Colonel, but he got killed in an ambush.[32]

Joseph Achuzie

Joseph Achuzie was a British-trained aeronautical engineer. He was born in 1929 and later earned the nickname "Hannibal." Before joining the Biafran Army in May 1967, Joseph Achuzie was an engineer with the Shell Petroleum Company based in Port Harcourt. He was amongst the founders and organizers of the Civil Militia in Port Harcourt. When that outfit was disbanded, Achuzie joined the Biafran army as a Colonel. He had a British wife and a son as of January 1970. After Biafran soldiers were forced to retreat across the River Niger Bridge into Onitsha on September 20, 1967. Achuzie was promoted to Major and given command of the Biafran 11th Battalion, responsible for defending the area between Atani and Ndoni from an imminent Nigerian attack. After the Biafran 18th Battalion under Colonel Assam Nsudoh was forced to retreat from Onitsha after 8 days of bloody house-to-house fighting, the 11th Battalion under Major Achuzie linked up with the 18th Battalion east of the city and made plans to counter-attack. The 18th Battalion swung south along the Old Market Road while the 11th Battalion under Major Achuzie swung north along the New Market Road in a coordinated Pincer Movement. The majority of the 5,000 men of the Nigerian 2nd Division stationed in Onitsha were either massacred or taken prisoner by Achuzia's men. Two separate counter-attacks were made by the Nigerian 2nd Division in the days following the Biafran assault but were both thwarted by the 11th and 18th Battalions stationed in Onitsha. Achuzia was given total control of the Biafran 11th Division on January 19, 1968, by President Ojukwu once the Nigerian 2nd Division under Murtala Mohammed reached Awka, giving the Nigerians a direct route to Onitsha. The 11th Division under Maj. Achuzie managed to hold off the Nigerians for two months until an offensive launched on March 20 resulted in the Nigerians breaking through the Biafran defensive lines surrounding the city, the final battle would last less than 24 hours. The Nigerians were forced to pay with heavy casualties but they managed to capture Onitsha and forced the Biafran 11th Division to retreat to Nnewi.[33]

Augustine Ifeanyi Aniebo

Colonel Augustine Ifeanyi Aniebo was also one of the Biafran soldiers in 1967. He commanded the Biafran 58 Brigade at Uyo. He was detained by Ojukwu until the end of the war following the fall of Uyo in 1968. He was

the military administrator of Bornu State and retired as a Colonel of the Nigerian Army in 1999.

Chris Ugokwe
Colonel Chris Ugokwe commanded the Biafran 52 Brigade which was stationed in the Owerri sector. He retired as a Lt Col in the Nigerian Army around 1985 and later became chairman of the National Population Commission, Abuja.

Lambert Ihenacho
Lambert Ihenacho is known as a brilliant and resourceful officer in the Nigerian Army. As a Biafran soldier, he commanded the Biafran 63 Brigade in the Owerri sector. And he had the distinction of having held out against all odds for 15 months in the face of furious onslaughts by federal troops. He retired as a full Colonel of the Nigerian Army in the 1980s.

Robert Akonobi
Colonel Robert Akonobi commanded the Biafran 57 Brigade. He rose to the rank of Brigadier General in the Nigerian Army and he retired in the mid-1990s.

Colonel Godfrey Nebo
Colonel Godfrey Nebo was an exceptionally tenacious commander. As a young officer, he commanded the Biafran 54 Brigade stationed at Onitsha. He also saw action in the Port Harcourt sector and ultimately rose to the rank of Colonel in the Nigerian Army, he retired in the 1980s.

Conrad Dibia Nwawo
Nwawo was the most senior officer in the entire people's army of Biafra. He was also one of the most distinguished and highly decorated military officers in the country who died at 92 years of age. Some of the positions he held in the Biafran Army include administrative officer, Biafran Army Headquarters and Commander, 11th and 13th Divisions of the Biafran Army, as well as the guerrilla commando unit.[34]

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu[35] was born in 1933 in Zungeru, a community in the northern part of Nigeria, which was then a colony of Britain. He was the son of Sir Louis Philippe Odumegwu Ojukwu, one of the most successful businessmen among the Ibos, the largest ethnic group in Nigeria. Consequently, the younger Odumegwu Ojukwu received the best education money could buy. His primary education was at a private Catholic school in the Nigerian city of Lagos. Before he was ten years old,

he was enrolled at nearby King's College as the youngest pupil in the institution's history. Two years later, Odumegwu Ojukwu's father transferred him to a school in Surrey, England, called Epson College, to finish secondary studies. Odumegwu Ojukwu had a natural athletic ability and, during his years in England, he honed his skills on the playing field when not attending classes. In school-sponsored sports, he served as captain of the rugby and soccer teams. He also set the All-England Junior record in the discus throw.

In 1952, Odumegwu Ojukwu was admitted to Oxford University. He majored in history, graduating in 1955 with honors. As an undergraduate, Odumegwu Ojukwu continued to pursue his love of athletics while developing outside interests in drama and journalism. He served as a leader in the Oxford branch of the West African Students Union during this time. In addition, he was known for his flashy sports cars, which he frequently drove at high speeds between Oxford and London. It was at Oxford that he met a female law student named Njideka; she eventually became his wife. Colonel Odumegwu-Ojukwu declared Eastern Nigeria a sovereign state to be known as "BIAFRA" after the Nigerian military leadership peace conference hosted by General Joseph Ankrah in January 1967, in Aburi, Ghana. Ojukwu who was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Nigerian Army then became the General of the Biafran army. Despite his breakaway action, Ojukwu was accorded the highest military accolade and a funeral parade in Abuja. Ojukwu died after a brief illness at age 78 in November, 2011.[36]

COMBAT ASSESSMENT OF THE BIAFRAN MILITARY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Fighting started on 6 July 1967, with an artillery barrage against Ogoja, a town near the border with the Northern Region in the northeast corner of Biafra. Here two Federal battalions faced the Biafrans in what Colonel Ojukwu realized was a diversionary attack. The real attack came further west opposite Nsukka, the prosperous market town recently endowed with the University of Nsukka, renamed the University of Biafra.[37] Here the remaining six battalions of the Nigerians were massed on the main axis, and they marched in on 8 July. They advanced four miles and then struck, The Biafrans, with about 3,000 men in arms in that sector against the Nigerians' 6,000, fought back tenaciously with Eastern Nigeria Police 303 rifles, an assortment of Italian, Czech, and German machine pistols, and a sprinkling shower of shotguns. The Nigerians captured the town of Nsukka and then destroyed the university, but could advance further.[38] In Ogoja province, they took Nyonya and Gakem, brought Ogoja into the range of their artillery, and forced the Biafrans to cede the township and

draw up a line of defense along a river south of the town. After two weeks, discomfited by the immobility of their redoubtable infantry, Lagos began to broadcast the fall of numerous Biafran towns to the Federal forces. "To those living in Enugu, it appeared that someone in Lagos was sticking pins at random in a map.[39]

After three weeks, the Nigerians got into trouble when two of their battalions, cut off from the rest, were surrounded and broken up to the east of Nsukka between the main road and the railway line. Two more scratch battalions composed of training staff and trainees were hastily armed and thrown into the Nsukka sector from the Nigerian side. In the air, activity was confined to the exploit of a lone Biafran B-26 American-built Second World Jar bomber piloted by a taciturn Pole who rejoiced in the name of Kamikaze Brown, and to six French-built Alouette helicopters piloted by Biafrans from which they rained hand-grenades and home-made bombs on the Nigerians. On 25 July 1967, the Nigerians staged an unexpected seaborne attack on the island of Bonny, the last piece of land before the open sea far to the south of Port Harcourt. Bonny was the oil-loading terminal for the Shell-BP pipeline from Port Harcourt.[40]

Militarily Bonny was unexploitable, for once warned the Biafrans relentlessly patrolled the waters north of Bonny, and subsequent Nigerian attempts to launch further waterborne attacks northwards onto the mainland around Port Harcourt were beaten back. On August 9, 1967, the Biafrans struck in earnest with a coup that shook observers both in Biafra and Lagos. Starting at dawn, a mobile brigade of 3,000 men they had carefully prepared in secret, swept across the Onitsha Bridge into the Mid-West. In ten hours of daylight, the Region fell, and the towns of Warri, Sapele, the oil center at Ughelli, Agbor, Uromi, Ubiaja, and Benin City were occupied. "Of the small army of the Mid-West nothing was heard; nine out of the eleven senior officers of that army were Ika-Ibos, first cousins to the Ibos of Biafra, and rather than fight they welcomed the Biafran forces."[41] The capture of the Mid-West changed the balance of the war, putting the whole of Nigeria's oil resources under Biafran control, Although she had lost about 500 square miles of her territory in three small sectors at the perimeter, she had captured 20,000 square miles of Nigeria. More importantly, the whole of the Nigerian infantry was miles away opposite Nsukka, with the broad Niger separating them from the road back to the capital and helpless to intervene, for the Biafrans the road to Lagos was open and undefended.

Colonel Ojukwu was trying to convince the non-Ibo majority of the Mid-West that he bore them no harm. "For a week delegation of tribal chiefs, bankers, traders, Chamber of Commerce stalwarts, army officers, and church dignitaries filed into Enugu on an invitation to see the Biafran leader and be reassured. Colonel Ojukwu hoped that the alliance of the

two of the three Southern regions would swing the West into an agreement and force the Federal Government to negotiate.[42] After a week it appeared this was not going to happen, and Colonel Ojukwu gave the order for a further advance westward. On 16 August 1967, the Biafrans reached the Ofusu River Bridge which marked the border with the eastern region. Here there was a brief scrap with Nigerian troops, who then withdrew. The Nigerian soldiers were from the Federal Guard, General Yakubu Gowon's bodyguard of 500 Tivs.

On 11 September 1967, the Nigerians launched a fast attack by boat up the river Orashi towards Oguta, a lakeside town not far from Uli Airport. Unspotted, the boats crossed the lake and the men disembarked. Oguta was still full of people and there was a lot of killing. Nigerians came across the River Niger from the Midwest. Colonel Ojukwu called his commanders and told them to get Oguta back. They did get Oguta but it had a by-product. Some of the Biafran troops there had been taken from the right flank at Umuakpu, and on 13 September a Nigerian patrol probing the flanks discovered the weak spot. An attack was launched that outflanked the defenses and brought the Nigerians to Obinze, ten miles south of Owerri. From there they ran on into the town.[43] In the north, the First Division moved on from Obilagu and captured Oldgwi town. This happened on 1 October and the situation began to change. The arms shippers who had let the Biafrans down over Aba and Owerri had been dismissed and a new air bridge was set up from Libreville, Gabon, Pilots of British, South African, Rhodesian, and French nationality ran it. Acquiring more funds, Colonel Ojukwu gained access to the wider European arms market and greater quantities began to flow in. The Biafrans went on to the counterattack. Williams took over Steiner's position and led two more charges on the city of Onitsha, which was never captured but had the Nigerians sealed within.

However, the Nigerian troops captured the villages of Agolo and Adazi, which threatened the Biafran heartland. The Commandos in the area fought back assisted by the S battalion of infantry. The Nigerians took another beating and retired back to Awka.[44] This recital of events over the eighteen months may seem to give the impression that the Nigerians advanced into Biafra smoothly, but this was not the case. The Nigerian troops met strong resistance from the Biafran military with every inch of advancement they made into Igboland. Sometimes their objectives were reassessed three or four times due to the nature of resistance. The Biafran military at times succeeded in blocking Nigerian troops for months causing a rewrite of their battle plan. This increased Nigeria’s expenditure on ammunition estimated several hundreds of millions of pounds and cost its military loss of several tens of thousands of men.[45] Furthermore, the Biafran army counter-attacked Nigerian troops in Igboland in most sec-

tors, notably at Aba and Owerri. At Aba, Colonel Timothy Onuatuegwu pushed the Federal forces back to the outskirts of the town, then swung his men down the right and left flanks. At Owerri Colonel John Kalu retook 150 square miles of the ground around the town and laid siege.[46] In the final analysis, the Biafra army's combat bravery and the pockets of temporal victories it recorded during Biafra's international conflict with Nigeria despite being outnumbered and outgunned were arguably fired by Igbo epistemological leanings that laud shrewdness and courage over cowardice.

CONCLUSION

The nexus between war and diplomacy played out well in Igboland during the Biafran War. The findings in this paper showed that the Igbo indigenous knowledge system of the delicate balance between war and diplomacy informed the military readiness of the state of Biafra. Igbo epistemology that extolled gallantry in men this paper argued contributed significantly to the formation of the Biafran army. It was the traditional and philosophical rationale for the Biafran war option when diplomacy (dialogue and the Aburi Accord) failed. Therefore, this paper argued that the Biafran army was born as a child of necessity. It emerged as a backup plan and path to securing the lives and properties of the Igbos through the instrument of violent insurgency and secessionism. During the Biafran war, the Biafran army held its own and gave a good account of itself as a force to reckon with. Although the Biafran army the main component of the Biafran military collapsed in 1970; it nonetheless left its permanent mark in the sand of history. Therefore, this paper contends that factoring the nexus between war and diplomacy in statecraft, nation and state-building struggles, and domestic and international crisis management is central to readiness to respond to unforeseen events, goal setting, policy, and strategic planning.

NOTES

1. Breanna V. Kingsley, *The Effects that War Has on Children and Child Soldiers*, (Enugu: Jemezie Associates, 2004), 11.
2. Ibid., 12.
3. Joanna Santa Barbara, *Impact of War on Children and Imperative to End War*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 2001), 3.
4. Christian Kopff, "The Man with Arms" at Aristotle Politics 1.2.1253a34", Society for Classical Studies Available at: https://classicalstudies.org/annual-meeting/145/abstract/-"man-arms"-aristotle-politcs-121253a34 Accessed August 18, 2021.

5. J. Barbara, *Impact of War on Children and Imperative to End War,* p.4.
6. Egbe, Olawari "Civil Wars, Child Soldiers and Post Conflict Peace Building in West Africa", *Women, Identities and Culture* Vol.1, No.1, (2014):19.
7. Ibid.
8. "Analysis of the Situation of Children Affected by Armed Conflict in the Niger Delta and Northern Region of Nigeria: Search for Common Ground in Nigeria, School of International Service, American University Washington DC, July 2012, p. 102.
9. Ibid., 101.
10. Solomon Amiara Amiara, "Nigerian−Biafra War: Re-interrogating Indiscipline and Sabotage among the Biafran Soldiers," *Journal of Political Science and International Relations* Vol.2, No.4, December 2019, 12.
11. Ibid., 12.
12. Interview with Mr. Chigozie Chukuwemeka, 72yrs, Civil Servant, at his residence in Aba, 21st February 2021.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Nzube, A. Chukwuma, "The Nigerian Elites and the Dialectics of Identity Politics in Nigeria: A Discourse on Biafran Agitation," *Africa Political Review*, Vol. 58, No.3, (2017), 45.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Duruji, "Resurgent Ethno-Nationalism and the Renewed Demand for Biafra in South-East Nigeria," 34.
19. Ibid., 35.
20. Eze, "The Indigenous Aliens in Nigeria," 32.
21. Ibid.
22. Gemma Mehmed, *Forgive and Forget? Reconciliation and Memory in Post-Biafra Nigeria*, (London: Veritas Lumen Publishers, 2013), 15.
23. Interview with Chief Okoro Nwafor, 76yrs, retired Biafran soldier, at his Residence in Nnewi, 18th February 2021.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Gideon Uchechukwu Nwafor, "Analysis of Radio Biafra Effectiveness on the Renewed Agitation for the Restoration of Biafra Republic among Listeners in Onitsha Metropolis," *Global Journal of Human Social Sciences Interdisciplinary*, 13(1), (2013): 7.
27. Ibid., p. 9.
28. Idowu Johnson & Azeez Olaniyan, "The Politics of Renewed Quest for a Biafra Republic in Nigeria," *Journal of Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*, Vol.12 No.5, 2002, 11.
29. Ibid., 22.
30. The ten (10) plotters of the 1966 coup in Nigeria were Major Kaduna Nzeogwu (Igbo), Major Timothy Onwuatuegwu (Igbo), Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna (Igbo), Major Chris Anuforo (Igbo), Major Don Okafor (Igbo), Major Adewale Ademoyega (Yoruba), Major Humphrey Chukwuka (Igbo), Captain Emmanuel Nwobosi (Igbo), Captain Ben Gbulie (Igbo), and Captain Ogbu Oji (Igbo). Retrieved from Military Wiki, "1966 Nigerian Coup d'Etat" https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/1966_Nigerian_Coup_d%27%C3%A9tat.
31. Kingsley, *The Effects that War Has on Children and Child Soldiers*, 11.
32. Ibid., 23.
33. Ibid., 24.

34. Solomon Amiara Amiara, "Nigerian−Biafra War: Re-interrogating Indiscipline and Sabotage among the Biafran Soldiers," *Journal of Political Science and International Relations* Vol.2, No.4, December 2019, p. 12.

35. Interview with Tony Ezewanne, 79 years, former Biafra soldier, at his residence in Nnewi, 20th February 2021.

36. Amiara, "Nigerian−Biafra War: Re-interrogating Indiscipline and Sabotage among the Biafran Soldiers, 12.

37. Ibid.

38. Egodi Uchendu, "Recollections of Childhood Experiences during the Nigerian Civil War," *An International Multidisciplinary Journal,* Vol.2, No.33, 2015, p. 2.

39. Ibid.

40. Interview with Chief Emeka Ezeh, 75 years, Chief, at his residence in Nnewi, 20th February 2021.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Interview with, Mrs. Joan Ikechukwu, 68 years, Wife of a former Biafran soldier, at her Residence in Nnewi, 17th February 2021.

44. Ibid.

45. Barbara, *Impact of War on Children and Imperative to End War*), 3.

46. Ibid., 4.

Igbo Studies Review 9, (May 2021): 95-120

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE TO WEALTH–BASED NAMES IN IGBO

CHIAMAKA NGOZI OYEKA

Abstract: Names are linguistic expressions, which reveal much about the bearer but also the culture where the bearer comes from. Considering that Igbo is a patriarchal society, this study aims at examining wealth-based first names, titles, and nicknames for males. The objectives are to explore wealth-based forms, structure, categorization, and meanings. A qualitative approach was adopted in carrying out the study, and primary data were sourced through interviews. Thirty adult men and women from different parts of the Igbo land were purposively sampled and interviewed. The researcher equally relied on her intuitive knowledge of the Igbo language. The Whorfian hypothesis was adopted for the analysis of this work. Findings reveal that most wealth–based names have wealth as the head of phrases or sentences which signifies the importance of wealth to the bearers. Semantically, the names reveal the Igbo philosophy about wealth. This study argues that though it may seem to the uninitiated that the Igbo value wealth above humans based on some of their wealth-based names, the fact is that they are more of name epithets. Additionally, the Igbo believe in acquiring wealth through diligence. They use their wealth to help their community. It is only when one's wealth is used in the right way that it is recognized by the community. The study recommends that the younger generation should take time to study and adapt to the Igbo balanced philosophy on wealth as revealed in the wealth-based names.

Keywords: names, wealth, Igbo, patriarchal society.

INTRODUCTION

THE IGBO PEOPLE ARE AN ETHNIC GROUP IN South Eastern Nigeria. They speak Igbo which includes various ''Igboid'' languages and dialects.[1] Among the Igbo, names are identity markers. A name identifies the bearer. Benjamin Okafo, for instance, argues that "names are inevitable. They are such an important and natural part of life that even animals, especially cats and dogs, are given names and they respond when called."[2] Referring to someone by his or her name is a way of showing him or her respect. Tracing the origin and functions of name, Nwagbara, also avers

Dr. Chiamaka Ngozi Oyeka *teaches at the Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.*

that "naming is probably from the Judeo-Christian perspective, one of humanity's initial accomplishments and one which involved the collaboration of man and God."[3]

Names are very important in life. Names are used to maintain relationships for when one calls another by his or her name; it shows a mark of honor and respect. Calling someone by his or her name is a way of establishing the named personhood. Names, according to Ruth Finnegan, are often used to express ideas, aspirations, sorrows, or philosophical comments.[4] His explanation shows clearly that names are an integral part of a language. Names communicate ideas.

On the importance of names, Derek Alderman cited by Otto Krogseth, summarises that "naming is a powerful vehicle for promoting identification with the past and locating oneself within networks of memory."[5] This assertion drives home a point. Names tell stories. A person can find out things that happened in the past through names. Ngozi Emeka-Nwobia, lends credence to the above assertion by noting that "people attach much importance to names because it reflects the people and reserves the originality of the people's languages."[6] This explanation shows that one can through names understand a group of people, their language and values. The above argument equally stresses strongly, the relationship between language and society. R.A. Hudson posits that "sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society."[7] Sociolinguistics studies the aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, context, the way language is used, and the effects of language use on society. Since names are expressed through language by society, it is very clear that names have to do with sociolinguistics. Austin ascertains that "the way we do things with words is functionally related to the culture of the society."[8] Society expresses its culture through language. Naming is an integral part of a culture, which is expressed through language. Mphande, cited by O. Kọ́mọláfẹ́, observes that "names are the most meaningful lexicon in the vocabulary of any language, and they are an important part of the language inventory."[9]

There is no end to the giving of names in many African societies, so a person can acquire a sizeable collection of names by the time he becomes an old man.[10] Names are classified into different groups such as first names, pet names, nicknames, and surnames.[11] Several works have been done on names in different languages. Mary Seeman's work is a review of two important determinants of naming: the ethnic tradition of the family and the gender of the infant. She concluded that names bear the stamp of the namer's traditions and their hopes for the child. The work also asserts that a name affects the person who bears it.[12] Mandinda Mabuza, whose work is on personal names, throws more light on the effect of names on the bearer. He argues that when one faithfully follows the guidance of

one's name an inexplicable self-fulfillment is acquired. Self-fulfillment is possible only when one keeps away from all that is not in agreement with the predictions made by his or her name.[13]

Names are not without meanings in Igbo society. Discussing Igbo names, C. Nze, submits that "the name a child receives twenty-eight days … after birth is…much more than a label or a mark of a personal identity."[14] Names tell stories in Igbo society. Nze further explains that naming and names are exercises of art. Names express the inner feelings of the Igbo. The feelings are rooted in religious, social, and family upheavals.[15] It is clear from the above explanation that one can access the Igbo language and culture through the Igbo names. Igbo names cannot be fully appreciated without adequate knowledge of the Igbo worldview.[16]

Several works have been done on names in the Igbo language, ranging from first names to pet names, nicknames, and surnames. The present work is on wealth-based names among the Igbo. At the time of this research work, the researcher could not access any comprehensive work on wealth-based names among the Igbo. The only available literature has to do with a compilation of Igbo names and a passive mention of some wealth-based names. This work, therefore, sets out to have an in-depth look at wealth-based names among the Igbo people of Nigeria to find out their forms, structure, categorization, and socio-cultural significance.

METHODOLOGY

The participant observation method was used in this study. The researcher is an Igbo, who grew up in the Igbo community where she had all but one of her academic qualifications. The researcher vividly recalls some firsts and nicknames that have to do with wealth in different Igbo communities where she ran her academic pursuit.

The researcher equally sourced secondary materials that have a compilation of some Igbo names and their meanings. The third method that was used for data collection is a face–to–face and telephone interviews. Thirty adult men and women were purposively sampled and interviewed. The interviewees are from different parts of the Igbo land. They were equally selected without recourse to educational background and occupation. The same set of questions was posed to the participants. The researcher tried to elicit from the interviewees, the Igbo belief in wealth, how the belief is expressed in names, both as personal, title, and nicknames, the effect of such names on the bearers and the Igbo society at large and finally, the attitude of the Igbo towards wealth as expressed in names both in the past and at present. The responses were carefully recorded. The wealth-based names which are in Igbo were translated into the English language. The data is organized under two headings. The

Whorfian hypothesis was used as the theoretical framework for the analyses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, (SWH, hereafter) also known as Whorfianism argues that thoughts and behavior are determined or partially influenced by language. Benjamin Lee Whorf, a student of Edward Sapir, is seen as the primary proponent of the hypothesis. The focus of the theory is on the relationship between language, culture, and worldview. SWH, according to Ayo Olaoye argues that:

> Language is not only socially bound, but culturally bound. Various societies view various aspects of culture differently in other words, a view of the universe differs from society to society. There is therefore an inter-relatedness between culture and worldview. And since language is the primary medium of cultural expression, the worldview and language are therefore inextricably interwoven.[17]

SWH has two versions. The strong and weak versions. The strong version, linguistic determinism, has it that language determines thought, and that linguistic category limit and determine cognitive categories. The weak version, linguistic relativism has it that linguistic category and usage influence thought and certain kinds of non-linguistic behavior.

Linguistic determinism has been widely criticized since it is virtually impossible to test one's worldview without using language. If one is to believe the strong version of linguistic determinism, one also has to agree that thought is not possible without language, which is impossible. Linguistic relativism emphasizes the potential to be influenced rather than unavoidably 'determined' by language. It equally assumes that language is influenced by its user's view of the world. The influence is not ascribed to language, but to the use within a language of one variety rather than another. This work adopts the weaker version of SWH which sees language as something that can affect the mind, thought, and reality. SWH is useful to this study which has to do with wealth-based names among the Igbo. Names reveal much about the culture of a given society, in this case, the Igbo society. Culture is expressed through language. It can therefore be said that society, language, and culture are entwined, and this relationship is the focal point of SWH. The adoption of the weaker version of SWH which is linguistic relativism is because the Igbo believe in the power of names, hence, the saying *aha onye na-edu ya* 'one's name guides him/her'. To the Igbo, one's behavior is affected by his name. It follows that wealth-based names affect both those who were given the names as

their first names, those who adopted it as name epithet and the Igbo society at large.

THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH IN IGBO SOCIETY

One of the major attributes of the Igbo is hard work. The Igbo believe that "*onye chuo, o rie* (when one works, he eats)." For the Igbo man, "*aka aja aja na-ebute ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ* (a person who soils his or her hands with sand will harvest food)." Monday Ọnụkawa, posits that "the Igbo … recognise that it is a virtue to be prosperous and great, and prosperity in the Igbo culture, is a product of hard work and patience."[18] The Igbo do not just acquire wealth for selfish purposes. In this regard, Ebeogu, cited by Ọnụkawa explains:

> an acquired wealth, is not appreciated if used essentially for selfish ends, hence the man of wealth in the Igbo traditional culture is also known as Akụruoụlọ 'Let the wealth be felt at home' an Omenukọ 'He who feeds the community in times of scarcity', or an Ọchịrịọzụọ 'He who undertakes to cater for many people'. It can easily be guessed why this class of people could become very powerful in the society. They are highly respected because of their drive, intelligence, resourcefulness, and philosophy.[19]

Ebeogu's explanation is one of the most revealing. It summarises the purpose of wealth among the Igbo and the benefits both to the one who acquired the wealth and the entire community.

Akụ na Ụba 'Wealth and Prosperity' are the key words in making reference to the wealthy among the Igbo. Also, Chinedum Ọfọmata, explains "*Akụnaụba na-akọwapụta ihe ịdị na gbanyụụ. Nke a pụtara na ihe ndị ọzọ na-achọ achọ nwere ebe o jupụtara* (Wealth and prosperity show a state of one having a surplus. It means that some have an overflow of what others lack)."[20] *Akụnaụba* in the traditional Igbo society refers to a man's family – wives and children – his large expanse of land and cash crops. *Ego* 'Money' in reference to wealth is a recent development among the Igbo. It entered the Igbo vocabulary as a result of contact with the Europeans who do their transactions with money. The above explanation is expedient because the wealth-based names to be discussed are names that have to do with *akụ*, *ụba* and *ego* "wealth, prosperity and money." Ọnụmajụrụ, remarks that "Igbo name is a story, a book or a dictionary itself."[21] The wealth-based names as part of the Igbo story, book and dictionary will tell a documented story and explain the Igbo worldview on wealth.

Men of great honor take titles among the Igbo. Their title names tell the stories of their achievements. Nicknames are also powerful among the

Igbo. Nicknames in Igbo are secondary cultural labels, which can eventually become the nexus of the person's identity.[22] Like title names, the individual or society may choose a name for the person. In most situations where an individual chose his title or nickname, such a one uses the opportunity to tell his own story the way that befits him, express his aspirations and boost his ego if need be. Nze asserts that:

> Often times adults take up names to describe and signify their new circumstances of life. This adoption of names obtains mainly for the purpose of title-taking and individuals employ such adopted names as manifestative of their life history and of the accomplishments.[23]

It is worth noting that a person has the right to accept or reject a nickname from the society, especially when such a name has a negative undertone. In most situations of rejection of names, one's superiors may persist in calling such a one by such names especially when the name has to do with the referent's negative personal attributes. The persistence in calling such a name among the Igbo is not a result of hatred. It is rather based on the belief that such name-calling will make the person feel bad and rethink his character which will lead to a positive change. The following section is an analysis of wealth-based names. The analysis is divided into two sections: wealth-based first names and title/nicknames.

ANALYSIS OF WEALTH-BASED FIRST NAMES

The names below are in sentence forms which shows indeed that they tell stories. It will be observed that in all but two of the names (see list of the entire names below), wealth appears at the sentence-initial, showing its importance both to the giver of the name and the society they belong to.

1. Ụba + bụ + ike
   Prosperity + is + power
   Prosperity is power.

2. Akụchi
   Akụ + chi
   Wealth + personal/guardian spirit
   Wealth from (one's) guardian spirit.

3. Akụudo
   Akụ + udo
   Wealth + peace

Peaceful wealth

4. Ụbaabụnike

Ụba	+ a	+ bụ	+ n	+ ike
Prosperity	+ NEG	+ is	+ Aux	+ force.

Wealth is not by force.

5. Nduụkaakụ

Ndụ	+ ka	+ akụ
Life	+ greater	+ wealth

Life is worth more than wealth.

The first name on the list highlights the advantage of wealth, which is power. The Igbo man values *ụba* which may come in two forms: *ụba mmadụ* (human prosperity) that is, numerical strength or *ụba ihe enweenwe* (material prosperity). The two go hand in hand most of the time. It is numerical strength that brings about material prosperity. More hands on the farms are expected to bring in more harvest. The second name traces the source of wealth to one's guardian spirit. The place of *chi* in the Igbo worldview cannot be overemphasized. The Igbo believe that one's guardian spirit has all it takes to bestow or deny one wealth. The person who gave the name acknowledges the place of *chi* in his wealth. The third name describes the nature of wealth which is a peaceful one. However, the fourth name on the list is a warning that wealth is not by force. All that society expects from an individual is hard work for wealth does not come by force. The last name on the list shows that the Igbo place premium on life over wealth.

WEALTH-BASED TITLE / NICKNAMES

A look at the wealth-based title and nicknames show that fifty-three, which constitute 71% of the names have wealth, money and prosperity at the sentence-initial, showing the value placed on wealth by the individuals and the society at large. The remaining twenty-two names, making up 29% of the names have wealth either in the sentence medial or final (see list 2 for complete details of names under this section).

The stories as revealed in titles and nicknames are subdivided into ten categories. The categories are the following:

1. Benefits of wealth,
2. Measure of wealth,
3. Prayer for wealth,
4. Ideology on wealth,

5. Setbacks of wealth,
6. Limitations of wealth,
7. Things valued above wealth,
8. Sources of wealth,
9. Age and wealth, and
10. Mockery of wealth

Benefits of Wealth

1. Akurienne/Akụhienne (ụmụnna eribe ife)
   Akụ + rie/hie + nne
   Wealth + grow + big
   When there is great wealth (the towns' men will enjoy the wealth)

2. Akụzuoọra (ilo anaa)
   Akụ + zuo + ọra
   Wealth + reach-suff + the masses
   When wealth is evenly distributed in society (enmity goes).

3. Akụnaesiobiike
   Akụ + na-esi + obi + ike
   Wealth + Aux make + heart + confidence.
   Wealth makes one confident.

4. Akụagbazie (ihe na-achọ imebi emebi)
   Akụ + agbazie
   Wealth + PREF – mend
   Wealth has mended (what would have spoilt)

5. Akụbuenwata (Ọ dị ka okenye)
   Akụ + bue + nwata
   Wealth + make big suff + child.
   When wealth makes a child big (He looks like an adult)

The names (1-5) in this category enumerate the advantages of wealth both to the individual and to the community. The advantages include confidence, enjoyment, speedy growth, friendship, and restructuring. For instance, the first name on the list states clearly that when there is great wealth, the kinsmen also reap the dividends. Name 2 serves as a follow-up, by stating that enmity vanishes when wealth is evenly distributed in society. The position is based on the belief that unequal distribution of wealth breeds envy, strife, and enmity. The eighth name shows that wealth makes one confident. One is very sure of sorting out his challenges

and those of the community when he has wealth. Name 4 highlights the power of wealth to restructure what is on the verge of damage. The name shows that wealth has the power to reform situations. The last name in this category points to the fact that wealth can make a young person look like an adult. Wealth can transform the physical appearance of a younger person in some cases by making him look very big and robust and in some other cases by his sitting with older ones and contributing to moving society forward.

MEASURE OR QUANTITY OF WEALTH

1. Akụagwụagwụ
   Akụ + agwụ
   Wealth + NEG-finish
   Inexhaustible wealth

2. Akụnyịlị
   Akụ + nyịlị
   Wealth + inexhaustible
   Inexhaustible wealth

3. Eseluenuego
   Eselu + enu + ego
   1st PER.SG-pick-SUFF+ top + money
   One whose money can never be exhausted.

4. Akụafụlụanya
   Akụ + afụlụ + anya
   Wealth + PRO – see – SUFF + eyes.
   Visible wealth

5. Ezeego
   Eze + ego
   King + money
   Money king

The above names give an insight into different measures of wealth which include surplus, inexhaustible and visible wealth. Names 1 to 3 elucidate wealth as inexhaustible. While the bearers of names 1 and 2 state clearly that their wealth cannot be entirely consumed or used up, the bearer of the third name says the same but in a different way. For name 3, the bearer uses only a little out of his immeasurable wealth to sort out issues. Name 4 illuminates the fact that the bearer's wealth is unlimited, and

the evidence is there for people to see. The last name under this category illuminates the fact that the bearer's wealth is limitless hence the referent as a money king.

PRAYER FOR WEALTH

1. Akụmam
   Akụ + ma + m
   Wealth + know + 1st PER.SG.
   May wealth come my way.

2. Akụkwe (batara m)
   Akụ + kwe
   Wealth + agree.
   May wealth agree (to come to me)

3. Akụbata
   Akụ + bata
   Wealth + enter SUFF
   Wealth come in

4. Akụ/Egoakọnam
   Akụ/Ego + akọna + m
   Wealth/Money + NEG-Scarce-SUFF + 1st PER.SG.
   May I not lack wealth/money

5. Akụmefuna
   Akụ + m + efuna
   Wealth + 1st PER.SG. + NEG-lost-SUF
   May my wealth not get lost

Names under this category are pleas from the bearers to be favored with wealth. Names 1 - 3 underscore a state of insufficiency, hence the plea to be favored with wealth. Name 4 brings to the fore that the bearer already has wealth but prays that he sustains what he has. Name 5, *Akụmefuna,* doubles up both as a prayer for the conservation of one's wealth and also as a mockery for a miser.

IGBO IDEOLOGY ON WEALTH

1. Akụnaeeruteerute

Akụ + na- + erute
Wealth + Aux. + PREF-reach-SUFF
Wealth rotates

2. Akụenwebe
Akụ + enwe + be
Wealth + NEG. own + home
Wealth has no permanent abode

3. Ezudebeego
Ezu + debe + ego
PRE-all + keep + money
It is not everyone that has money

4. Ekejiụba
Eke + ji + ụba
Destiny + hold + prosperity
Destiny determines one's prosperity

5. Egodịnogwu
Ego + dị + n' +ogwu
Money + is + Aux + thorn
Money is found among thorns

The Igbo believe that wealth rotates. It has no permanent abode. The belief is expressed in names 1 and 2. The Igbo admit that it is not everyone that has money as name 3 elucidates. The Igbo believe also that one's destiny is a determinant of how wealthy the person will be as seen in name 4. Finally, name 5 is a warning that one needs to tread carefully while searching for money because it is in thorns.

SETBACKS OF WEALTH

1. Akụbuokwu
Akụ + bu + okwu
Wealth + carry + conflict
One's wealth may be a source of trouble for him

2. Ụbanaeseokwu
Ụba + na-ese+ okwu
Prosperity + Aux.bring + conflict
Prosperity brings conflict.

3. Akụbuiro

Akụ + bu + iro
Wealth + carry + enmity
Wealth brings one's enemies.

Names 1 to 3 roll out the disadvantages of wealth. Wealth sometimes brings in trouble, conflict, and enmity. The setback of wealth is bi-dimensional. There is always strife when the wealthy look down on the poor except the case is handled maturely. For instance, Chinua Achebe, who captures the Igbo society before the advent of the white man, observes thus:

> Everybody at the kindred meeting took sides with Osugo when Okonkwo called him a woman. The oldest man present said sternly that those whose palm kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble. Okonkwo said he was sorry for what he had said, and the meeting continued.[24]

The above excerpt portrays Okonkwo as rich and proud. His looking down on the poor, Osugo, would have brought in serious conflict if not for the intervention of the oldest man in the meeting. There is bound to be a clash of interests whenever the rich treat the poor with contempt. The situation is almost the same when the poor show no respect to the rich. It is based on the above explanations that wealth is said to bring in strife.

LIMITATIONS OF WEALTH

1. Akụejeozi
   Akụ + eje + ozi
   Wealth +NEG.go + errand
   Wealth does not run an errand for one.

2. Akụezumkpa
   Akụ + ezu + mkpa
   Wealth + NEG.-cover + need
   Wealth does not solve all problems

3. Akụezuoke
   Akụ + ezu + oke
   Wealth + NEG. reach + share
   Wealth does not reach everybody

4. Akụakandụ
   Akụ + aka + ndụ
   Wealth + NEG- greater + life
   Wealth is not greater than life

5. Akụegbuọnwụ
   Akụ + egbu + ọnwụ
   Wealth + PREF(NEG) + kill +death
   Wealth cannot stop death

The limitations of wealth are enumerated in names 1-5. These include the inability to run an errand, solve every problem, satisfy every need and destroy death. The Igbo use the first three names on the list to sound a warning on limitations of wealth as well as stress the need for good human relationships. Even in the present dispensation where people hire labor, an Igbo will tell you that *ọrụ e goro ego bụ ọrụ e goro ego* in other words, a laborer can never work to your satisfaction as your honest kinsmen would. Name 4 places longevity above wealth while the last name on the list upholds the need for one to be cautious for wealth does not kill death.

THINGS VALUED ABOVE WEALTH

1. Okwurieakụ (ma ya erina mmadụ)
   Okwu + rie + akụ
   Conflict + eat – SUFF + wealth
   Let conflict consume wealth (but not a person)

2. Mmadụkaakụ
   Mmadụ+ ka + akụ
   People + greater + wealth

3. Eziahakaego
   Ezi + aha + ka + ego
   Good +name + greater + money

The above names show that the Igbo value good human relationships above wealth. Name 1 shows that the Igbo would rather trade their wealth to resolve a conflict in which there is a threat to human life. Value is placed on man rather than wealth in name 2. For name 3, a good name is placed above wealth.

SOURCES OF WEALTH

1. Akụchi/Chukwu

Akụ + chi / Chukwu
Wealth + guardian spirit/God

2. Akụchikwadoro (nyịlị onye anyaụfụ)
   Akụ + chi + kwadoro
   Wealth + guardian spirit + support-SUFF
   Wealth given by God (cannot be stopped by an envious person)

3. Akụnwadike
   Akụ + nwa + dike
   Wealth + child + powerful
   The wealth of a powerful man's child

4. Akụnna
   Akụ + nna
   Wealth + father
   Father's wealth

5. Akụnne
   Akụ + nne
   Wealth + mother
   Mother's wealth

Bearers' sources of wealth are enumerated under this category. Name 1 traces the source of his wealth to his guardian spirit. Monday Onukawa, explains the place of *chi* in Igbo cosmology thus:

> *Chi* is the Igbo 'personal life force, individualized providence, etc. It is a central point in the psychology, thought, and belief of the Igbo. For the Igbo, *Chi* is a very significant ''essence of existence.' They believe that *Chi* is responsible for existence, prosperity, success, failure and that it is indeed the sole controller of the entire life affairs of the people.[25]

The above explanation summarizes the place of *chi* in the Igbo man's life. Name 2 builds on the same belief that the envious cannot destroy wealth from one's personal god. Names 3 to 5 trace the source of wealth to father and mother. The implication is that the parents gave them a good start, not that they boast about their parents' money. A man in the Igbo society is judged according to his worth and not the parents.'

AGE AND WEALTH

1. Akụnwata
   Akụ + nwata
   Wealth + child
   Child's wealth/wealth got at a young age
2. Nwajiakụ
   Nwa + ji +aku
   Child + hold + wealth
   A child that has wealth

3. Nwalupuoakụ
   Nwa + lupuo + akụ
   Child + burst + wealth
   When a child bursts upon wealth

For names 1 - 3, *nwa / nwata* in the context refers to youth. Interviewees reveal that bearers of such names made their wealth at their youthful age. The bearer of the first name under this category states clearly that his wealth was made in his youth. Name 2 establishes the same, that he is wealthy even as a youth. The last name on the list goes a bit further to establish the fact that the wealth he made in his youth is beneficial to others for when a child bursts wealth, it benefits his kinsmen.

MOCKERY OF WEALTH

1. Ọkpa(ego) ataaja
   Ọkpa (ego) + ata + aja
   One who gathers (money) + PREF-eat + sand
   One who gathers money but hardly spends it/stingy person/miser

2. Akụbuụzọ
   Akụ + bu + ụzọ
   Wealth + carry + first
   One who places wealth first

3. Akụatụegwu
   Akụ + atụ + egwu
   Wealth + PREF-carry + fear
   Spend thrift

4. Akụbụlụọnụ

Akụ	+ bụrụlụ	+ ọnụ
Wealth	+ is Pst SUFF	+ mouth

If wealth were just by word of the mouth

Names 1- 4, which form the last category has much more to do with society. The names are given by society to people as a result of their character and attitude towards wealth. It has been stated earlier that most of those who are referred to by such names reject it, but they are still called by such names, especially by their superiors. Name 1 refers to a miser. The referent has money but makes a mockery of himself and his money in that he puts in much effort to make the money but finds it difficult to spend it on himself not to think of society. Name 2 mocks someone who places undue value on wealth. Name 3 refers to a spendthrift while the last name on the list makes a mockery of a person who boasts much about money but has little or nothing. Society uses names in this category to mock extremists on the issue of money.

DISCUSSION

The data is a rich source of information on wealth among the Igbo. The Igbo philosophy on wealth is expressed through the names. Explanations from an oral interview with Hilary Enendu show that 'semantically, wealth-based first names mostly have to do with the Igbo traditional wealth – human beings, and not necessarily material wealth as it literally appears.'[26] The Igbo has it that *onye nwere mmadụ ka onye nwere ego* (He that has human/people surpasses the person that has only money). The value is on human beings not necessarily on materials things, hence *Ụba* in the names *Ụbaka, Ụbabụike* and *Ụbaabụnike* talk about numerical or human increase and not materialism.

It was also revealed through an oral interview with Chinedu Afamefuna, that 'first names tell stories about the families and circumstances surrounding the birth of the child'.[27] He further gave an illustration with the name *Egobuike* was said to be given to the bearer because money sorted a major challenge in the family at the time the child was born. From the above meanings, it is very clear that materialism is far from the meanings of the wealth-based first names.

On the data that has to do with the title and nicknames, names predicated on a measure of wealth top the list by 23%, followed by names that enumerate the advantages of wealth which constitute 21%. The point is clear. The Igbo do not only appreciate the value of wealth but have a strong belief that it is good for one to have an overflow of wealth in order to solve not only one's personal problems but the community's own. The Igbo are not acquainted with begging; therefore, every Igbo aspires to ac-

quire his àkụ̀ by dint of persistent diligence.[28] Every Igbo man's assiduity to get wealth is often misconstrued as materialism but it is not so. Isichei, cited by Ebo Ụbahakwe discloses that "even in such a callous business as warfare, the hired warriors in pre-literate Igbo society maintain that they fought for glory and not for pay."[29] Ụbahakwe, argues that "as modern history and our recent experiences would confirm, a materialist would fight to the last man provided that last man is he!"[30] The explanations clarify the issue of materialism among the Igbo.

SWH argues that language can affect the mind, thought and reality. Wealth-based names affect the mind of the Igbo, and they have proof. For instance, based on the advantages of wealth and the measure of wealth as revealed in names, the Igbo achieve great feat in that the names spur them to work extra hard to make wealth. Ọnwụbiko, posits that:

> The spirit of enterprise has ensured that just forty years after the fratricidal civil war, the people of the southeast have literally rebuilt their cities, towns and villages devastated by that war without any external assistance or financial lifeline… nowhere in the world have a people been able to rebuild their destroyed homelands after warfare without external help.[31]

The above assertion summarises the industriousness of the Igbo man and explains better, what he does with his wealth.

Data reveals that there are more wealth-based titles and nicknames than first names. First names account for only 17% of the entire data while titles and nicknames comprise the remaining 83%. The present result falls in line with Ebo Ụbahakwe's findings.[32] His work on Igbo personal names reveals names that have to do with material assets as second to the last on the list, accounting for only 1.67% of the entire names. The point is that the Igbo man's life is not centred on wealth as many assume. If it were so, first names which serve as windows through which one can view the people's culture would have revealed so. Adiele Afigbo, clarifies that "Igbo society placed a high premium on hard work and so not only valued the hard worker but held him up for admiration."[33] The Igbo encourage and appreciate hard work. They are not interested in materialism but in achievements. The lop-sidedness in the names points the Igbo child to the fact that he needs to work extra hard to achieve something in life and only then can he tell his own story in his chosen style. The Igbo belief in individual hard work is further strengthened by the question *a mụlụ onye na ego?* (Was anyone born with money?) One may argue at this point that some people are born into wealthy families hence the names *Akụnne* and *Akụnna* (father's and mother's wealth). This study reveals the aforementioned names as ones that trace the foundation on which the bearers of the

names built their wealth and not necessarily that the wealth the bearers enjoy is exclusively their parents as the names literally suggest.

The Igbo believe that wealth has no permanent abode, in other words, no one should boast or lament about it. They equally admit that money is a necessity hence the aphorism *Nwoke kpata ego, o rie ụfọdụ, o debe ụfọdụ* 'If a man earns money, let him spend some and keep some." This is not to say that they do not admit the poor among them. The names under the plea to be favored with money buttress the fact that even the poor desire to be financially independent. Nwachukwu-Agbada gives an insight:

> The Igbo person by nature hates to be insulted on account of his or her poverty or low status in life, for it is believed that surplus or penury is written on one's palm by providence (akaraka). One Igbo proverb rhetorically asks: *Ọ kọ m ọnụ ụwa ị jụrụ chi m ajụjụ?* (You who insult me because i am poor, did you try to find out from my guardian spirit why I am made that way?).[34]

The Igbo does everything positively possible to be free from poverty. They do not only plead to be favored with wealth but do the necessary consultations before residing to fate. Chinua Achebe, who unfolds the Igbo way of life before the advent of the white man tells of Unoka, who went to consult *Agbara* because of his poor yield. The answer from Chika, the priestess has it thus:

> You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm. You...are known in all the clan for the weakness of your matchet and your hoe...Go home and work like a man.[35]

Unoka had earlier been described as in his days as "lazy and improvident ...quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow."[36] Unoka's nature did not stop him from doing the necessary consultation. His poverty was because of his laziness. The Igbo understand and acknowledge the place of gods, one's ancestors, his personal god and hard work when it comes to wealth. When the aforementioned is in place and the person is still poor, such is usually excused thus: *O mebere ma chi ekweghị, ụmụnna atala ya ụta* (Let no one blame a hard worker who is not favored by *chi*.) The emphasis here is the person's personal god. It implies that the person is not destined to be rich. What the Igbo abhor is laziness. A traditional Igbo man fits into agriculture, trade, or manufacturing industry. Afigbo asserts that ''each of these three main provinces of economic activity played an important part in the survival of the Igbo as a group and in determining the character and

quality of their culture, even of their religion and cosmology.''[37] Ọfọmata throws more light on why the Igbo abhor laziness by noting that:

> Ha ekwenyeghị n'ịnọ nkịtị. Ha kwenyesiri ike na mmadụ ga-agba mbọ nke ọma tupu ọ kpata ihe ọ ga-eri. Na onye nọrọ nkịtị, agụụ egbuo ya. Ọ bụ nkwenye dị otu a kpatara ndị Igbo ji bụrụ ndị na-arusi ọrụ ike ma bụrụkwa ndị e ji igba mbọ n'ụzọ pụrụ iche were mara (They do not believe in idleness. They strongly believe that one has to work very hard before s/he gets what s/he will eat. That if one is idle, s/he will die of hunger. It is based on this belief that the Igbo are very hardworking, and they are known for their hard work).[38]

The Igbo philosophy on wealth is balanced. They admit clearly, what wealth cannot do. Despite the advantages of wealth, the Igbo sounds a warning on human relationships as wealth cannot solve every challenge a man has nor can it destroy death. The Igbo value good name above wealth, hence the name *Eziahakaego* (good name is better than money). The Igbo equally care to know the source of one's wealth, which accounts for some people making reference to their source in the names they bear such as *Akụchi, Akụnne* and *Akụnna.*

The age at which one acquires wealth matters to the Igbo. For the Igbo, *kama nwoke ga-abụ a ma ama a machaghị amacha, nwoke too ka ụga laa n'ike* (Instead of a man to be inconsequential let him, like the *Ụga palm*, grow fast and depart).[39] The emphasis here is on hard work at one's youth and not one living a complacent stress-free life with the view that such a risk-free way of life will make him live longer. The Igbo see wealth as what one needs to get at a youthful age when he still has the strength, so as to make an impact in the society. They encourage hard work with the saying that: *nwata kwọchaa aka, o soro ọgaranya rie nri* (if a child washed his hands, he would dine with the nobles). For a child to dine with the real nobles of the land, he must follow the right path in his acquisition of wealth. It is here argued that the wealth-based names affect the bearers to continue to work harder to maintain their names. It also encourages the younger ones to work hard so as to tell their own stories. This falls in line with the SWH.

The last set of names summarises the Igbo people's view of wealth. Wealth is meant to be utilized in solving problems, and not be given undue preference. Wealth should also be used judiciously. Finally, the Igbo acknowledge the place of hard work and destiny in wealth making and not just one boasting about wealth that he does not have.

One must admit that there are always exceptions to rules. Some Igbo still go against the Igbo philosophy of making wealth through the right and peaceful means. The Igbo society sees one who acquires wealth through illegal means as aj*ọ nwa si owere ba nne ya afọ* (An evil child who

came into the world mischievously). The person's money is referred to as *ego ọkụ* (hot money) or) *ego ọbara* (blood money), if the money is gained through rituals. It is only the likes of such a person that hail and share in his money, for the Igbo admit that *ọ dị ka ọ dị kpọba, ọ dịka ọ dị egolu, a nọkọọ ka a ha eri udele, a tọtuo ngiga* that is, (birds of the same feather flock together).

CONCLUSION

This study delved into wealth-based names among the Igbo. The general stereotype is that the Igbo have a strong passion for wealth. The study reveals that hard work is what every Igbo man advocates so as to contribute meaningfully to the society. The study also reveals that the Igbo advocate one making wealth at a younger age. Room is equally given to a hard worker whose *chi* does not bestow the favor of wealth on. The place of *chi* in wealth-making serves as a check for every Igbo man to do his part by working hard and leaving the outcome of his hard work to his *chi* who has the final decision.

The limitations of wealth are established in the names. The Igbo philosophies on how wealth should be handled are well expressed in the names. The study argues that the Igbo have a well-balanced philosophy on wealth. There are changes in society concerning wealth-making through dubious means. The changes are global and not peculiar to the Igbo. The younger generation should use wealth-based names as referent points in their pursuit in life as names affect perception.

WEALTH-BASED FIRST NAMES

1. Egobụike
   Money is power
2. Akụbụike
   Wealth is power
3. Ụbabụike
   Prosperity is power
4. Ụbaka
   Prosperity is greater/supreme
5. Ụbadịire
   Prosperity is certain
6. Akụbụude
   Wealth carries fame
7. Akụbụeze
   Wealth is king
8. Akụnna
   Father's wealth

9. Akụchi
   Wealth from (one's) guardian spirit
10. Akụdịnobi
    Wealth is in the homestead
11. Akụudo
    Peaceful wealth
12. Ụbaabụnike
    Wealth is not by force
13. Akụabụnwa
    Wealth is not a child.
14. Ndụkaụba
    Life is greater than prosperity.
15. Ndụkaakụ
    Life is worth more than wealth.

WEALTH-BASED TITLE AND NICKNAMES

1. Akurienne/Akụhienne (ụmụnna eribe ife)
   When there is great wealth (the towns' men will enjoy the wealth)
2. Akụzuoọra (ilo anaa)
   When wealth is evenly distributed in the society (enmity goes).
3. Akụnaesiobiike
   Wealth makes one confident.
4. Akụbụuko
   Wealth is pride/makes one proud.
5. Akụjụobi
   Wealth makes one's heart to be at rest.
6. Akụbụugwu
   Wealth brings prestige.
7. Akụbụuru
   Wealth is advantageous.
8. Akụbuenwata (Ọ dị ka okenye)
   When wealth makes a child big (He looks like an adult)
9. Akụluoụnọ (a malụ onye kpatara ya)
   When wealth reaches the home (the owner is known)
10. Akụbụmmadụ
    Wealth makes a person.
11. Akụagbazie (ihe na-achọ imebi emebi)
    Wealth has mended (what would have spoilt)
12. Akụnaebunwa
    Wealth makes a child great.
13. Akụchieeze
    When wealth is crowned king
14. Akụpuome (e libe ife)

When wealth sprouts (people will enjoy it)

15. Akụbụndụ
Wealth makes one live good life (comfortable)
16. Akụọha
Public wealth
17. Akụamịa
Wealth has flourished.
18. Akụirighiri
Wealth acquired gradually.
19. Akụjiijeabịa
Wealth that walks in slowly
20. Akụnyịlị
Inexhaustible wealth
21. Akụafụlụanya
Visible wealth
22. Akụagwụagwụ
Inexhaustible wealth
23. Akụerika
Surplus wealth
24. Akụakalịa
Surplus wealth
25. Omenụkọakụ
One who feeds the community during scarcity.
26. Ezeego
Money king
27. Eseluenuego
One whose money can never be exhausted.
28. Omeego
One who produces and spreads money.
29. Iteego
Pot of money
30. Akanaemeego
Producer of money
31. Ikpoakụ
Heap of wealth
32. Akụakọ
Wealth + PRE-scarce
33. Ezeerisiakụ
The king's wealth is inexhaustible.
34. Akụmam
May wealth come my way.
35. Akụkwe (batara m)
May wealth agree (to come to me)
36. Akụbata
Wealth come in.

37. Akụ/Egoakọnam
May I not lack wealth/ money?
38. Akụmefuna
May my wealth not get lost.
39. Nwarieakụ
Let my child inherit my wealth.
40. Akụbụrụiche (o nweghị onye ga-atụ m ya)
If wealth were stone, (no one would throw it at me).
41. Akụnaeeruteerute
Wealth rotates.
42. Akụenwebe
Wealth has no permanent abode.
43. Okwubanego (ogbenye eselụ ọnụ)
When money is the subject of discussion (the poor makes no contribution)
44. Ọkụtalụ(akụ)kwe
One who made wealth and owns up he/she did.
45. Ekejiụba
Destiny determines one's prosperity.
46. Igbonaefuruakụ
The Igbo (the world) get lost in search for wealth.
47. Akụkwesịrị
Wealth befits.
48. Ezudebeego
It is not everyone that has money.
49. Anaeriakụ (akụ ana abịa)
When wealth is being consumed (it continues to come)
50. Mbaanaabaraego
To reprimand money (reprimand for money)
51. Egodịnogwu
Money is found among thorns.
52. Akụbuokwu
One's wealth may be a source of trouble for him.
53. Ụbanaeseokwu
Prosperity brings conflict.
54. Akụbuiro
Wealth brings one enemy.
55. Akụejeozi
Wealth does not run an errand for one.
56. Akụezumkpa
Wealth does not solve all problems.
57. Akụezuoke
Wealth does not reach everybody.
58. Akụakandụ
Wealth is not greater than life.

59. Akụegbuọnwụ
Wealth cannot stop death.
60. Okwurieakụ (ma ya erina mmadụ)
Let conflict consume wealth (but not a person)
61. Eziahakaego
Good name is better than money.
62. Mmadụkaakụ
A human being is supreme over wealth.
63. Akụchi/Chukwu
Wealth from the guardian spirit/God
64. Akụnwadike
The wealth of a powerful man's child
65. Akụnne
Mother's wealth
66. Akụnna
Father's wealth
67. Akụchikwadoro (nyịlị onye anyaụfụ)
Wealth given by God (cannot be stopped by an envious person)
68. Ụbasinachi
Prosperity is from one's guardian spirit.
69. Akụnwata
Child's wealth/wealth got at a young age.
70. Nwalupuoakụ
When a child bursts upon wealth
71. Nwajiakụ
A child that has wealth
72. Ọkpa(ego) ataaja
One who gathers money but hardly spends it/stingy person/miser
73. Akụbuụzọ
One who places wealth first.
74. Akụatụegwu
Spend thrift
75. Akụbụlụọnụ
If wealth were just by word of the mouth

NOTES

[1] G. Ugbor, "Using Igbo History and Culture as a Framework for Teaching Igbo Language as a Second Language in Nigeria," *Journal of Nigerian Languages and Culture* 16, no. 2 (2016): 83-118.

[2] B. J. Okafo, "Alor Names: Origin and Meaning," in *Alor: An Anthropological Source Book*, eds. C. Nwajide, A. Afuekwe, A. Okafo, A. Edozie, A. Nwune, E. Mbaekwe & C. Ojukwu (Lagos: ADI, 2011), 35.

[3] A. Nwagbara, "Enactment of Being: The Humanism of Personal Names," in *Re-Visioning Humanistic Studies*, eds. A. Eruvbetine & U. Yakubu (Lagos: African Cultural Institute, 2009), 166.

[4] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[5] O. Krogseth, "Names and Collective Identity," *Names and Identities, Oslo Studies in Language* 4, no. 2 (2012): 161-166, accessed August 1st, 2020, www.journals.u:o.no/osla.

[6] N. Emeka-Nwobịa, "The Sociolinguistics of Afikpo-Igbo Personal Names," in *Issues in Language and Human Development: A Festschrift for Jerome Ikechukwu Okonkwo*, eds. P. Anyanwu and I. Obuasi (Enugu: SAN, 2013), 171-186.

[7] R. A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6.

[8] E. Akpan, "Politeness as an Attitude in Languages: A Case Study of English, Efik and Ibibio," in *Issues in Sociolinguistics: The Nigerian Perspective*, eds. E. Okon and M. Okon (Port-Harcourt: Emhai, 2003), 210.

[9] O. Kọ́mọláfẹ́, "Name 'Customising' among Nigerian Youth and its Implications on Literacy and Culture," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 3, no. 6 (2014): 47-56.

[10] John Mbiti, *African Religious and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969).

[11] Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics,* 5th ed. (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2006); Geraldine Nnamdi-Eruchalu, "Language and Social Identity: The Significance of Sobriquets in Married Igbo Women," in *The Humanities and Nigeria's Democratic Experience*, eds. A. Chiegboka, C. Nwadigwe, and E. Umezinwe (Nimo: Rex, 2009), 416-424; Adaora Anyachebelu, "Patterns of Igbo Spousal Names," *Ihafa: A Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015): 214-227.

[12] Mary Seeman, "Name and Identity," *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 25, no. 2 (1980): 129-136.

[13] Mandinda Mabuza, "Individual Names and Personality: A Consideration of some Beliefs," accessed August 12th, 2017, http://www.gencat.cat doi:10.2436/15.8040.01.86/pdf.

[14] C. Nze, "The Art of Naming Among the Igbo," *Ikenga Journal of African Studies* 6, nos. 1&2 (1984): 47-50.

[15] Nze, "The Art of Naming Among the Igbo," 48.

[16] R. Okafor, L. Emeka, and T. Inyiama, *Igbo Personal and Title Names* (Enugu: New Generation Books, 2008), 24.

[17] Ayo Olaoye, *Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Abuja: Ogunleye, 1998),233.

[18] Monday Ọnụkawa, *Gịnị Bụ Aha Gị: Topical Issues on Personal Naming in the Igbo Society*, 24th Inaugural Lecture (Aba: Abịa State University, 2016), 22.

[19] Ọnụkawa, *Gịnị Bụ Aha Gị*, 22.

[20] Chinedum Ọfọmata, *Omenaala na Ọdịnaala Ndị Igbo* (Enugu: Format, 2012), 301.

[21] V. Ọnụmajụrụ, "A Semantic and Pragmatic Analyses of Igbo Names," *African Research Review* 10, no. 2 (2016): 307-324.

[22] Osita Gerald Nwagbo, "Nicknames among the Igbo: An Ethnolinguistic Approach," in *Igbo Institutions and Leadership*, eds. Gabriella I. Nwaozuzu, Patrick U. Okpoko, Boniface M. Mbah and Ndubuisi O. Ahamefula (Nsukka: Centre for Igbo Studies, (2018), 126-140.

[23] Nze, "The Art of Naming Among the Igbo," 47.

[24] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958), 19.

[25] Monday Ọnụkawa, "KWE – Names and the Complementary Dual Concepts in Igbo," *Igede Igbo* 1, no. 1 (2000): 104.

[26] Interview with Hilary Enendu, Umuoshi, Alor, 20th June 2017.

[27] Interview with Chinedu Afamefuna, Agbor, Alor, 20th June 2017.

[28] Ọnụkawa, "KWE," 105.

[29] Ebo Ụbahakwe, "Culture Content of Igbo Personal Names," in *Igbo Language and Culture*, vol. 2, eds C. Ọgbalụ and E Emenanjọ (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1982), 33.

[30] Ụbahakwe, "Culture Content of Igbo Personal Names," 36.

[31] Chinyere Nnorom and Augustine Agugua, "Malignant Self-Reliance as a Post-Civil War Self-Fulfilling Prophecy among the Igbo," in *Topics in Igbo Economic History,* eds. O. Njoku and O. Iwuagwu (Lagos: First Academic Publishers, 2008), 165.

[32] Ụbahakwe, "Culture Content of Igbo Personal Names," 36.

[33] Adiele Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (Ibadan: University Press, 1981), 128-129.

[34] J. O. J. Nwachukwu-Agbada, "Ịkọ Ọnụ: The Tradition of Poetic Insult among Igbo Children," in *Advances in African Languages, Literatures and Culture Essays in Memory of Nnabuenyi Ugonna*, eds. C. Ogbulogo, P. Ezikeojiaku & O. Alaba (Lagos: Sam Orient, 2001), 177.

[35] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 14.

[36] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 3.

[37] Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand,* 124

[38] Ọfọmata, *Omenaala, 86.*

[39] Nnabuenyi Ugonna, *Mmọnwụ: A Dramatic Tradition of the Igbo* (Lagos: Lagos University Press, 1983).

Igbo Studies Review 9, (May 2021): 121-138

TRACING AN ANCIENT LANDMARK: *ISŪ ỌGWỤ̀ IN* ABATETE

ADAORA LOIS ANYACHEBELU

Abstract: Abatete, a town in Idemili Local Government Area of Anambra State of the Igbo cultural area in Nigeria, like other African traditional communities, engages in various festivals, one of which is the New Yam Festival. Before the commencement of the New Yam Festival, traditional Abatete folks perform Isū isū ọ́gwụ̀ ritual. This study sets out to investigate the processes involved in the performance of isū ọ́gwụ̀; identify the symbolic elements in it and their meanings; the essence of the ritual vis-à-vis the reason for its extinction. The data for this study was obtained through oral interviews. The Symbolist theory was employed in the analysis of the work. Findings reveal that two of the processes involved in isū ọ́gwụ̀ are sacrifices and purification rites, that several symbolic elements abound in isū ọ́gwụ̀; and that the major essence of isū ọ́gwụ̀ is for maintaining peaceful coexistence in the society. The performance is almost extinct due to foreign or outside influences. The study recommends that isū ọ́gwụ̀ should be sustained due to its great essence.

Keywords: Isū ọ́gwụ̀, Abatete, ritual, festivals.

INTRODUCTION

THIS STUDY INVESTIGATES THE PROCESSES INVOLVED in the performance of the ritual practice of *isū ọ́gwụ̀* among the Abatete people as well as analyzes the symbolic elements involved in the ritual practice. *Isū ọ́gwụ̀,* an ancient practice among the Abatete is the rite of purification and absolution before the new yam festival. The ritual of *isū ọ́gwụ̀* and its link to yam cultivation is critical is understanding the importance of agriculture, especially yam cultivation to Igbo life and identity. According to Ndulue (1992: 131), Yam is highly ritualized among the Igbo and the new yam festival 'opens' the door of the New Year. Basden called yam "the Igbo staff of life."[1] He observed that yam "stands for [the Igbo] as the potato does for the typical Irishman."[2] According to Chima Korieh, "The elevation of yam to a high status has its root in the people's agricultural past. Yam defined the agricultural landscape and its cultivation epito-

Dr Adaora Lois Anyachebelu *is a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.*

mized Igbo male achievement and prestige."[3] Ndulue (1992: 131) notes that "No man who attained manhood in Igbo context would 'enter' the New Year and eat new yam without first performing the rite of purification and absolution." This is to make sure that every member of the society is at peace with his/her neighbor, thereby, spiritually clean in readiness for the celebration of the new yam festival 'iri ji ọhụụ'. This is achieved first by offering sacrifice to appease the earth goddess, *ala*. After the sacrifice, the chief priest goes from house to house to all community members who extended invitations to him for the *isu ogwu*. The essence of *isu ̄ọ́gwụ̀* is to make sure that participants in the celebration of the new yam festival are pure and at peace with their fellow human beings.

The rich heritage of African societies is under trait due to several factors including modernization and colonial influences. Some of them have been transformed due to Western influence while others are on their way to extinction. According to Bosade Afolayan, "Africans were seen in the character of a stereotypical and demeaning image. In fact, their cultures were denigrated. This is the situation suffered by almost all the countries in Africa colonized, especially by the British."[4]

In Igbo society, various festivals are carried out at various times in celebration and honor of certain deities and crops. Such festivals include the New Yam Festival, '*Ọfala* Festival', and Ito *ọgbọ* 'Celebration of old age' festival. This study attempts to explore *isu ̄ọ́gwụ̀,* an ancient ritual practice among Abatete people, which is on the verge of extinction due to the influence of the Western way of life that came to muffle the indigenous African way of life. The study also identifies and analyzes the symbolic elements in *isu ̄ọ́gwụ̀ i*n order to bring the essence of the ritual practice to the fore. The data for this study was obtained through oral interviews, library searches and through the intuition of the researcher as an indigene of the town. The symbolist theory was employed in the analysis of the work to aid in the abstraction of the symbols contained in the ritual practice. Without a proper understanding of the symbols in the ritual practice of *isu ̄ọ́gwụ̀,* its essence and significance will not be understood and appreciated, especially in the contemporary time.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

A festival is a special day or period, usually in memory of a religious event, with its own social activities, drinks, dances, food, various cultural displays and activities or ceremonies. Sally Wehmevier defines "festival" as a series of performances of music, plays, films/movies, etc. usually organized in the same place once a year; a series of public events connected with a particular activity or idea.[5] O. A. Akintan perceives festivals as "celebrations of important events in every human society which bring

together people from all walks of life."[6] Traditional festivals most often than not culminate into performances, entertainment, rites, and rituals. Festivals signal times for planting and harvesting crops in many African communities.

Festivals usually take the form of rituals, sacrifices, and ceremonies in traditional African Society. Ritual, on the other hand, is a ceremony or action performed in a customary way that is usually attached to festivals, or religious celebrations. Wilson[7] sees ritual as primarily a religious action directed at securing the blessing of some mystical powers since rituals can happen within the festival. It will not be wrong to say that most of the festivals are heralded by ritual ceremonies. Different communities in Nigeria have different ritual practices attached to some festivals or patterns of worship. That is to say that festivals and rituals are not just undertaken for the mere fun of it. They perform various functions, including symbolic functions as well. This also applies to the traditional Abatete people.

Many traditional rituals and festivals abound in Nigeria, and they include religious festivals, harvest festivals and rituals, installation festivals/rituals, and initiation festivals/rituals. Cultural festivals and rituals are an integral part of the people's culture. It is obvious that a lost culture is a lost history and identity, and a lost identity is a lost society. According to Babs Fafunwa, "History is to a people what memory is to the individual. People with no knowledge of their past would suffer from collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without a guidepost of precedence to shape their course. Only a thorough awareness of their heritage allows them to make their public decision as they make their private ones."[8] If Fafunwa's claim is anything to go by, it becomes very imperative that various cultural rituals, festivals, and ceremonies being held in different societies be documented.

Festivals have always played the role of 'connectors' among people and their culture, heritage, and roots. Most of the African festivals have been in practice for hundreds of years and some of them are still relevant even in contemporary times. Nigeria, with over three hundred ethnic groups, have several traditional festivals that have been in existence for several centuries. For instance, the Eyo festival of the Yoruba, Ojude Oba festival of the Ijebu, and the Durbar festival in the North. The Igbo people also have several festivals including the New Yam Festival, the *Ofala* Festival, the *Mmọnwụ* Festival, the *Ekpe* Festival, and the *Inne* Festival.

Festivals and rituals are parts of the Igbo life; hence most Igbo literary artists allude to them in their literary works. Achebe made mention of the festival of the pumpkin leaves,

> The festival of the pumpkin leaves would fall on the third *Nkwọ* from that day … It was true he named the day for the feast of the pumpkin leaves for the New Yam festival, but he did not choose it …. No! the Chief Priest of *Ụlụ* was more than that, must be more than that if he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival – no planting and no reaping". … "The chief priest approached the part of the circle and says, Great *Ulu* who kills and saves; I implore you to cleanse my household of all defilement. If I have spoken it with my mouth or seen it with my eyes, or if I have heard it with my ears or stepped on it with my foot, or if it has come through my children or my friends or kinsfolk let it follow these leaves.[9]

The above excerpt from Achebe alludes to some of the ritual activities associated with the new yam festival in Igbo society. Furthermore, Obodo referred to Akani celebrated in the land of Okporowo. He explains that Akani is a great festival, which usually takes place in the dry season, during the moonlight. It is the period that every farmer eats out of the best of his/her farm produce. People are expected to maintain peace during the week of Akani.[10]

Scholars have researched different aspects of African festivals and rituals.[11] M. U. Ushe examines the implications of ritual symbolism in the sustenance of culture and meaning in Africa, with a special focus on the Tiv of Northcentral Nigeria. He also discusses certain cultural traits such as festivals, dances, arts and crafts, body decoration and scarification, initiation, and funeral rites. The study concludes that Tiv Ritual Symbolism has both direct and indirect religious meaning on the customs, traditions, language, and beliefs (culture) of the Tiv people.[12]

Ogbenika's explores aspects of social mobilization and festivals in Africa. The main thrust of his study is the reiteration of the importance of festivals to present-day African people and showcasing its relevance to the world at large The study discovered that festivals are not only important for the observation of time, which can be seen in reality through the seasons of the year, but they sometimes serve the function of social mobilization and cohesion. He also notes that festivals serve as entertainment, identification of times and seasons, the celebration of religious ceremonies and rituals, and also promote social cohesion among members of the society. The study, however, notes that the essence of the festivals has been abused by some social deviants in the society on many occasions, although that has not affected its essence in contemporary African society. The study concludes that festivals help to stabilize African traditional societies and ensure the preservation of Africa's well-revered and unique cultural values, wise sayings, proverbs, and folk tales among others[13].

Though different scholars have carried out studies in the area of African festivals and rituals, no study has been carried out in the aspect of the *Isu Ọgwụ* 'ritual practice' in Abatete. Hence, the rationale behind the current study.

ISU ỌGWỤ 'RITUAL PRACTICE IN ABATETE

Abatete, a town in the Idemili Area of Anambra State of the Igbo cultural area in Nigeria, like other African traditional communities, engages in different festivals and rituals as well. However, most of these cultural heritages are becoming extinct due to obvious reasons of outside or foreign influences.

Abatete is one of the nineteen towns in the Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State of Nigeria. south-central of Nigeria. The principal occupation of the Abatete people is subsistence farming, while their secondary occupation includes trading and civil service. Abatete is made up of four major villages namely: Nsukwu, Agbaja, Ọdịda and Ogbu. Each of these villages is also made up of smaller villages respectively. Okoli Otie is believed to be the ancestral father of Abatete. According to Ndulue, Okoli Otie is the ancestral father of Abatete, Umuoji and Nkpor.[14] Following Muoedu,[15] Edeogu being the eldest son and heir to the throne and the residential quarter and the great palace, 'Nnekwu Obi' of Okoli Otie in accordance with customs and tradition was not allocated a residential quarter 'Ani Obi' by his father. He and his family lived with Okoli Otie in the present area of land called Abatete.

One such festival is the New Yam Festival. Before the actual commencement of the New Yam Festival, traditional Abatete folks perform *isu ọ́gwụ̀* ritual. *Isu ọ́gwụ̀* was religiously observed by Abatete indigenes before the advent of Westernization.

Isu ọgwụ is a ritual practice that heralds the harvest season and the new yam celebration amongst Abatete people. Yam is seen as the king of crops in Igbo society. It is the mainstay of the Igbo.[16] Yam as a crop is farmed by men. That is not to say that women are forbidden to engage in the planting of yam in Igbo society. Yam occupies a premier position that highly successful farmers take the title '*Ezeji*' "King of yam," *Obiji*, 'home of yam', and *Diji*, a husband of yams'; that is a person who is renowned for his exploits in yam planting and good harvests.

The importance attached to the successful cropping of yam at Abatete made prominent farmers go to seers at Nenyi, a small village near Anam to read 'Year Cycle'. The 'Year Cycle' tells them in advance if there would be a good distribution of rainfall and abundant harvest that year.[17] Hence the celebration of the New Yam festival in many parts of Igbo land. In Ig-

bo society, the New Yam festival is usually celebrated annually in August after the harvest.

In Igbo, the concept of time, every month is owned by a particular deity. The Igbo calendar has four days – *Eke, Orie, Afọ* and *Nkwọ* making up a week in Igbo society. Seven weeks then make up one month. Thirteen months (one hundred and sixty-four days make one year). There are two divergent views on which month comes first and which follows. Ndulue listed the Igbo lunar month with particular reference to Abatete as tabulated below.[18]

TABLE I: LIST OF IGBO LUNAR MONTHS IN ABATETE

Position of Month	**Name of the Month**	**Activities Carried Out During Each of the Months**
1st Month	*Ufiejịọkụ*	Period for offering thanksgiving to the deity *Ufiejịọkụ* – "*Alụm Mmụọ* New Yam Festival after which new yams are harvested.
2ndMonth	*Ezigwe*	The deity that exercises protective power over Abatete
3rd Month	*Ọmaliko*	*Ọmaliko* deity is the wife of Ezigwe. *Ọmaliko* is more powerful than Ezigwe in her destructive propensities, but both exercise protective power over Abatete. The month is sacred, and it is marked by the roasting of yams. It is observed as a "holy" *month – no quarreling, no fighting, no letting of human blood through the town.*
4th Month	*Ọmaliko Obuikpo*	*Ọmaliko Obuikpo* in another capacity looks after the welfare of women farmers. The main crop cultivated by women is 'Ede' Cocoyam and it is during this month that women celebrate the new yam festival.
5th Month	*Kamanụ*	*Kamanụ* is the deity that protects palm wine tappers. It is celebrated with feasting and drinking.
6th Month	*Olisa*	*Olisa* is another name for *Chukwu* the Supreme Being. This is the month when important titles are taken.
7th Month	*Aja*	The month when sacrifices are made to evil spirits
8th Month	*Ogwugwu*	Female spirits and procreation and rejuvenation. During this month farmlands are prepared for planting.

9th Month	*Eke*	The name of the first spirit that gave the Igbo the names of their market days. It is the month when the cultivation of yams starts in real earnest.
10th Month	*Mmụọ Obodo*	Small spirits, help to look after the town and help with germination.
11th Month	*Afọ 'Ọfọ'*	*Ọfọ* is the material symbol of conscience. It stands for truth, honesty, and fair play. It is dedicated to *Afọ*
12th Month	*Nkwọ Ogu*	*Ogu* stands for equity. It is a female deity, and it always goes hand in hand with *Ọfọ - Ọfọ na Ogu*. It is dedicated to *Nkwọ* the last of the spirits in Igbo days and it means that the Igbo do not deceive in their commercial dealings with others.
13th Month	*Agwụ*	*Agwụ* is the deity that helps native doctors in their search for herbs and cures for illness.

The second school of thought on the categorization of Abatete lunar month is the one identified in Muoedu. According to Muoedu there are thirteen Lunar months in the year.[19] Each month has twenty-eight days. They are presented in the table below.

POSITION OF THE MONTH	NAME OF THE MONTH	ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT DURING EACH OF THE MONTH
1st Month	*Ọnwa Eke*	The year starts with the appearance of the moon called *Ọnwa Eke*. The moon appears within the second week in January. Festival marking it is the cooking of cocoyam by Idol priests *Ndị Eze Mmụọ* in their respective shrines or *obi*s. Feasting and merriments and display of various masquerade grace the occasion. The significance of this festival is to remind the community that planting season has arrived.
2nd Month	*Ọnwa Mụọ Obodo*	This month is filled with festivals celebrated by villages and wards respectively at different dates.
3rd Month	*Ọnwa Afọ*	the month of celebration of the *Afọ* market.
4th Month	*Ọnwa Nkwọ* or *Ọnwa Ọmaliko Ọkọchị*	The festival marking the appearance of this moon is celebrated in Nsukwu and Agbaja villages.
5th Month	*Ọnwa Ọmaliko*	On the appearance of the moon known as *Ọnwa Ọmaliko*, planting

		season ends throughout the town.
6th Month	*Ọnwa Kamanụ*	In this month, the palm wine tappers in Abatete celebrate the anniversary of the palm wine tapping knife (*Mma Nkwụ*)
7th Month	*Ọnwa Agwụ* or *Ọnwa Ịgbakwụ Afa*	This anniversary is celebrated by members of Agwụ society, native doctors, soothsayers and fortune tellers throughout Abatete.
8th Month	*Ọnwa Alọ Mmụọ* (*Ịwaji*)	This is the month in which *Isu Ọgwụ* is observed.
9th Month	*Ọnwa Ọmaliko Udummili*	The appearance of this moon signifies the wrestling period in Abatete.
10th Month	*Ọnwa Ọmaliko Obuikpo*	*Ọnwa Ọmaliko Obuikpo*
11th Month	*Ọnwa Nnema* or Ọnwa Ọzọ	This is the month in which the cocoyam festival is celebrated and *ọzọ* title initiation.
12th Month	*Ọnwa Aja*	The month of sacrifice.
13th Month	*Ọnwa Ogwugwu*	This is the last month of the year. On the appearance of this moon, the houses of priests (*Ezeogwugwu*) are thronged by worshippers who offer sacrifices to *ogwugwu* goddess in appreciation of many good things. All men and women who are reincarnated of *ogwugwu* goddess are duty-bound to offer yearly sacrifices.

An interview with Chinwe Akụdụ, reveals that the lunar months outlined above incorporate the calendar of the entire Igbo society, while Mouedu's own is peculiar to Abatete as a town.[20]

In Igbo society, some festivals are carried out before the New Yam Festival or before the planting season. Achebe talks about the feast of the 'Pumpkin Leaves' marking the beginning of the planting season and the 'New Yam feast which marks the beginning of the harvest season. Achebe[21] also talks about the week of peace. "You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth, we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbor. We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess of the earth; without whose blessing our crops will not grow." Achebe goes further to explain that "The feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honor the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan."[22]

Isu ọgwụ is a form of sacrifice that purifies the soul and body ready for the celebration of the new yam festival of *Iwa ji* 'new yam celebration' Muoedu.[23]

Yam is held in such high regard in Igboland at large and in Abatete in particular and the new yam festival 'opens' the door of the New Year; that no Igbo who attained manhood in the Igbo context would 'enter' the New Year and eat new yam without first performing the rite of purification and absolution. That rite transforms him into a state of 'holiness' before they celebrate the New Yam Festival. That rite is called *Isu Ọgwụ* 'ritual practice' Ndulue.[24]

Every adult male who took part in wars and or participated in all the other exploits of male adulthood usually performed *Isu Ọgwụ* 'ritual practice' rite before he eats new yam every year. According to an interview with Ichie Ọkaka, the sacrifice is performed in the following order: Aged men followed by any person old or young, who intentionally or by mistake committed murder and then followed by any person, old or young, who intentionally or by mistake set residential houses ablaze. According to Ichie Ọkaka[25], the aged women are to perform the sacrifice before or after the new yam festival.

The *Isu Ọgwụ* ceremony is the time of the year when an Abatete man is purged of his sins in the Igbo traditional religious way. This ceremony is rooted in the belief that *Chineke,* 'the creator' is the source of all life and the giver of everything. They believe that it is a supernatural God that grants them the grace to be alive to complete the year cycle. They are also of the belief, that *ala*, the goddess of land gave the Igbo the king of crops – yam. Therefore, every adult male worthy of his manhood needed to be sanctified before he eats New Yam which ushers in the New Year. According to Ndulue, "An adult male worthy of his manhood in the Igbo context, must be an achiever."[26] This is because the Igbo believe in hard work. Some of their Igbo maxims are pointers to the above claim. Some of them include: '*aka aja aja na-ebute ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ*' 'Dusty hands give rise to oily mouth', meaning that hard work leads to a good harvest. *Nwata kwọchaa aka, o soro ọgaranya rie nri* 'If a child washes his hand clean, he will dine with the elders' and *nkụ onye kpara n'ọkọchị ka ọ na-anya n'udummiri* 'The firewoods which a person gathers in the dry season are the firewoods that that person will make use of in the rainy season.' All the above proverbs point to the importance of hard work, and the need for hard work. The Igbo do not believe in laziness; hence they do not encourage begging. Individual achievements are to be encouraged and admired because it contributes to the upliftment of the existential status of the community.

A non-achiever is regarded as *akarogoli* 'non-entity/riffraff.' A non-achiever is not expected to perform the *isu ọgwụ* rite. *Isu Ọgwụ* 'ritual prac-

tice' is performed at Abatete, for eight days (two native weeks before the celebration of the new yam festival).

THE PERFORMANCE OF *ISU ỌGWỤ*

Isu ogwu 'ritual practice' is performed by the chief priest. Before the commencement of the new yam ceremony proper, the chief priest is expected to conduct a particular sacrifice, to appease the earth goddess--land, *ala*. After the sacrifice, the chief priest goes from house to house to all community members who extended invitations to him for the *isu ogwu*. This is because the *isu Ọgwụ* 'ritual practice' is conducted on an individual basis. The chief priest carries a basket along as he goes. This basket is called *Ụkpa Ekwensu* 'basket.' *Ekwensu* in Igbo belief is not a devil; it is a deity that possesses both good and non-virtuous potencies depending on what one wants. Hence the morphological components: *E+kwe+n+su.*

E = one (impersonal pronoun)
Kwe = agree/accept/allows (consents)
Su = occurs/takes place/takes effect. If put together then, *ekwensu* means 'if one consent (good or bad), it takes place.

This basket, which is usually carried on the shoulder by the chief priest, contains various kinds of herbal roots, leaves, and bones of animals and birds. These items are symbolic. The contents of the *Ụkpa Ekwensu* 'satan's basket' include – *Mkpọlọgwụ Ngwu* 'the root of a very strong tree that is not easy to break, *Mkpọlọgwụ Ike* 'the root of a very strong tree that is not easy to break, *Mkpọlọgwụ Gbachili ụzọ,* 'the root of a tree that forms major obstructions across any foot path', *Mkpọlọgwu Ọkwalenwe* 'the root of a very tall slippery tree very difficult to climb not even by monkeys', *Ọkpụkpụ Agụ* 'Leopard's bones', *Ọkpụkpụ Enyi,* 'Elephant's bones', and *Ọkpụkpụ Ugo,* 'Eagle's bones' and some other herbal ingredients. (The essences of these materials are discussed in the last section of this work.)

As the chief priest arrives at the house of any participant to engage in the *isu ọgwụ* 'ritual practice', the person is required to provide certain items, which includes: *nzu* 'kaolin', *ọmụnkwụ* 'very tender oil palm fronds, *akwụkwọ abọsị* 'abọsị leaves', *ushe* 'native cosmetic', *ọkwa* 'small mortar and *ọjị* 'kola nut'.

The preferred *ọkwa* 'mortar' for *isu ọgwụ* is a newly carved one. Where it has already been used, it iṣ to be thoroughly washed to get rid of any trace of palm oil. It is believed that palm oil is a powerful antidote to any strong traditional medicine. The chief priest will collect the items and put them into the *ọkwa* 'mortar.' He will also open his *Ụkpa Ekwensu* 'ekwnsu's basket' and begin to bring out the herbal roots, leaves, and bones one after

another. When he brings out any of the items, he would call it by its name and scrape a small portion of it into the *ọkwa.* He adds all to ensure proper blending. He will pound all the contents together. Once a person undergoes *isu ọgwụ,* it is believed that the person is already purified. As the chief priest pounds the contents in the *ọkwa* 'mortar', he invites the person undergoing the cleansing to sit on a small stool. The chief priest will bring out four seeds of *ose ọji* 'alligator pepper' from his *Ụkpa Ekwensu'* puts them on the open right-hand palm of the person undergoing the absolution. The chief priest goes on to dab the pounded herbal roots, leaves, and bones on the forehead, chest, shoulders, and back of that person. After that, the chief priest will say to the person undergoing the process of cleansing, *a wụo m gị arụ* 'I have bathed you'. The chief priest will, at this juncture, put some portions of the pounded herbal mixture into his (chief priest's) mouth and tells him/her that he is about to actualize the cleansing processes, *ịgba ya ọgwụ*. 'He is about to administer some medicine on the person.' The person will give his/her consent aloud before the chief priest proceeds. The chief priest will then spit the herbal mixture on the forehead, chest, shoulder and neck of that person. After this, the chief priest will make the following incantation:

Ekwensu mbụ	'Ekwensu one
Ekwensu ịbọ	'Ekwensu two
Ekwensu ịtọ	'Ekwensu three.

The chief priest then says to the person, *bụchapụ* and 'spit out a shower of saliva'.

The chief priest then continue with the following utterances:
Ma ị gbuu n'agha,
ma ị gbuu na mbelede,
ma ị tọgbulu atọgbu,
ma ị zọgbulu azọgbu,
ma ị nyegbulu enyegbu,
ma ị gbuu n'anyasị,
mọbụ n'efifie,
mọbụ n'ụtụtụ;
ma ị netaa n'anya,
ma ị metalụ emeta,
ma I kwutee n'okwu,
ma ị chetaa n'echiche;
ma ị lọlụ ajọ nlọ
n'uchichi mọbụ n'efifie;
ihe ndị a gụpụtara,

ma i mere ya n'ụbọsị Eke,
mọbụ n'ụbọsị Olie,
mọbụ n'ụbọsị Afọ,
mọbụ n'ụbọsị Nkwọ,
agwala m Ekwensu
ka o kpochapụ faoo. Ndulue[27]

Whether you killed at battle or whether you killed accidentally
or by kidnapping
or by mysterious powers
or by poisoning.
whether it was at night
or by day or in the morning.
whether you were covetous,
or committed the offense by spoken word,
or by action,
or by thought.
whether you had a bad dream tonight
or by day.
all these offenses whether
you committed them on an *Eke* day
or *Orie* day or *Afọ* day or *Nkwọ* day,
I exorcise the devil
to cleanse you of them
and absolve you from them.

The rhythm of the above incantation is occasioned by syntactic parallelism except for lines 14, 15, 20 and 21. The use of dialect are also evident, as could be seen below: n'efifie instead of n'ehihie, 'in the afternoon'; *ị lọlụ ajọ nlọ,* instead of *ị rọro ajọ nrọ*, 'you had a bad dream';*ma ị netaa n'anya instead of ma ị letara n'anya,* 'whether it was through your sight'*; ụbọsị* instead of *ụbọchị* 'day'*; and Olie instead of Orie*, 'Igbo market day.'

Furthermore, the few offenses that are being enumerated by the chief priest represent any likely offense or sin that the person being absolved might have committed, knowingly or unknowingly.

The chief priest then puts the *abọsị* leaves tied in an oblong position across the mouth of the person being absolved of his/her sins and tells him/her to listen while the chief priest continues with the following *ogholi* 'sins committed' incantation:

Ogholi mbụ,
Ogholi ịbọ,
Ogholi ịtọ,

Ogholi ịnọ,
Ogholi ise,
Ogholi isii,
Ogholi ịsaa,
Ogholi ịsatọ,
Ogholi itenanị
Sins committed unintentionally one.
Sins committed unintentionally two.
Sins committed unintentionally three.
Sins committed unintentionally four.
Sins committed unintentionally five.
Sins committed unintentionally six.
Sins committed unintentionally seven.
Sins committed unintentionally eight.
Sins committed unintentionally nine.

Ogholi means sins committed by the person being absolved unknowingly or unintentionally, such as if that person saw a widow on the way after 6:30 p.m. when cocks had gone to roost or ate any food prepared or served by a woman in menstrual period. This is because, in Abatete, widows are regarded as unclean, hence, they are forbidden from touching anything that would be eaten by men. They are equally not permitted to leave their homes once it is around 6: 30 p.m. because such would be regarded as unclean.

At the end of the above incantations, the chief priest tells the person being absolved to bring one yam and one cock. The yam is pealed on one side from the head of the yam to the tail. The chief priest spreads white powder, kaolin *nzu,* on the pealed part of the yam. The chief priest cuts open the neck of the cock with his thumbnail. The cock is neither strangulated nor killed with any other sharp object. The speed with which the chief priest uses his thumbnail to kill the cock is the same speed as when a knife is used in killing the cock.

The chief priest at this point collects another *nzu,* 'kaolin' with which he draws a straight line across the door through which he came in. The line drawn symbolizes a demarcation between good and evil. This implies that the person has translated from evil to good. The person is then absolved, sanctified, and purified based on Abatete traditional belief.

The essence of this ceremony hinges on the fact that *Ekwensu,* in Igbo belief, is not a devil, but rather a deity, which possesses both good and non-virtuous potencies depending on what one wants. Hence, if one believes that he can absolve him or her from evil, it becomes effective. *Ekwensu* is a motive spirit whose course could be directed towards virtuous intent or non-virtuous intent. It is the belief of the Igbo people that

Ekwensu aids the living either to do good or to do evil. Hence, it is this deity alone which has the potency to do evil that can also absolve an evildoer from what he/she has committed against the earth deity, *ala*. This confirms what Fred M. Vinson in Alily 2000 says, that "what man has made, man can change." Hence, what *Ekwensu* has done, *Ekwensu* can actually change. This is because evil is not endued by man, rather by *Ekwensu*. This contradicts the Christian belief, which holds that the power to absolve sin, entirely, rests with God.

The cock used for the ceremony is then cooked by the person being absolved from sin. Nobody is permitted to cook it for him or to partake of the meat. He eats it alone. He uses the pounded herbal roots, leaves, and bones as an ingredient for cooking the cook. After the celebrant had eaten the cook, he becomes 'holy' to join in the celebration of the new yam festival.

On the morning of the New Yam Festival proper, as a follow-up to the *isu ọgwụ* 'ritual practice' so as to enable people to start the New Yam Festival in a holy state, very young boys below the age of nine years old, goes from house to house to ward off any traces of any evil that might still be lingering behind a person's '*obi'*, a house belonging to the man of the house after the *isu ọgwụ* ritual rite had been carried out.

The young boys go to the person's *obi* with *ọmụmụ*, a 'preparation in egg shape.' When they get there, they will roll the *ọmụmụ* on the four walls and the floor of the person's house, and then on the seats. As they do this they utter the following incantation *'kpashi, kpashi*, 'exorcising the devil to cleanse the man and his household of any traces of evil.' At the end of the final cleansing exercise, the person gives the young boys yam.

The cooking and pounding of yam are symbolic of transformation from one realm (in this case, the realm of sin and impurity) to another realm (the realm of purity). The man being absolved is then clean to partake in the New Yam festival.

SYMBOLIST THEORY AND THE SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF *ISU ỌGWỤ*

Symbol refers to a concrete or familiar idea, story, action, character, convention, or an object that is used in reference to, or as an explanation of, an abstract idea or a less familiar object or event. Firth sees symbolism as "a component of human culture, with language as its prototype." Symbolism can be seen as the art of expressing ideas by suggesting what the ideas are, through their recreation in the mind of the audience through some symbols. The symbolists hold the view that ideas or concepts should not be

described directly but rather that they should be explained with concrete images.

Firth and Preminger[28] are of the view that symbolists operate on the principle that the power of word goes far beyond ordinary denotative verbal limits through suggestive developments in syntax and interrelated images and what they termed the 'phonetic symbol.'[29]

Kottak, on the essence of symbolization, maintained that "Although other animals learn, only humans have cultural learning, dependent on symbols. Humans think symbolically-arbitrarily bestowing meaning on things and events. By convention, a symbol stands for something with which it has no necessary or natural relation. Symbols have special meaning for people who share memories, values, and beliefs because of common enculturation.[30]"

For Cohen, symbols are a metaphysical and religious activity involving signs to arouse emotion and conflicting desires in human beings for the purpose of social integration and dramatization of values in the society.[31] Symbolic expressions give meaning and add value to things that otherwise, are inexpressible in the community.

Symbolists are of the view that there is a kind of inherent and systematic analogy between the human mind and the outer world, and also between the natural and the spiritual worlds. Hence, the items used for the *Isu ọgwụ* are very symbolic; in that beyond their physical representation, they stand for certain beliefs and things among Abatete people.

It then follows that beyond the physical activities carried out by the Chief priest that *Isu ọgwụ* and the items utilized are very symbolic in the above-named society. They appear in the form of ritual symbols.

Ritual symbolism abounds in African traditional society which is an important aspect of traditional religion. It is a religious action or channel which gives meaning to beliefs, customs, traditions, ideas, and practices in the society.[32]

Isu ogwu 'ritual practice' is not performed in Abatete, just for the mere fun of it. It has some symbolic implications. *Isu ogwu* 'ritual practice' symbolizes absolution, cleanliness, purification, and freedom from all defilement. It is symbolic of inner purging, sanctification and cleansing.

It is the belief of Abetete people that any full-grown man that eats the yam in defilement will meet with some evil; hence the need for *Isu ogwu* 'ritual practice.'

The items used in *Isu ọgwụ* are also very symbolic. *Ụkpa Ekwensu 'Ekwensu's* bascket' that is carried by the chief priest symbolizes transference of evils and wickedness that are perpetuated by people from the offenders to the chief priest for absolution. Some of the content of the basket carried by the *dibia* 'medicine man' are also symbolic as seen below:

Mkpọlọgwụ Ngwu, 'the root of a very strong tree that is not easy to break', alludes to the fact that money and power are the root of all evil, such as snatching of a person's wife, killing or other evil vices.

Mkpọlọgwụ Ike, 'the root of a very strong tree that is not easy to break', *Mkpọlọgwụ Gbachiliụzọ*, 'the root of a tree that forms major obstruction across any foot path' is symbolic of a stumbling block to one receiving his cleansing; *Mkpọlọgwu Ọkwalenwe*,'the root of a very tall slippery tree very difficult to climb not even by monkeys,' symbolizes a kind of inhibition or an impediment to one's attainment of higher status in life. *Ọkpụkpụ Agụ*, 'Leopard bones', is symbolic of terrestrial or land predators. *Ọkpụkpụ Enyi*, 'Elephant' bone', is symbolic of oppression, while *Ọkpụkpụ Ugo*, 'the Eagle's bone, is symbolic of air predators.

The items to be presented to the chief priest by the person being absolved is also very symbolic. *Nzu*, 'white chalk' is symbolic of peace as the essence of *Isu ọgwụ* is to restore peace between the individual and his fellow humans as well as his creator. *Ọmụnkwụ*, 'very tender oil palm fronds' and *akwụkwọ abọsị 'abọsị* leaves' are symbolic of the seriousness and sacredness of the *Isu ọgwụ*. *Ọkwa*, 'small mortar symbolizes crushing to death of all the evils committed by the person that is being absolved. *Ushe*, 'native cosmetic' and *ọji*, 'kola nuts', are symbolic of newness, beautification and peace that comes to the person after the absolution.

The pounding of the various elements during the period of *isu ọgwụ* stands for unity. While the chief priest in inviting the person undergoing the cleansing to sit on a small stool as he pounds the contents in the *ọkwa* 'mortar', is symbolic of the willingness of the person being absolved to undergo the process of *isu ọgwụ*.

The utterance of the chief priest to the person undergoing the process of cleansing *a wụo m gị arụ*, 'I have bathed you,' symbolizes inner cleansing.

Ekwensu mbụ	'Ekwensu one
Ekwensu ịbọ	'Ekwensu two
Ekwensu ịtọ	'Ekwensu three.

The above incantation, being made thrice by the chief, stands for perfection and completeness. Whereas the utterance, *bụ chapụ* 'spit out a shower of saliva', signifies rejection of his old evil way of life.

CONCLUSION

This paper takes a look at *isu ọgwụ* 'ritual practice' in Abatete as one of the means through which members of Abatete society are purified. This ritual makes for mutual co-existence as everyone strives to maintain good conduct in the society to avoid partaking in the ritual process. This ritual prac-

tice, due to the influence of Westernization, and also due to the fact that women do not generally partake in the practice, has almost gone extinct. This study is carried out as one of the means of documenting this very important ritual practice, especially for consumption by the younger members of the society who may never have the opportunity to experience it.

Most Igbo rituals and festivals are attempts at sustaining and maintaining peaceful co-existence in society as it was in the primordial era; hence, this paper recommends, therefore that every effort should be made at documenting all known Igbo festivals and rituals as this will save them from imminent extinction.

NOTE

[1] See George Thomas Basden, *Niger Ibos: A Description of the Primitive Life, Customs and Animistic Beliefs of the Ibo People of Nigeria by One Who, for Thirty-five years, Enjoyed the Privilege of their Intimate Confidence and Friendship* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 389-390. Cited in Chima J. Korieh, "Yam is King! But Cassava is the Mother of all Crops: Farming, Culture, and Identity in Igbo Agrarian Economy," *Dialectical Anthropology* (2007) 31: 221-232

[2] Basden, *Niger Ibos,* 389-390, 394

[3] Korieh, "Yam is King! But Cassava is the Mother of all Crops," 222.

[4] Bosade F. Afolayan, "New Toyi-Toyi" Troop: Chinyere Okafor and the Redemption of the African Society, *Ihafa: Journal of African Studies,* 6 (1) (2014): 95-116.

[5] Sally Wehmevier, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (9th Edition), (New York: Oxford Press, 2008).

[6] O. A. Akintan, "Traditional Religious Festivals and Modernity: A Case study of Female-Oriented Cults Annual Festivals," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3 (9) (2013):140-1162.

[7] M. Wilson, *Religion and the Transformation of the Society: A Study in Social Change*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[8] Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: George and Unwin, 1974), 89.

[9] Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (London: Heinemann,1964), 50-51.

[10] N. B. Obodo, *Uwadiegwu*, (Enugwu: Longman, 1980), 19.

[11] See for example, M. E. Zuese, *Ritual Customs: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*. Ohio: UP Athens Publishers, 1979, Okoli, "The Influence of Christian Religion on Nsukka Traditional Practices." *Nsukka Journal of Religious Studies (NJRS).* Vol. 2 (1) (2008): 47-58; Bentina AlawariMathias, "Socio-Religious Significance of Ikoro and Ekpe Festivals in Akwete Ndoki Community of Abia State, Nigeria," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 4, (5) 2014; Ogwezzy-Ndisika & Faustino, Extra-Mundane Communication: Insights from Festivals and Carnivals, in *Culture and Customs of the Yorùbá,* Toyin Falola & Akintunde Akinyemi (eds.), (Austin, Texas: Pan-African University Press, 2017), 339-353.

[12] M. U. Ushe, "Implications of Ritual Symbolism in Sustenance of Culture and Meaning in Nigeria: a Case Study of Tiv in North Central Nigeria," *Journal of Communication and Culture: International Perspective* 2 (3) (2011): 30-40.

[13] Gregory E. N. Ogbenika, "Festivals in Africa and Social Mobilization," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* IV (III) 2020: 291-295. Festivals in Africa and Social Mobilization (rsisinternational.org)

[14] Ndulue, *Abatete: Political and Economic History,* 23.

[15] O. M. O Muoedu, *Abatete Cultural Heritage*: *A Magazine of Abatete Development Organization*, (n.d: 6.

[16] G. T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria (*London: Frank and Company, 1966), 98.

[17] Ndulue, *Abatete: political and Economic History,*131.

[18] Ndulue, *Abatete: political and Economic History,*138-40.

[19] Muoedu, *Abatete Cultural Heritage*, 25-28.

[20] Oral interview with a seventy-two year old Mrs. Chinwe Akụdụ from Abatete.

[21] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958), 24-25.

[22] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart.* 29.

[23] Muoedu, *Abatete Cultural Heritage* 27.

[24] Ndulue, *Abatete: political and Economic History,*131.

[25] Oral interview with Ichie Ọkaka.

[26] Ndulue, *Abatete: political and Economic History* 132,

[27] Ndulue, *Abatete: political and Economic History* 134.

[28] Preminger, *Enlarged edition of Princeton Encyclopedia,* 836.

[29] Raymond Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, (London: Watts, 1956).

[30] C. P. Kottak, *Cultural Anthropology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002), 77.

[31] D. A. Cohen, *The Circle of Life: Rituals from the Human Family,* (Album. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publications, 1991).

[32] Firth, *Symbols: public and private,* 127.