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The Threatening Annihilation of Core Igbo Culture: Predominant Causes and Suggestive Remedies

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Abstract

There is almost no more culture in Igboland. The Igbo as an ethnic group, had very strong and enviable peculiarity of culture, but now, have adulteration, as matter of fact, confusion of culture. The unique culture that informed and reflected in all they did, is currently calling for a yet-to-be-manufactured magnifying lens, to ascertain the existence of what could be called, the pure Igbo culture or none. This study which is a probe into the reasons for the quagmire, made use of published books, materials available online and personal observation, to approach the inquiry. It was vividly discovered during the research that Christianity which was the religion the western colonial masters came in with, went a long way to condemn the prevailing culture of the ethnic homogeneity, distract the people from originality, divert them to imbibe the culture of the visitors, thereby mutilating the once cohesive acceptance given to Igbo culture by her indigenes; some are disregarding the culture completely, another group is caught in the mixed grill of Igbo/European cultures and the rest, holding tenaciously to the core values of the threatened culture, especially the elderly. This situation cuts across all spheres of living among the Igbo extraction as an entity, in southeastern Nigeria. The westerners made use of religion and education on the hearts and minds of the Igbos. The effect of western teachings against Igbo culture is strong, but not conclusive. If steps toward recovery are taken, Igbo culture will bounce back, unshakably.

Key Words: Culture, Igboland, westerners, condemn, originality, threatened, recovery

Introduction

For man to socialize, he/she must do that in compulsory conjunction with another human

person or persons, for as they say, “no man is an island”. This compelled interaction between and among human beings, is what

gives rise to the formation of friendship, marriage, family, extended family, clan, hamlet, village, town, local government area, state, country, continent and the global relationship of continents.

There is no level of human dwelling or settlement that has come to stay, that does not have regulation, dos and don'ts, rules or accepted pattern of living for peaceful cohabitation or coexistence. These dictates, customs or mores written or unwritten, make up what can be termed the culture of that given society.

The Igbos, though dispersed and under various states of the country, but by ancestry, of South-Eastern zone of Nigeria, have norms that make up their culture, thereby knitting them together in conformity as a people.

The reasons for this paper are threefold: point out the contributory customs that form Igbo culture, expose the prevailing incitations militating against the culture and propose definite ideas, for its rectification/rescue.

Who Are The Igbo?

It is of utmost necessity at this point, to explain who the Igbos are.

The Igbo people...are an ethnic group in Nigeria. They are primarily found in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. A sizable

Igbo population is also found in Delta and Rivers States. Igbo is also considered a very minority tribe in states such as Benue, Kogi, Akwa Ibom and Edo. (Culture Trip, 2018)

“Ethnic Igbo populations are found in Cameroon.” (Forrest, 1994)

Mwakikagile Godfrey (2006) and Igbo defender.com (2018) added, “Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea, as migrants.”

History of the Igbo People

By origin, the Igbos have foundational deoxyribonucleic acid (D.N.A) composition called Haplogroup E-M2 represented as well by Eibiai-M2 which is a human Y-chromosome found chiefly among African, Western Asia, majorly West Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, the region of African Great Lakes, North Africa, the Middle East. By relational consideration, the foregoing implies that Igbos have linkages with the localities mentioned. Other related groups to the Igbos are: Ibibio, Efik, Annang, Bahumono, Ogoni, Idoma, Igala, Edo, Ijaw, Ogoja, Bamileke, and in the diaspora: Afro Caribbean, African Americans, America Liberian and Krio. (Wikipedia.org, 2024)

Main Geographical Location of Igbo

“Igbo, people living chiefly in southeastern Nigeria” (Britannica.com, 2024).

Igboland (Ala Igbo) also known as Southeastern Nigeria (but extends into South-Southern Nigeria), is the indigenous homeland of the Igbo people. It is a cultural and common linguistic region in southern Nigeria. Geographically, it is divided into two sections by the lower Niger River: an eastern (the larger of the two) and a western one. (Slattery, 2016).

Language of the Igbo

Igbo is the principal language cluster of the Igbo people, an ethnicity in the southeastern part of Nigeria.

Core Igbo Culture

Culture, (Igbo: Omenala ndi Igbo) (Nwauwa et al, 2019), has from one of the definitions, been said to represent a way of life of a group of people – the behaviours, beliefs, values and more. Among many that are bound to come under the lens of this study, an initial look at the spirituality of the Igbos, wouldn't be a usurpation of position.

Religion: The indigenous religion of the Igbo people (Odinala) is based on a belief in a Supreme Deity (God - Chukwu) that created and superceeds all things and has subordinate gods (chi) that represent the Supreme Deity, physically.

Study.com (2024) presents it this way: "Odinani, the traditional system of Igbo

spirituality, includes many different gods whose power comes from a supreme deity known as Chukwu." Bringing it closer home in relating with the worshipers, study.com (2024).

Traditional Igbo religion combines spiritual belief with the natural world and other dimensions of everyday life. Igbo also believe in reincarnation between immediate and extended family members. Reincarnated ancestors are identified through birthmarks, physical features, or similarities in behaviour present in a newborn baby. There is also a group called Ogbanje, who are said to be evil spirits that bring misfortune by dying early in life and continuing to be reincarnated into the same family.

Mckenna Amy (2024), opined that:

Traditional Igbo religion includes belief in a creator god (Chukwu or Chineke), an earth goddess (Ala), and numerous other deities and spirits as well as a belief in ancestors who protect their living descendants. Revelation of the will of the deities is sought by divination and oracles.

The results of the search through divinations and oracles in order to know the will of the gods, are gotten through human visits and consultations with traditional males and females who are dedicated in priesthood; Dibia (the male) and Ezenwanyi (the female).

Their work also includes performing sacrifices (ichu-aja), spirit worship (ife mmuo) and conjuration of spirits (ibu mmuo eje ozi).

Foods

The traditional Igbo people are rich in food types, hence their assorted cuisine:

The core of Igbo food is its soups. The popular soups are Ofe Oha, Onugbu, Ofe Akwu, Egwusi and Nsala (white pepper soup). Yam is a staple food for the Igbos and is eaten boiled or pounded with soups (Nigerian News, 2020).

On the shelves for Igbo foods are Ukwa, Okpa, Okra soup, Ogbono soup, Isi ewu, Ofe Owere, Fio Fio, Abacha, Akpu, Achicha, Achara, Ikokoo, Elubo, Akamu, Garri, Agwa (Beans), and Palm wine.

Men, women and children have hands on deck, to till, cultivate, maintain and harvest in Igboland from where the foregoing food items are gotten.

Pattern of Inheritance

The Igbo society is a very chauvinistic type and upholds patrilineal style of inheritance. This implies that in the family descent of the Igbo extraction, only male children, especially the first son or the next male in succession, is considered as opposed to

feminine children. In acknowledgement of this order, Onyemelukwe (2015) affirmed that, “The tradition says the first son inherits; he may share with males siblings, but not female.” By culture, it is not contestable that male children (sons) inherit their fathers’ wealths. In some cases, the wealth of a dead father, becomes the exclusive reserve of the headson (okpara), other times, the father could prefer to distribute his estate to his sons, while he is yet alive. He could still pronounce that all are theirs to share, but leaves the sharing for his first son to do. In some cases, when a man amassed wealth, didn’t distribute it and left no instruction, older men of their kin or from their maternal home, are invited to do the sharing, for the sons.

Traditional Rulership (Ichi Eze)

The Igbo society believes in human equality which by implication confers headship or leadership on people (men) to oversee their individual families and never beyond it. Using one of the Igbo communities or towns, Orji in Owerri, Imo State for representation, Okoroafor (2023 p.80) observed that:

Going back to Orji town’s traceable beginning, Orji was a community you could describe as one of personal lordship, no one bowed to the other fellow indigene for any reason, though not negating the fact

of the opportunity or opportunities of certain more blessed persons. Every person was satisfied with his standard of living and never tolerated insult from any other person, due to one acquisition or the other, of the later. However rich anyone felt he was, was subject to the grading and evaluation of even the assumed poor, in the polity. There was no ruler over Orji.

Thus, was the original Igbo where no one ruled over any other or lorded it over any community.

Burials

Different types of deaths warrant different types of burials. This is determined by an individuals age, gender and status in society. Children are buried in hiding and out of sight, their burials usually take place in the early mornings and late nights. A simple untitled man is buried in front of his house and a simple mother is buried in her place of origin: in a garden or a farm – area that belonged to her father (Chigere, 2001 p.97).

Equiano, (1837, p.24), specifies: “After a death, the body of a prominent member of society is placed on a stool in a sitting posture and is clothed in the deceased’s finest garments. Animal sacrifices may be offered, and the dead person is well perfumed”. Burial usually follows within 24 hours of death. (Njoku, et al 1990, p.28)

Marriage

From study, marriage in Igbo traditional society, takes two roots; either negotiated by parents of the couple from their births or both adults will submit their consents. “Marriages were sometimes arranged from birth through negotiation of the two families (Ritzer, 2004, p.248). Agbasiere et al, (2000, p.114) assert:

The process of marrying usually involves asking the young woman’s consent, introducing the woman to the man’s family and the same for the man to the woman’s family, testing the bride’s character, checking the woman’s family background and paying the bride’s wealth.

Igbo Dressing (Ejiji Omenala Igbo)

The Igbo community culturally have peculiarities with regard to clothing. The voicesa.com (2019) stated that “the purpose of clothing originally was simply to conceal private parts. Because of this purpose, children were often nude from birth until the beginning of their adolescent – the time they were considered to have something to hide.” “Maidens usually wore a short wrapper with beads around their waist.” (Masquelier, 2005) “Both men and women wore wrappers.” (Chuku, 2005, p.135). She added, “Uli body art was used to decorate both men and women in the form of lines forming patterns and shapes on the body.”

Igbo New Yam Festival (Iri Ji Ohuu)

The Igbo people are majorly farmers, cultivating, harvesting, subsisting on and commercializing crops. In the diversity of their farm produces, a particular crop stood prominent amongst all and that is yam. The Igbo value yam so much that they celebrate its harvest season in their various communities represented by different names as, Iwa ji, Iri ji, Ike ji depending on localities (Ugo, 2007). To cement its significance, Ugo Daniel continues to assert, “it symbolizes the conclusion of a harvest and the beginning of the next work cycle. The celebration is a cultural occasion tying individual Igbo communities together as essentially agrarian and dependent on yam.”

Usually, at the beginning of the festival, the yams are offered to the gods and ancestors first before distributing them to the villagers. The ritual is performed either by the oldest man in the community or by the King or eminent titleholder. (Pulse Nigeria, 2021; Onyema in Emeagwali, 1997).

Amplifying the role of the executor of the new yam festivities, Ugo Daniel explains:

This man also offers the yams to the god, deities, and ancestors by showing gratitude to the supreme deity for his protection and kindness in leading them from lean periods to the time of bountiful harvest without deaths resulting from hunger.

Scarification: “Ichi” according to (Jeffreys, 1951), “was a form of facial ritual scarification worn by mainly men of the Igbo people of Nigeria. The scarification indicated that the wearer had passed through initial initiation into the aristocratic Nze na Ozo society.”

In the words of the researcher, Ika akara (giving of mark), is for nobility of Nze na Ozo (Nze and Ozo) title holders. Elizabeth Isichei (1978) clarifies, “the scarification was found among men in the Awka-Nri areas and among few women in the Awgwu and Nkanu areas. Its wearers were authorized to perform ritual cleansing of abominations and to confer titles on people.”

Widowhood Practices

Of all losses through death, losing a life partner has been a matter the Igbo of Southeastern part of Nigeria wouldn't treat with levity. Men lose their wives and become widowers, women lose their husbands and are widows. These dual losses are not negligible to the Igbo, but from immemorable time, more attention has beamed on the widow, as against the widower.

Udeh et al (2022, p.18), observed that “this practice is no longer a two way activity because, widows are known to be mourners

of their husbands in a systematically set ways.” In agreement with that, Agumagu (2007) in Udeh et al (2022, p.19), averred that, “a widower has no traditionally laid down laws governing his mourning rites.” Widows have been the gender subjected to all manners of humiliations and oddities.

Cultural practices like programmed wailing, sitting on the floor, sleeping or sitting next to the corpse, disinheritance...poverty, physical and psychological traumas, violence, lack of decision making by the widow, underutilization of widow's resources, dependency and threat to children's lives...they are humiliated at several occasions during the time their husbands still lie in the mortuary...widows are treated like slaves...these practices make widowhood exhaustive and traumatic...the widow is frightened, lonely and grieving excessively...ritual seclusion...oath ritual...shaving of hair...tying up of hands in rags...the widow does not eat with her hands for three months...starvation unless she is fed by another widow...forced to take a bath on her husband's grave...stipulated period of mourning...dropping of condolence gifts on the ground...widow inheritance (forceful remarriage)...wearing of black. (Udeh et al, 2022, pp. 18-20)

Respect for the Aged

The normal Igbo community from pre-colonial time, has been gerontocratic in nature, giving elders position and resultant headship and honour. Igbo know their seniors and accord due respect.

One of the ways to show respect, is greeting elders whenever you see them. There are various dialectical ways of greeting people formally and informally. For the context of this paper, let us list few formal ones, that could go from a younger person to an older person: “Ndewo, Ma – mma, Nno, Kedu” (Educate Igbo.school.blog, 2024).

Another way to revere the older people, is seeking counsel from them and relying on their ideas. “listen to their advice thoughtfully and keep asking them questions so you can learn more from their experiences. Seeking their advice really helps your elders feel heard and shows that you appreciate their input.” (Wits End Parenting et al, 2023).

Taboos of the Igbo People

“The highest deity in Igboland is the earth. The Igbo believe “Ala” to be mother from whom every good being comes, and for that whoever does something bad is said to have defiled the earth” (Okonkwo, 1976:105).

The foregoing suggests that Igbo people are a set of decent minded people who do not

create room or expect anyone to be indecent. In that connection, Thomas, (1914:59), posited that: “people are known for many things one should not do called ‘nsoala’ which can be said to be forbidden”. In order to throw some light over some of the taboos, Onukwube and Anedo, (2019), cited: “Theft, suicide, adultery, incest, sabotage, witchcraft, disobedience to leadership of a community, inducing one to commit suicide, using charm to kill someone and murder”.

In consonance with Onukwube and Anedo, Edeh, (1985:32), opined that: “life especially human life, is that which only ‘Chineke’ can give. Among the Igbo...murder, whether accidentally or intentionally committed, is regarded as murder in – so far as life is lost”.

Attempting to situate these taboos (“Aru”) in time or era, Onukwube and Anedo, (2019), asserted that: “in the olden days, a man who mistakenly killed a child in the bush would first run away from his village”.

Other taboos of those days, were: leprosy, smallpox, man (widower) dying during the mourning of his late wife, a child approaching with its legs at birth, a child growing the upper teeth, before the lower dentition, killing of sacred animals, wine gourd breaking enroute marriage rites, giving birth to twins, death by swollen abdomen,

felling of deified trees, killing one’s sibling, etcetera. Any of the forelisted crimes as regarded, is termed desecration of the land. “Of a person who committed such crime it was said, “omere nsoala or omeruola ala” meaning he defiled the land. Ezeokoye, (1977:43).

When there is such situation that someone fell victim of any of the taboos, both the culprit and the locality are deemed as ‘defiled’ and a cleansing that is traditionally ritualistic, is called for, otherwise there could be consequences. In agreement with this practice, Ayisi, (1972:91), confirmed that: “once any of these taboos is broken, a cleansing sacrifice follows immediately. Failure to do this, will as believed bring misfortune to the culprit in particular, his immediate family and the society he belongs to in general”. This cleansing of an individual or community is referred to by different Igbo areas, in divergent dialectical renditions:

Njucha – Onukwube and Anedo, (2019).

Ichuaja – Basden, (1966:224).

Ikpuaru – The Sun Newspapers, (2018).

Ikwa-ala – Mezieobi, (oral account.2022).

Works/Recreations of Igbo People

Aside from what could be formally called, culture which we have seen within the foregoing pages, Igbo people have other inclinations for their everyday living, hence working to earn for livelihood and taking advantage of the natural free space cum fresh air, to unwind.

Igbos are very strong and skillful people. Skills gotten either informally through natural talent or inherited through family genetic chemistry, otherwise, formally by training. These stated backgrounds, make it very possible for them to engage in various worthwhile occupations.

Works: Farming

Igbo people are agrarians by nature, most likely because of the fertility of their ecosystem which gives rise to lush vegetation and resultant yield of harvests with regard to various crops, in their seasons.

Subsistence farming characterizes agriculture among traditional Igbo people. The chief agricultural products include yams, cassava, and taro. Other important subsidiary crops include cocoyams, plantains, maize, melons, okra, pumpkins, peppers, gourds, and beans. Palm products are the main cash crops. (Amadiume, 1987)

Artisanship

Igbo people by their culture, engage in and do a lot of handicraft (oru aka). Their gifting and expertise in artistry, covers areas as building houses, bridges, making of traditional beds, mats, hats, chairs, raffia bags and foot-wears and even ornaments. Extrapolating on the certainty of Igbo handiworks, Wikipedia, (2024) defines and enumerates:

Igbo art (Igbo: Ìkà Igbo) is any piece of visual art originating from the Igbo people. The Igbo produce a wide variety of art including traditional figures, masks, artifacts and textiles, plus works in metals such as bronze. Artworks from the Igbo have been found from as early as 9th century with the bronze artifacts found at Igbo Ukwu.

Traditional Igbo House

One of the avenues Igbo people use to exhibit their profound artistry, is in building construction. With locally extracted raw materials coupled with know-how skills, they churn out various architectural designs of dwelling places for family, relatives and functions.

Igbo architecture predominantly uses locally sourced materials such as mud, clay, wood, bamboo, thatch, and palm fronds. These materials are abundant and well-suited to the local

climate. The traditional Igbo dwelling is often organized within a compound, which includes several houses for extended family members arranged around a central courtyard. The courtyard serves as a communal space for gatherings and interactions. Igbo architecture is modular with structures being added or expanded as family needs grow. This flexibility allows for adaptability over time. Most traditional Igbo houses feature steep pitched thatched roofs made from palm fronds or grass. The roofs provide insulation, natural ventilation, and protection from rain. Houses may be adorned with decorative patterns and motifs, often carved with wooden beams, walls, and doors. Such designs hold cultural and symbolic significance. Such Igbo houses have elevated floors, which serve multiple purposes, including protection against flooding, improved ventilation and storage space underneath. Verandas and raised platforms are common features offering shaded outdoor spaces for relaxation, socializing and various activities. Many Igbo houses incorporate sacred spaces, such as shrines, or altars for religious practices, ancestor veneration, and community rituals. Architectural elements often carry cultural and

religious symbolism, reflecting the Igbo worldview and values (Onuorah et al, 2023).

Apart from the structural designs, colours were also traditionally sought to beautify the buildings. Lending supportive voice to the decorations, National Museum of African Art (2008), confirmed that “some houses had elaborate designs both in the interior and exterior. These designs could include Uli art designed by Igbo women.”

Recreations: Music/Dance

One of the major ways the Igbos engage in recreation, is through the duality of music and dance. The Igbo types of music and the accompanying dance patterns are very popular in Nigeria. Individual music makers, song groups and dancers, abound in their different styles. Under the question, “what is the Igbo tribe known for?”, study.com (2024) asserted, “the Igbo people are known for their traditional style of dance called atilogwu. These high energy performances often include elaborate acrobatic stunts.” Nkwa Nwaite women’s music and dance team are another brand of Igbo entertainment, likewise Alija, Nwokorobo, Ndi Inyom Aro, Ndom Obiwuruotu, Abigbo, Nkwa Umuagbogho, (Ohafia war dance) Ikpirikpi ogu (Wikipedia, 2015).

Folk Lore (Akuko Ifo)

Another agelong custom of the Igbo people, is folk lore. “Folklore plays a major role in Igbo culture. They represent creation, life and even death. Through elaborate tales, the Igbo people pass on their beliefs about how their people came to be.” (UIU-LA 2018). From the foregoing, it is deducible how oral tradition of the Igbo moves from generation to generation, hence it is the old that normally tell the folktales, the histories and interpretations to the young. Folklore is as well a means of teaching morals and Godliness, hence any bad actor in the story must be discovered and reprimanded accordingly in the tales. The applications of the stories, usually impact listeners and direct them to good attitude for peaceful and just neighbourliness. In confirmation of this, UIU-LA (2018) stated that,

While the tales focus mainly on animal characters, they represent many aspects of everyday life. Igbo folktales, like American fables, are useful teaching tools for the young, encouraging positive behaviour...warn children against greed and untruth and instead encourage honesty, and the mutual support of those around an individual. This is important in Igbo society because they are a

people who are very much reliant on their neighbours.

Having taken a wide look at who the Igbo are, their history, language, geographical habitation, mode of dressing, their types of food, their architecture, rites of marriage ceremonies, honorary titles, practices at bereavement, means of livelihood, their order of inheritance, as a matter of emphasis, the customs that make up their culture and their taboos, the researcher deems it imperative at this juncture to cast a contemporary glance at the Igbo society with regard to their culture.

Social Change

Change is one thing that has been proven overtime to be constant and if there is anywhere this has come to be true, it is about the culture of the Igbo people. In connection to this, New World Encyclopedia (2023) clarifies, “culture, however, is not fixed or static, rather, it involves a dynamic process as people respond to changing conditions and challenges.” Chukwuezi in Mezieobi and Irikana (2021) posited that “change is one of the (unavoidable) fundamental experiences of human life.” Nwosu (2015) pinpointed this when she cited Ukadike and Iwegbu when they opined that social change “is normal in human environment and it is a regular occurrence.”

Seemingly Weak Resistance

The objection or resistance of the Igbo people against the causes of social change that hit their cultural stability, is rather, weak. There are merely some areas of Igbo culture that sustain despite social change. In that regard, Emeagwali (1997) captured an aspect when he asserted that “the influence of Christianity notwithstanding, many traditionalists and title holders in some Igbo communities never taste the new yam until the day traditionally set aside for it.”

Igbo People And Their Culture Today

What can be defined as Igbo culture today, is

Mirrored in this conjoined look at it; Igbo culture are the customs, practices and traditions of the Igbo people (faculty.ucr.edu, 2020) of Southeastern (The Commonwealth.org, 2020) Nigeria. (It consists of ancient practices as well as new concepts added into the Igbo culture either by cultural evolution or by outside influence. These customs and traditions include the Igbo people’s visual arts, music and dance forms, as well as their attire, cuisine and language dialects. (Adugna, 2020). Because of their various subgroups, the variety of their culture is heightened.

The above indicated approach or definition of the Igbo culture today, is correct, hence there are undesirable features of change adulterating the culture. Certain diversifications are encumbering Igbo culture to the effect that there is seeming disappearance of the core cultural values and clear confusion over the yet observed ones, hence they are carried out at ununiformed degrees in different places of Igboland, determined by their levels of acceptance or rejection, yet by the Igbo.

Predominant Causes of Igbo Cultural Adulteration

Colonialization: (Christianity/Education)

Southern Nigeria, most especially the southeastern part which is the home of the Igbo people, had the African Indigenous Religion up until the intrusion of European colonization. The Europeans came with religion and formal education. The religion they came with branded the indigenous religious practice of the Africans, as satanic.

The number of people practicing Igbo religion decreased drastically in the 20th century with the influx of Christian missionaries under the auspices of the British colonial government in Nigeria. In some cases, Igbo traditional religion practice was sycretised with Christianity, but in many cases

indigenous rites were demonized by Christian missionaries. (Wikipedia.org, 2024)

In consonance with the Wikipedia account regarding where the Europeans pitched their tent of Christianity majorly in Nigeria and the effect of foreign religions on the African indigenous cultures, Mezieobi (2021) asserted that,

With the incursion of colonialism and the two main religions – Islam and Christianity – it ushered in,...Christianity became and is mainly practised in the Southern part of Nigeria while Islam is dominant in the Northern part of the country. These religions brought great changes to the entire Nigerian society.

In same vein, Mckenna (2024) didn't mince words in commenting over the strong effect of Christianity on the Igbo people as he opined that "many Igbo are now Christians, some practicing syncretic version of Christianity intermingled with indigenous beliefs."

From the foregoing, Wikipedia.org (2024) had indicated that the number of Igbos who are still holding on to indigenous tenets of worship decreased seriously in the 20th century, but the researcher extrapolating from that, sees it as introductory, hence it has gotten worse in this subsequent or succeeding

21st century. Not only has number of indigenous religion adherents come to almost zero, it appears like one can say that as frightening as upto 99. whatever percent of the culture and lifestyle of the Igbo speaking people of southeastern Nigeria, have been overtaken by western civilization. In the 21st century, a majority of the Igbo bury their dead in the western way." (Agbasiere, 2000, p.143)

At high sensitivity, colonialism, with the instrumentality of Christian religion, got to the level of bringing all Igbo taboos to nought, dating them to the past. In good understanding of and subscription to the fact that Igbo taboos are now in the past, Eric Okoroafor (2023) posited that,

Attempting to situate these taboos ("Aru") in time or era...taboos of those days, were leprosy, smallpox, man (widower dying during the mourning of his late wife, a child approaching with its legs at birth, a child growing the upper teeth, before the lower dentition, killing of sacred animals, wine gourd breaking enroute to carrying out marriage rites, giving birth to twins, death by swollen abdomen, felling of deified trees, killing one's sibling, etcetera.

The Igbo people of today, will create or exhume a Christian or academic reason or reasons, to excuse any of the mentioned anomalies that were never tolerated, till the

Igbo polity got invaded. The supposed greatest taboo which is murder, is now treated among courtroom litigations and all manner of twists and turns are employed to demean the sacredness of human life and first degree murderers are going scot-free. “In the olden days, a man who mistakenly killed a child in the bush would first run away from his village.” (Onukwube and Anedo in Okoroafor, 202, p.39). To crown the denial of Igbo culture, is to point out that against the usual convention of equality of all persons in Igboland, the Igbo people began crowning men kings (Eze, Igwe) in their various localities, as an emulation of Lord Lugard’s designating of warrant chief to some Igbo men, for the sake of administration.

The warrant chief system emanated as a matter of necessity from the lack of preexisting chieftaincy traditions in some parts of Africa. There were parts of British colonial territories, such as the Igbo region of eastern Nigeria, which had no tradition of chieftaincy intuitions. (Encyclopedia.com, 2024)

Wikipedia.org (2024) affirmed that it was created by Lugard when it opined that “Frederick Lugard introduced the Eze system of warrant chiefs.” This entitling that gave rise to Igbo people commencing and sustaining the Ezeship installation, has done

more harm than good, in almost all Igbo communities, as revealed by observations; making Igbos replicate the experience of Israelites who fared better without human kings, than after they said they wished to be as other nations ruled by kings. 1st Samuel 8:18 “and ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.” (Bible Hub, 2022)

No Documentation of Culture

One of the esteemed customs of the Igbo people, is their oral tradition. Oral tradition is the way the ideas, social behaviours and their culmination in culture are passed from one generation to another, but finding during the course of this probe, reveals the limitation of oral tradition, hence it lacked documentation in writing. This limitation has become one of the causes of the impending dearth of Igbo culture, because there is dearth of information. If there is no physical documentation that people (generations) can consult or refer to, the tendency to forget or even adulterate the culture, will be highly inevitable. Giving definition to oral tradition and its mode of spreading, Ki-Zerbo (1990) opined that “oral tradition may be defined as being a testimony transmitted verbally from one generation to another. Its special

characteristics are that it is verbal and the manner in which it is transmitted.”

Igbo As The Most Receptive/Accessible Ethnic Group

The fact that the Igbo people are the most traveled ethnic group in Nigeria and can be found anywhere humanity exists on the earth, shows their openness to non-traditional lifestyle and culture tolerance. JSTOR.org (2024) presents this certainty thus: “only mention the Igbo tendency toward adventure. One of the most restless of people and the most travelled.”

The Igbo people in comparison with other ethnic nationalities within Nigeria, remain the most penetrating and penetrable group. They can freely intermingle, accommodate, intermarry with others and easily pick and speak the languages of the other ethnic groups, than otherwise. “Igbo people are widely traveled and their contributions to the growth and development of the country cannot be overemphasized.”

These movements, cohabitations, relationships and acclimatization to other climes and cultures affected and still affect their own inherent culture.

Conclusion

Complacency and future of Igbo culture are beside each other now. The core culture of the Igbo people is getting extinct and not much is being done about it. As it is, with the shouting and glaring levity over its revival, finding trace of Igbo culture in the little far future, appears bleak.

Recommendations

The researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Igbo language should be made compulsory at all levels of education, below the tertiary, in all of the southeast.
2. Let there be at least, an annual convention of scholars of Igbo language specialty, worldwide, to brainstorm on the way forward for Igbo culture.
3. Let every southeastern state compulsorily have and richly fund ministry of culture.
4. Igbo families (home/diaspora) should bring their offsprings up with pride of Igbo language.

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