

RESURRECTING IGBO CULTURAL VALUES THROUGH FOLKLORE: 'EGWU ONWA' AND ITS COMMITMENT TOWARDS SOCIETAL ETHOS

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Abstract

Folklore, a fundamental aspect of the Igbo traditional culture, refers to the traditional art, literature, knowledge and practice that are disseminated largely through oral communication. Long before our societies transited into global villages, *egwu onwa*-moonlight activities were rich sources of not just entertainment but education and training of the younger generation. It remained a repository source of knowledge that deepened and transmitted the grandiose cultural values, worldview and cosmologic outlooks of the various societies. A nightly activity, '*egwu onwa*' ranks among the treasured aspects of folklore not just among the Igbo people in Nigeria but many other societies in Africa. That was many decades ago before the invention of cinema, gramophone, radio, television, and internet services. This paper reopens conversation on moonlight games and it's socio-cultural cum philosophical imports in Igbo societies. Through a field research and samples of moonlight games collected in Nise, a town in Awka South LGA of Anambra State, in the Eastern part of Nigeria, the study reexamines these moonlight activities in the light of their communal importance and seeks to reestablish their relevance in our present day society motivated by the dearth of moonlight activities. The study concludes on the glaring need for recourse to moonlight ideological and philosophical underpinnings in coping with the prevalent social order and declining societal ethos.

Keywords: *Egwu onwa*, Folklore, Philosophy, Ethos, Ideology, Morality

Introduction

Every group of people who shares a common tradition, culture and language possesses something that is unique to them and this includes their folklore. These groups of individuals share as central part of that identity, folk traditions- the things that the people traditionally believe, do, know and say. In other words, Folklore embodies the totality of the people's existence, worldview and outlook to life. It comprises all the lore, rich cultural heritage and the rich traditions of the people, handed over to them from generation to generation orally. This lore makes a given set of people or community unique and distinguishable from other people and other communities. In the words of Charles Nnolim:

By folklore we mean the unrecorded tradition of a people as they appear in their popular fiction, custom, belief, magic, ritual, superstition and proverbial sayings.... it is a major component in the total folk culture of such a homogeneous group of people. (16)

Culture, a key variable in this study, is perceived as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Adedimeji, cited in Aharanwa, Ubaku & Ugwuja, 36). The critics further support that culture “is an all-embracing entity without which progress in society would remain a mirage. This explains the consensus of opinion amongst scholars that the basis of development is culture and any community that aims at progress without its culture is only deceiving itself by engaging in self-immolation” (Aharanwa, Ubaku & Ugwuja, 36).

Moonlight games, popularly known in the Igbo language as “*Egwu onwa*” is part of the folklore of African societies. The Igbos of the ancient past instituted the culture of playing under moonlight which was a rich source of education, entertainment, and recreation. This was a time, many decades ago, when electronic gadgets and internet services were non-existent in Igbo land, and children had little or no access to formal learning. Mama Sophia interestingly reveals that:

The moonlight game is a traditional evening recreation for youth still practiced in some places. “*Onwa tibe, ije aguba agadi*” – “the crippled elders long to walk again when the moon is out”– is a proverb that describes how much the elders miss youthful age. The present-day form of night worship provides adequately what were lost in the area of African evening recreations. (148)

Egwu Onwa is a rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people enjoyed by many generations of the Igbo societies in the time past. At the appearance of a full moon, the euphoria and excitement are consciously and unconsciously transmitted. Even the joy to partake in the *egwu onwa* propels one to finish one’s chores as quickly as possible. Everyone partakes in these games that are gender-friendly and sensitive. While the female folks engage in songs, dances, and games befitting their gender, the boys delight in wrestling bouts, acrobatic displays, special stunts, dancing, and musical performances. The elders sit in groups, around campfires, sipping and sharing local drinks, exchanging nostalgic tales of the heroic and interesting past, and thrill each other with mild taunts known as *Njakiri*. Sometimes, the elders engage the children in moonlight tales. Adults and children benefit greatly from these practices which hinges on communal life, harmony, peaceful co-existence, unity, the oneness of purpose, and solidarity. Otuka Victor attests that: “Every civilization handed down to its children from one generation to another, traditional types of games. Play itself helps in the development of the brain. It is the vital activity that children use to learn about and interact with their world. It is usually the work of a child in which they are preparing themselves for adult roles and for society at large. For a child, play is the vehicle for exploring and learning, developing new skills and connecting with others. Through self-directed play, children follow their interests, explore the unknown, link outcomes with choices, conquer their fears and make friends” (NP).

Today, sad enough, this beautiful culture of playing under the moonlight, *Egwu Onwa* is among the neglected cultural practices among the Igbo people. This is due to technological growth and sophisticated inventions aided by western education and

acculturation that have altered the scene of our modern-day societies, eroding our once cherished ideals and indigenous cultures.

The study therefore, through a fieldwork, attempts a study on what were vis-à-vis moonlight games as part of the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people with a submission on the glaring need to blend some past heritages in our present glamour. This problem that necessitated this research is the near dearth of moonlight games and activities in our society. Again, is the lacuna and discontinuity of interest in its study and collection as part of the constituents of folklore in Africa over the years. This research, therefore, is aimed at renewing interest in moonlight activities in our societies. They include “hide and seek,” “action songs,” “tongue twisters,” “breath control games,” “riddles,” “puzzles” “song display/ dance choreographies and some dramatic performances. Through a fieldwork, the research rediscovered the wealth of our moonlight games, its academic, cultural, social, religious and even economic imports in African society with a critical evaluation of some of the philosophical ideologies underlying these activities in the hope that these philosophical and ideological commitments can be harnessed once more to navigate the ship of our modern day society towards a desired and more humane destination. To this end, this study bridges some glaring gaps in previous studies on moonlight tales, songs, dances and other of its activities and most importantly, triggers off the scholarly need to open up further refreshing and exciting discussions which the moonlight games in Africa rightly deserve.

Methodology

As fieldwork, the researcher in this study selected moonlight games and songs from Nise, a town in Awka South LGA of Anambra State in the Igbo Land-the Eastern part of Nigeria. The samples were collected from interviews conducted on fifteen interviewees gleaned from the four villages in Nise. The accounts from the interviewees, eight females, and seven men formed the materials in which this study based its analysis of the moonlight artifacts collected and thus examined.

Nise Town in Igbo Land: A Brief Foray

The Igbo people make up one of the major tribal groups in Nigeria today. In line with the colonial geography, the Igbo occupy mainly the eastern part of the country. They are today found in high concentration in Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo states of Nigeria. There are also large Igbo populations in Delta and River states. Igbo people are a very immigrant race. They are in large numbers resident in Northern Nigeria and in old Ogoja, Calabari, Benin, and Lagos. (Oraegbunam, 3). The Ibo or Igbo people are found in southeastern Nigeria and have many interesting customs and traditions. With a population of around 40 million throughout Nigeria, they are one of the biggest and most influential tribes. Igbos are well-known for their entrepreneurial endeavours, both within Nigeria and around the world. (Adejoke Adeboyejo, NP) Oraegbunam reports that:

...Igbo migrants trooped out to the Cameroons, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, and recently to all parts of ECOWAS sub-region and South Africa. And apart from the trans-Atlantic slave trade that populated Europe and the Americas with good number of Igbo elements, the 20th and 21st centuries have also witnessed an

unprecedented influx of the people into the western world perhaps in search of the greener pastures. (3)

The Igbo land is the home land of one of the dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria occupying the forest region of the South-Eastern Nigeria with an overflow across the River to the fringes of the West-Niger Delta. The Igbo people are basically farmers, traders craftsmen whose social life flows with the rhyme of festival, ceremonies, rituals and work (Sunday Nnamani, 4)

Nise is a town located in Awka South LGA of Anambra State. It is bounded by Nibo, Agulu, Enugwu-ukwu and Amawbia. Nise people are Igbo-speaking group. They are mainly farmers, traders and hunters. Nise has four villages, Ngodo, Arah, Umuazu and Isiakpu.

Moonlight games in Nise are a nightly activities carried out at the appearance of the moon. This is usually done when the moon is full and often time when its light is visible enough to guarantee vision and sight in the square. *Egwu onwa* is carried out during the dry season in order to guarantee the absence of rain that is an enemy of games and plays. The participants in the play are mainly children between ages of fives and fifteen years. Adults also partake in the game but on a different pedestal. The play is a recreational activity which commences especially after dinner and runs into the night. It is characterized by a wide spectrum of activities which include songs, précis and responses, wrestling, dance/choreography, mimes, riddles, puzzles, storytelling, group dynamics and so on. The origin of moonlight play in Nise is not clear as it seems to date back to the beginning of the town. These plays take place within the courtyard of a family or compound, especially for the very young children. But it is organized around the compound square or meeting ground for the more grown-up ones. It could last from the period after dinner to midnight, when everyone in the village may have retired for the day.

This study, therefore, examines some samples of moonlight activities collected in the town in the light of their socio-political, cultural and academic significance and the need for their revitalization not just in Nise but on the other parts of Igbo land in order to once more, inject and maximize the full benefits of these folkloric materials which one thrived and codified our communities in the time past.

Moonlight Games in Nise Town: Context, Nature and Significance

Moonlight games in Nise town are played basically for fun and entertainment, but that does not in any way undermine the socio-political, cultural and academic essence of the game. The games are played by children in the night, whenever the moon is full and very high up in the sky. In Nise town, as it is akin with many other places in Igbo land, the moonlight game is best enjoyed during the dry season, the time of and after harvest when people settle to enjoy the proceeds from the farm. This period is known in their local calendar as “Onwa asaa.” The game usually starts around 8 pm, when most families in Igbo land have enjoyed their dinner and are ready to join other families and friends for a communal playing under the moonlight. During these times, people look up to monitor the moon. Once the moon is full, *izu oba*, the people will troop out to delight in its presence and make merry. The moonlight games cover

a wide spectrum of activities. They include “hide and seek,” “action songs,” “tongue twisters,” “breath control games,” “riddles,” “puzzles” “song display/ dance choreographies and some dramatic performances. The young maidens, as part of the essence of the midnight gathering, delightfully interact among their peers and exchange breaking news and local gossips, without losing the sight of the young good looking men that usually form the object of their fantasy and admiration. The young men on their part, aware of the lingering admiration of the maidens, engage in wrestling bouts and acrobatic games, stunts and musical/dance displays that taste their talents, courage, bravery and tenacity.

Though some aspects of these games tend to survive and are integrated in many of the games children play at their different recreational times, even the social gatherings have metamorphosed in different forms and occasions including some nightly activities the adults partake in, nevertheless, the uniqueness of moon and the gathering under its spread are of paramount significance. Apart from the peace and serenity that nightfall brings with the appearance of the full moon, there is a sense of cultural uniqueness, language exploration and sense of communal bonding that is deeply attached to moonlight games which is lacking in these engagements in modern setting. Again, beyond its entertainment purposes, moonlight activities are of deep educative and philosophical import unlike our modern day adaptation of these activities, and its communal value is best expressed in this long aged Igbo proverb, “*Onwa puta, obodo agwu n’ ama*” translated as, “Once the moon appears, the town empties into the square. The presence of the moon is of great influence, highly therapeutic and a catalyzing agent in these games for full exploration of its gains and benefits. The uniqueness of the moon to the *egwu onwa* phenomenon is best captured in Gerald Ezech’s submission that: “In the days of yore, the moon bore a lot of symbolism. The Igbo people were pastoralists, farmers, hunters etc. The people returned to their homes and at night they become philosophers within the *Egwu Onwa* moments” (Uzor Maxim NP).

The section of the research deals with few of the raw moonlight songs and games collected in Nise, a town in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

One of the games collected is entitled “Dodo nido, Doni.” In this game, the participants are divided into two groups. Each of the groups will hold one side of a bamboo stem and as soon as the contest begins, they sing:

Dodo nido, doni. (2 times) - (suggesting let us pull, let us pull)

Ngodo wete ogugu ka anyi nafa do- do ni - Ngodo bring the bamboo stem so that we contest.

Arah weta ogugu ka anyi nafa do- do ni - Arah bring the bamboo stem so that we contest.

Umuazu weta ogugu ka anyi nafa do- do ni- Umuazu bring the bamboo stem so that we contest.

Isiakpu weta ogugu ka anyi nafa do- do ni- Isiakpu bring the bamboo stem so that we contest.

Ngodo, Arah, Umuazu, Isiakpu are names of the four villages in Nise, in Awka South of Anambra State, Nigeria. The different groups will begin to pull the bamboo stalk. Anyone who falls and loses her grip on the bamboo stem is eliminated and the group with the greater number of survivors wins.

Another game is entitled “Nwa m Nwa m”. In this game, there are two groups with an equal number of the team member. At each instance, a team dispatches one person who will continue to hop with one leg while they sing:

Nwa m, Nwa m, nwa m o- kpangene - My child, my child, -kpangene
Nwa m jelu oku na agbaja- kpangene. -My child that went to answer a call in faraway land
Okpa luo gi ani gi nodu oo, -kpangene - If your two legs touch the ground, then stay back.
Okpa elughi gi ani gi nata ba – Kpagene -If your two legs do not touch the ground then return.

(The idea of two legs touching the ground means if you are comfortable do not return, if you are not, return to us)

The two contestants will continue to dance and challenge each other on one leg. The first to let her second leg down is recruited by the other team. In that way, the game goes on till one team is bereft of team members.

Another game collected is “Asigene”. In this game, children are seated in a circle. There are three major characters. One is called Amagu, the other, Ichele, then the lead singer, Asigene. There is a pebble which is the bone of contention during the game. Ichele is condemned in the circle to search out with utmost keenness on the movement of the pebble among the circle. Whoever fails to pass on the pebble as supposed, will be caught and the person will replace the one in the middle of the circle and the game restarts. While the game is on, the leader would be singing and passing the pebble on:

Asigene kpanga ofe, oho oo, oho -Asigene pass on the pebble
Onye na onye ka nchiche nata? - Who is being plagued by leprosy?
Ima na nchiche anaro atanu m oo - I am not plagued by leprosy
onona ogbo ka nchiche n’ ata - It is the one standing in the middle that is plagued by leprosy.

From the song, whoever is in the middle is assumed to be plagued by *nchiche*-leprosy. It is this derogatory remark and shame that propels the victim, to at all cost, discover someone who will replace her and save her from the shame. Once this happens, the game restarts with another victim of assumed leprosy menace occupying the middle.

Another game is entitled “Ayolo”. Before the game starts, the groups are divided into two equal numbers. Then there will be a mother overseeing each group and looking after her children (group mates). Then each group dispatches a member on a journey

to lure and snatch a child from the other group to populate theirs. The person sent will address the mother of the opposing group as Ayolo. She chants:

Ayolo na abia m be gi -Ayolo I have come to your house.
Ibakwa be m noo (2 times) -If you have come to my house you are welcome.
Isi nke a di ka isi nwa m oo - This head of this one is like the head of my child.
The team echoes: *oburokwa nwa gi!* – She is not your child!
Any nke a di ka anya nwa m oo. -The eyes of this one are like the eyes of my child.
Oburokwa nwa gi oo! - She is not your child!
Imi nke a di ka anya nwa m oo -This nose is like the nose of my child.
Oburokwa nwa gi oo! - She is not your child!

(She will continue to name other parts of the body until she will begin to negotiate with the opponents)

Mu welu nke a? -Should I go with this one?
Eee ooo na ona echu iyi eee ooo - No, No, No, she fetches water! No, no, no!
Mu welu nke a? -Should I go with this one?
Eee ooo na ona awa nku eee ooo - No, No, No, she cuts firewood!
No, no, no!
Mu welu nke a? -Should I go with this one?
Eee ooo na ona esi nri eee ooo - No, No, No, she cooks food! No, no, no!

After much enquires, when the mother is not vigilant, the visitor grabs one of the children and tries to flee. If successful, she takes the child to populate her group. If unsuccessful, she returns. Then it will be the turn of the other group to repeat the same act and win a member. The game ends when a mother in one group, losses all her children to the mother from the other group.

Another game we shall consider here is entitled “Oku na agba.” In this game, the leader of the team announces sudden fire on the mountain and everyone is commanded to run:

Oku na agba na enu ugwu- gba gbabanu oso -There is fire on the mountain, run run run!
oku na agba na enu ugwu- gba gbabanu oso -There is fire on the mountain, run, run, run!
oku na agba na enu ugwu- gba gbabanu oso -There is fire on the mountain, run, run, run!

But sooner than later, the leader declares:
oku anyu o n’ ike oo -The fire ends at once!

Anyone who fails to stand still when the fire is declared ended will be eliminated. The game continues in that order until a winner emerges.

The last game we shall consider here is “Onye enena Anya n’azu”:

Onye ene na anya na azu

-No one should look behind.

mmonwu anyi na aga n’ilo,
village square.

-Our masquerade is passing in the

onye nee anya n’azu

-Anyone who looks back.

mmonwu anyi ga apia ya utali.

-Our masquerade will flog him/her.

This game, very popular and common in Igbo society is performed among children. They children sit in a circle. One person with a stick runs behind everybody with the stern warning that no one should look back. The rest will respond to affirm the consequences of looking back. The person is at liberty to flog anyone who looks back. At some intervals, she drops the stick behind someone. If the person rounds the circle without the person noticing that the stick was dropped behind her, she will receive some flogging for her lack of vigilance. If she catches up with the person, she will flog the person before she settles down in her original position and in that way, the game continues. The game promotes obedience and diligence in a child which in turn enhances the chances of a child being obedient and abiding by the customs, laws, and ethical values that govern the homogenous society.

Storytelling as Core Aspect of Moonlight Activities

Outside wrestling, hide and seek, action songs, tongue twisters, breath control games, riddles, puzzles, song display, and dance choreographies that feature prominently during moonlight activities in Igbo societies, storytelling is another interesting aspect of the game. Some folktales were collected in the course of the fieldwork and the significance of folktales in Igbo society can never be overemphasized.

Folktale is in the form of stories often involving human beings, spirits, and animals in the struggle to survive in an enigmatic world. It is a unique genre of folklore for it teaches with stories believed to have happened in the time past and its essential purpose is to inculcate morals and build on lasting ethical values and accepted way of life in society. People are prone to learn from one another’s errors, misdoings, and misjudgments and that is what makes folktales endearing to societies where they thrive and still survive. Jasper Onuekwusi believes that “of all the genres of oral literature, (folktale) is the one that most adequately fulfills the entertainment and educational function of oral literature. It does not have that restriction which form and usage impose on proverbs, riddles, myths, and legends. Folktale has no fixed form. This is because the folktale admits a lot of improvisations which show a particular narrator’s ingenuity or skill. What is usually constant may be a storyline and the ultimate moral that a particular tale carries” (35). Akporobaro, F.B.O adds that “folktale is a traditional story which is told for the purpose of entertainment and not meant to be believed and handed down either in written or oral form” (96). In traditional Igbo society, life was full of cultural activities. Presentation of folktales was usually done during the moonlight night. This encouraged moral development of the children as well as communal living among the people. Folktales are normally told in the evening after the evening chores. Children normally sit round the fire side in their father’s “obi” or in their mother’s hut to listen to folktales. Normally the

elders, their father or mother tells the story. Children then turns in telling their own stories. These story telling sessions normally take place in the evening after the evening chores. They take place in the relaxed atmosphere unlike today's education which is characterized by the strictness and rigidity. Traditional Igbo child listens to the folktale from infancy to adult life. (Ogbalu cited in Nyigide & Okoye, 2)

Some folktales were collected in the course of the fieldwork. These tales are laced with serious moralistic imports worthy of note. The tales are categorized in the various categories folktales are classified in Africa. They include morality tales, tales with demon lovers in them, fertility tales, trickster and supernatural tales. Due to what of space, these tales will not be recreated here in the size, volume and numbers they were collected. We would mention them here in order to advance our discussion on folktales as aspect of moonlight activities.

Morality tales are those tales with moral lessons. The tales of this kind pass to the people important ideal and moral values of the society and hinges on the consequences of every evil practice in society. Some of these morality tales were collected in the course of the fieldwork. Some of the titles include, "The Little Boy and his Flute" which narrates how obedience and honesty saved a poor boy from the spirits and decorated him with riches afterward. "The Girl and the Melon Seed", which teaches us not to return evil for evil. "The Wizard and the Richman's Son", "Then, the "Wicked co-Wife" which details the retributive effect of evil and wickedness was collected. "The Orphan" shows that it is not good to be wicked because no one knows the head that will wear the crown tomorrow. Everybody should be treated equally no matter the status because God has his way of uplifting the poor. "The Squirrel and his Mother", "The Little Hunter", "The Old Man and the Bottle of Oil," "The Hare and the Chameleon," are but not exhaustive of the morality tales collected.

Tales of Demon Lover with Magic in them were also collected. These are tales in which the gods take part in the love affairs of men in which there is some sort of magical intervention brings about a happy or unhappy ending. Examples include "Ogueji in search of a Marriage Cow" a story that narrates how Ogueji married a wife with magic. There were also Why Stories. The why stories answer the questions about why things happen the way they do. They are similar to myths because they answer the why question and account for the origin of things. Examples include, "Why people have a hole on their back", "Why People Die", "Why the Goat and Hen Are used for Sacrifice", "Why the Hawk Feed on the Chicken", "Why the Tortoise has a Shell", "Why the Tortoise has a Crack Shell". Trickster tales involving the story of tortoise and under animals were collected. Then, Supernatural Stories that involve spirits, supernatural powers, gods, etc. like in the story of Ojadili were all collected as part of the folktales that feature during moonlight activities.

Folktale occupies an enviable position in the oral literary activities of the African people. They are used to teach morals and instill the right attitude in people, both adults and children alike. Folktales are used to ridicule and expose the reward of any bad behavior, attitude and way of life in society and on the other hand they are told in order to extol and cultivate in individuals, the lasting values of love, honesty,

chastity, purity, contentment, obedience, patience, kindness, among many other lasting social values and attitudes. The story may be linked to real life but nevertheless, it is largely imaginative stories recreated from memorable experiences for the sole purpose of entertainment, rather than recording history or some social realities.

Socio-Cultural cum Philosophical Essences of Moonlight Games in Igbo Societies vis-à-vis Nise Town

The moonlight games are tied to the cultural and cosmological outlook of homogenous Igbo societies. The embodiments of these activities in many ways transmit the cultural values of the society to the younger ones who in turn will become progenitors of these values. Women are trained in the ethical paths of womanhood and male children tilt the path of becoming a full-fledged man admired in society. The sacredness of masquerade, taboos, and unethical practices are richly transmitted in these activities.

Mama Sophia while espousing the rich values of *egwu onwa* argues that the missionaries contributed greatly to its destruction: “Young men and women should not go out at night,” the first missionaries said. “They might fall to temptations and commit sins of impurity.” She defends that: “sacredness was maintained during moonlight games before the missionaries arrived. The young men stayed on their part of the village square while the young women stayed on theirs. But each group was not too distant from the other. This was for protection and help in case of emergency.” (148) Atiboroko Uyovbuckerhi supports further that:

Until recent times these games flourished magnificently in rural communities in Urhoboland. Unfortunately they are fast disappearing from our villages and hamlets, thanks to the combined influence of Television, Radio and rural-urban migration. Unless some effort is made to arrest this threatened extinction of our moonlight games, they may not endure much longer and what is worse, our youths will grow up into adulthood without the benefit of the nurturing activities which have engineered and defined the Urhobo ethos in the past. (NP)

The moonlight activities in many ways promote social interactions among children who grew on the foundation of love, oneness, and dignity. Age grades and kinship are strengthened. Even ethical marriages often stem from these gatherings. This is contrary to our age of social media and dating sites where humans are more electronically connected than physically united. Respect, hard work, duty consciousness, and doggedness are implanted in children as early as possible as moonlight games are rewards to obedient and duty conscious children. Children are trained on vigilance, mental alertness, and rapid responses to situations as could be gleaned from these games. They are forged on the principles of survival instincts akin to a man in his existence. Strength, courage, bravery, and physical fitness are put to test in wrestling bouts and other games engaged by the boys. These are qualities they would need years later to cater for their families and defend their communities whenever the need arises. Effeminate boys struggle to integrate themselves in the game of bravery and courage or lose the admiration of the girls. Tolerance and

communal existence are part of the gains of moonlight activities tied to the social relevance in the milieu of a homogenous set of people. The moonlight activities guarantee good spirit and good energy. Disputes are also settled in the course of these interactions. The activities imbibe humility, respect, kinship, and duty consciousness and children knew their places.

On the philosophical and ideological imports of moonlight activities, a lot could be gleaned from the exegesis of these games and interactions. First, since it is rich in entertainment, lasting social contacts among peers are greatly encouraged, and happy children, in no fewer ways, contribute to a happy society. Again, the idea that there is no place like home is enshrined in some of these games evident in “Nwa m, Nwa m”. Some of these games bother on the need for a child to be productive to earn the parents' good remarks and protection as could be gleaned from “Ayolo”. The academic and intelligent side of a child is always underscored. The games are used to test a child's agility, attentiveness, alertness, and rapid response to situations. In all, the spirit of a clan, the love, togetherness, oneness, peace, harmony, fulfillment, contentment, and happiness are all virtues sampled and imbued in these games which are values that are fast eroding our modern-day society where the immorality curve continues to witness an exponential rise.

Modern Day *Egwuawantilo*: What has *Egwu Onwa* got to do with it?

This answer is in the affirmative. There is a lot the recourse to the philosophical and moralistic underpinnings of moonlight activities can do in our present-day society. Let us take, for instance, a folktale. Folktale, an aspect of African folklore, rewards virtues and punish vices and this is very necessary in our disordered world. “Prior to western education, Africa, particularly in Igbo society, folktales played an indispensable role in traditional education. It was a veritable means through which morals, culture, beliefs, values, worldview and consciousness of the Igbo were handed down to the younger generation. In the early Igbo traditional community, Igbo folktales were invaluable to the early Igbo people due to the communal attributes of the stories. The tales served as tools for conflict resolution in the communities, and is still thought to weld same capability for enhanced consciousness” (Nnyigide & Okoye, 2).

The novel is the closest today's society comes to storytelling and it is worthy to mention that in our modern-day society, literature, in many ways, is fast losing its moralistic aspects as writers tend to be more realistic in their exploration of the gains of modernism. 21st-century writers, grappling with several changes and manifestations of the dynamics of society, experiment several styles, and pursue ‘any’ subject matter of interest to them. It is arguably true that we live in a globalized world where morals and ethical values survive in their lowest ebb. We live in a society where we struggle to cope and come to terms with all shades of abnormalities that are fast become normal and acceptable way of life. From the turn of the 21st century, we notice a radical departure from the traditional issues and thematic concerns that were once en-vogue in African fiction. Literature today has transited to imbibe and reflect the spirit of the age. The LGBTI community is fast deepening its tentacles and finding its place in our various societies. The new P-pedophile/pedophilic act which has started to add itself though forcefully and

unacceptably to the acronym-LGBTI-P, thrives among other shades of abnormalities unseen in the previous literatures, lest say the 20th century literature. Prostitution, love, lesbianism, gay relationships, all these have become part of the issues that bother our literature today. These were issues that were significantly absent in the literature of older generation of African writers. In telling these stories, there seemed to be a general feeling among the 21st-century writers that literary creativity must be accompanied with a certain degree of obscenity, sensuality, and erotic ideas, or better still what Femi Osofisan refers to as “Wounded Eros and Cantillating Cupids”. Osofisan, in favour of older writers, argues that Amos Tutuola’s ‘Drinkard’ was too occupied with the problem of retrieving his dead tapster from Dead’s Town to have him tap for him again to indulge in dalliance. Okonkwo, he insisted, despite his several wives was never caught surrendering even once to a tender caress. Also in Soyinka’s representation, he supports that Sidi in *The Lion and the Jewel*, though caught in the trap of Baroka, yet the consequent scene of love-making between them is depicted not through any physical contact but symbolically, in the form of Baroka pumping the piston of a crude machine! He emphasizes that nowadays, both writers and readers of our time would laugh at such mannered restraint (41). Nnolim Charles describes the 21st-century writers as: “the fleshly school of writers...whose main characters are in dire pursuit of the flesh, writers for whom excitements and satisfactions of the body are far more important than the sanctity of the soul; for whom the pleasures of the flesh are more moment than the essence of the spirit. (232) The implication of this is that the 21st-century writer grapples with these arrays of subject matters proving a fertile ground for literary creativity and depending on the side the writer identifies, his creative energy is poured in pursuit of his belief and that too, to a greater extent, controls the moral tone of the story. The long age knowledge that literature rewards virtues and punish vices is no longer viable with several works of literature in our 21st century. The irony is that the novels in many ways do no longer foster morals as earlier entrusted under its watch. This is the point where the resuscitation and revival of folktales among other appurtenances of moonlight activities become of utmost importance. “The omission of folklore education in the early lives of our children is grave.. some of the consequences of abandonment of folkloric education are that the present day youths “dream wild, act wild, live wild” and sometimes, take to violence because their value vault is bankrupt” (Nnabuihe cited in Nyigide & Okoye, 4).

The folktales as key to moonlight activities have remained faithful in this regards. All the tales collected in the course of the research are laced with several moral lessons and the typical role of literature rewarding virtues and punishing vices are exemplified. Thus, these tales in no small way promote right cultural and ethical values. The dangers of foreign tales, movies and cartoons that are more accessible to our youths and children should worry us. “Imported cartoon films contain nothing but European, American and Asian fairy and animal tales, the parallels of which abound in Igbo traditional tales. The themes of hardwork, obedience, humility, morality, the consequences of disobedience and all that which are embodies in Igbo traditional prose narratives are very relevant to children upbringing...” But unfortunately, parents, these days, “deny their children indigenous cultural values by making them part of westernization, eroding old tradition of folklore... The result is that the Nigerian youths today lack discipline because they lack proper upbringing”

(Ikwbuzo cited in Nyigide & Okoye, (4). We submit that in our age of ICT where children are dependent of the make-believe and fictitious stories circulating online all around the globe, there is urgent need for recourse on the folktales and moonlight glories of the people in the quest to maximize its moral potentials to foster and preserve social and cultural values once more.

Conclusion

This study revisited moonlight games in the purview of globalization as gleaned from the Nise town, an Igbo-speaking area of Nigeria. Through fieldwork, the research aimed at rediscovering the wealth of our moonlight games, its academic, cultural, social, religious, and even economic imports in Igbo society and a holistic study of the philosophical ideologies underlying these activities. It is established that the *Egwu Onwa* culture served as a veritable source of happiness to both the adults in society and contributes greatly to the physical, psychological, and moral build-up of children.

In our present-day society, we can comfortably argue that our society has transited from the glory days of *egwu onwa* to the gory times of *egwuawantilo*. Culture is dynamic and evolves no doubt, but in the transitional evolutions, certain aspects are more or less the socio-cultural identity and the very essence of a people and their loss could signal the loss of a society. It from this point that this study submits that though the moonlight activities and its paraphernalia has largely obliterated and long relegated in the course of societal transition, several of the *egwu onwa* ideologies, its rich tie to the culture, education, religious, political, and economic lives of the people beg for a place in our society in the purvey of globalization and the *egwuawantilo* that that taken the length and breadth of our societies literarily by the storm. This is one of the viable pathways in our quest to resuscitate the dead embers of societal values, morals, and ethical ideologies that once made our societies ideal, noble, and praiseworthy.

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