

COMMUNAL RELATIONS IN THE TRADITIONAL IGBO SOCIETY

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Abstract

This work investigates into the peace and tranquility of human relations in the traditional society of the Igbo people, who were known for their egalitarianism, communality and religiousness. Not being judgmental but open to the light of literary and informative barrage of evidences, ushers in the community consciousness in the individual minds of the Igbo. This is a culture of life, where all hands are on deck to achieve not just life but a beautified life. Everyone has a self-determining role to play in their disparate worlds that complement one another. There is thus political, economic and social independence and peace. Free conscious determination of self in a community that shares its overarching principles with the members is a good platform for peace.

Introduction

There is a common dignity of all Igbo men and women as descendants from God. It is a quality that is inherent in every person. The society fosters this right and provides the environment for the objectification of the human powers and the humanization of objective reality. This is to say that every society should have a humanitarian end in all policies. The society is an environment which should enhance a free conscious realization of human dignity. This work sets out to understand this realization process as what truly leads to peace. We shall proceed by delineating the meanings of some working terms to be used in this paper before the examination of the worldview of the traditional Igbo society without bias.

Igbo Traditional Society

Uchendu (1965) states that the Igbo People are located between latitudes 5° and 7° north of the equator and longitude 6° and 8° east of the Greenwich Meridian. They occupy an area of about 25,280km² (15,800square miles) (p.1). The Igbo People are densely populated, which suggests a long occupation of the land. Amadiume (1996) writes that in 1963 the Igbo numbers about 8.5 million and by 1993 has grown to more than 15 million. Encarta Encyclopaedia (2006) has it that the population was something over 17 million in 2006. Smock (1972) maintained that “the Igboland had the densest countryside population in any part of Africa” (p.21).

It is good to note that it is often hard to distinguish between the original cultures of people and what is obtainable owing to interactions with other societies around them. When such interactions become enforced, culture of a subject group or the group under investigation experiences a non-unilateral change that they deform the passengers of such culture. The Igbo culture is a victim of such change. The place of man and woman will be viewed from pre-historic times, which includes pre-colonial times. This is a time one can

truly get to the heart of the Igbo People since there were no coercive infiltrations on their culture. Amadiume (1987) says:

The pre-colonial period, pre-1900, is considered by present-day Igbo as the 'olden days', when traditional customs were 'pure and unspoilt'. In contrast, after 1900, including both colonial and post-colonial times, is considered as the modern period. This division does not imply that in the 'olden days' there was no external contact or change. Change would have been gradual or negotiated, and neither sudden nor immediately apparent.
(p. 21)

A gradual change is always accepted by the people and builds into the fabric of their culture, not destroying the overarching principles but enhancing the cultural components. Igbo cultures can be deceptive to an observer scholar since the principles of their existence are not written anywhere but have been fabricated into the being of the people. This is what led early researchers like Leith-Ross (1939) to pen down some contradicting statements about our women. However, attempts will be made to get close to the traditional ideas of the Igbo vis-à-vis the contemporary views.

Family: Family serve to give a name and belonging to life. Everyone belongs to a family. Children are born to the family and not to the father of the child. Children born to a family, even if a man from outside the family is responsible, bear the family name and not the father's name. The family being talked of here is both the *extended* (which Nma, (2003) describes as nuclear family plus the children of the man's daughters and sons, maternal and paternal uncles and their families (p. 41)) and the *nuclear* family, (man, wives and children from all the wives) systems. Nwanunobi (1992) said that "the nuclear family provides the context within which the rights and duties of wider kinship expectations are internalized. It is an important channel for the process of socialization from childhood to adult life". (p.19). The family is a micro community. Ownership of land and gods are by family descent. At times, gifts from the gods concerning healing, divination, etc are by family descent too.

Community: The community is to offer protection and security to all. Activities of life especially security are organized in communities. The Igbo settle in communities and even though they trace to *Nri* culture as having influence on them, the Igbo People had never been made into a political whole. A subsidiary entity, the community is often given the prominence. Gods are owned in common but this does not disallow the particular gods of the individual families or even of the head of the family. This creates a lot of

variety in the Igbo pantheon. *Communal*ity, which is a strong underlying factor of Igbo life derives from community life but means more than it. It comprises of all the above and is intrinsically tied to the enhancement and preservation of life that Mbiti (1991) referred to it as: “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am” (p.141). *Nmetụta ka egbe ji ekwu okwu* – the gun sounds through series of contacts. What one has in one develops through interpersonal contacts within the community and with the help of the community.

A Cursory Glance at the Igbo Worldview

In this section therefore, a few areas will be looked into in order to observe what were at the prime of the Igbo world/reality. With the fulfilment of the worldview as a backdrop, peace reigns in the lives of individuals and communities at large.

Duality in Reality

Edeh (1985) avers that the Igbo have a view of a dual world “*Uwa n’ani muo*” (p.73) depicting the spiritual and physical worlds. Egbujie (1976) believes too that:

For the Africans the world is *dual in nature*. Beyond and over above the visible, tactile, physical world, there is a non-visible, nontactile world which envelopes the former. It permeates the former through and through; it is simultaneously within and outside of the earth and the seas. (p.107)

The spiritual reside with the physical; separating them is applying the Platonic theory of duality. Reality can be grasped as a whole and not in parts. Good and evil do not have independent existence but complement each other. The Igbo say: *E gburu uru e nye okpukpu; e gburu okpukpu e nye uru* – in distributive justice, the two component sides must be placated. *Ife kwuru, ife akwudebe ya* - Something stands by another. According to Aniakor (1973):

When Duru Agwu/Duru Aku, the Chief Diviner at Amauzari in Mbano Division, through whose divination man comes to understand the complicated web of cosmic relationships between him and the gods, looked at the five divination pebbles on his palm, he picked out one, threw it on the ground, picked it up again, examined it and stared into the vacancy in communion with the gods.

He said:

<i>ihe di abuo abuo</i>	-	Reality comes in twos
<i>Nwoke na nwanyi</i>	-	Male and Female
<i>Ihe oma na ihe ojoo</i>	-	Good and Evil
<i>Ugbua na Mgbe-Ochie</i>	-	Present and Past
<i>Mmadu na Mmuo</i>	-	People and Spirits
<i>Igwe na Ala</i>	-	Firmament and Earth
<i>Onwu na Ndu</i>	-	Life and Death

In saying this, he penetrated the heart of Igbo ontology (p.6)

Origin of the Igbo Man and Woman

Udobata (1992) puts forth that When Eri came down to the earth from the sky, he sat on an anthill as the land was a morass or water-logged –*Ala di deke deke*. He was sent down from the sky with his wife *namuaku*. Following *Eri*'s complaint, *Chukwu* sent down an Awka blacksmith who used his fiery bellows to dry the land (p.17)

This myth states that man and woman are children of the Supreme Deity. Both came down from above. Insofar as the myth suggests a late arrival of the *Nri* clan, the woman did not come from the earth as the Awka blacksmith but came down with the man. This is in accord with the Igbo idea of reality as duality.

Man and woman are therefore the two dialectics that make the human world. Thus the man is the male-face while the woman is the female-face of humanity. None can really exist without the other. Ekwuru (2009) comments on this that the “daily interaction between the two dimensions of the world is characterized by a kind of tension-conflict-harmony drama. That is, in their mutuality and difference, there seems to be a “polarised opposition”, infinitely “changeable and unpredictable.” (p.43). There may be tension and conflict but there is no chaos but a harmonious resolution under the broad spectrum of reality which is seen as a harmonious interpenetration of forces. Man and woman are therefore equal from origin.

The Four Urstoffs

The world is one with spiritual and physical corollaries and it is made up of the sky, the celestial bodies and the earth and in turn is composed of four basic elements: *earth*, *water*, *fire* and *air*. The more solid and tangible ones, *earth* and *water* have female attributes while the intangible ones, *fire* and *air* have the male attributes. This truly reflects the place of women in the minds of the Igbo as a whole lot can be deduced from this. The gods attached to the first two are female deities and they have ever dominated the Igbo pantheon. Their influences have percolated down to the spine of socio-religious activities that

they rule everything even birthing and life after death. This clearly supports that the Igbo supreme deity may have been the *Ala*, the earth goddess. Women are tangible, *nnenne ife*, pillars of human life and family and around them revolves the *air* and *fire* of existence. *Fire* moulds and gives a face (meaning) or force while *air* rekindles life and movement. Water does not move except through the influence of *air* while the *earth* remains inchoate except when formed by fire as when a blacksmith moulds it. *Fire* and *air* have no beauty in themselves while *earth* and *water* are the beauties of life. *Fire* and *air* have no place or residence; they come and go, while *earth* and *water* are the stakeholders of existence. More of this would be seen from the relationship of the sun god, *Amadioha*, and the earth goddess, *Ala*. It is also good to note here that the adjective employed by the Igbo to depict “tangible” is formed from the female word for mother, *nnenne ife*.

Idea of the Supreme Being/Beings

Chukwu: It has been overtly demonstrated by many scholars that the Igbo People believe in a unified world created by a Supreme Being, *Chukwu Okike*. It appears in many myths of origin. Talbot (1926) maintained that “the word *Chineke* appears to have come into use lately, and in many parts, only after the introduction of the Christian religion. The old form seems to have been *chi*, sometimes called “*Chi-Ukwu*, the great *Chi*.” (p. 41).

Ala: *Ala* is believed to be the Supreme Mother of all things. *Ala* is believed to be the wife of the Supreme Being, who in some places is called *Amadioha*.

Amadioha – *Ala* relationship

Amadioha inhabits the sky and was separated from the Earth Goddess because of a woman who disobeyed a tradition by committing *aru*. Another myth portrayed *Ala* and *Amadioha* as being in the water, which covered the whole earth but seeing that humans and animals would have nowhere to bury their dead and rest, *Ala* decided to spread the body out and make a home for humans. When the *aru* was committed and *Amadioha* receded to the far sky, it (*Amadioha*) fertilized the land with rain water, which helped *Ala* bear food for humans and animals. The Igbo say: *e lechawa odidi nwoke na nwanyi, a mara ka Amadioha na Ala siri biri* – One gets the idea of the relationship between *Ala* and *Amadioha* from the status of husband and wife. The gods (*Ala* and *Amadioha*) are therefore the prototype of the family life. Thus to the extent the abstract relationship between the gods are described, to that extent or more does it x-ray the original understanding of husband and wife. Ekwuru (2009) speaking on this analogy said that *Ala*:

... represents a bundle of paradoxes; thus, she is at once beneficent and maleficent like most other gods. *Ala* “raises”

and “nourishes” the life of her children; yet she “kills” and “swallows” without mercy. Her beneficency is most experienced in the increase of fertility in all creatures that directly and indirectly (are) nutrified from her “labyrinth womb” of goodness. While her maleficiency is seen in the “death” and “burial” into her “labyrinth womb” of wickedness. She is nevertheless, the prototype of Igbo feminine beauty and fertility. Hence, it is said that: *Ala bu nma*, “Ala is beauty:” *Nma Ala bu omumu*, “the beauty of Ala is her fecundity”. This also highlights the traditional Igbo concept of feminine beauty; which comprises of “bodily fitness”, “fecundity” and “humility.” A woman who lacks any of these three qualities of beauty in the traditional Igbo society was considered to lack the “functional” ontological fitness for womanhood. (p.106)

In this *Ala-Amadioha* typology, the place of the woman is projected into *Ala*, the earth-goddess and the man into *Amadioha*. *Ala*/woman is humble and unassuming, always stretching it/her(self) out to accommodate all. *Ala*/woman is the foundation of all human thriving or at the center of preservation of life and is full of sacrifices for its daughters and sons. The woman feeds the children and she can keep away from the husband in order to rear the children. However, the husband comes from time to time to fertilize it/her with rain for the teeming and preservation of life. The husband often strikes the land with thunder in the bid to protect it/her from evil. The man has not the patience and humility (the sign of *air* mentioned above) to tend life but the strong hand of discipline (the sign of *fire*, also mentioned above). *Ala*/woman is beautiful and for love of it, Igbo People can traverse distances in order to acquire/marry more. *Amadioha*/Man is a visitor to the house coming to fertilize the *Ala*/Woman that it/she may go on with the work of her heart: sitting with its/her children and being happy with the corresponding responsiveness. Chiegboka (2009) quoting Ngwoke Ike says:

It is not uncommon, especially among polygamists in some communities, for husbands to take it that it is not their responsibility to maintain their wives and children, ‘rather it is they (wives and children) who have to maintain him. Every wife must fend for herself and her children and from the fruit of their labours, maintain her husband, whose primary duty, as many see it, is to impregnate the wives at least available opportunity (p.22).

Personal god (*Chi*)

Agbasiere (2000) rather associates *chi* with the movement of the sun, which is a sign of *Amadioha/Chukwu* and the receptivity of the earth, which is a sign of the goddess of *Ala*. This is seen in the greeting: *I bola chi?* - Have you succeeded in breaking through darkness to light? *Ala* is the force behind the Igbo communal religion and *chi* is the mark of uniqueness for the individual, which can be associated with personal fortune or misfortune. Agbasiere (2000) thus concludes that *chi* is “a subtle incarnation of both *Chukwu* and *Ala*” (p. 55).

Man and Woman in Igbo Society and Life

Relationship within the Kinship Structure

Nna na nwa (Father-child): The father is the owner of the family and every member of the family is taught to be obedient to the father. The father is seen as a ‘briefed disciplinarian’ and a symbol of physical strength, growling at wrongs and punishing instantaneously. The father does not often follow a case quietly for sometime but is often briefed on whom to discipline. This creates a view of a remote figure of the father in the family. He has not the finesse of caring for life and so often drives the children to the mother’s place. This is just like the relationship between *Amadioha* and *Ala* over the children as seen in the previous chapter. The father, like the *Amadioha*, leaves the house and children to the wife. Out of her volition and love for children, the wife often stays at the home to care for the children with everything she has. Children have been the joy of women in marriage and this depicts our previous assumption about *Ala*, the Goddess. She feeds them, clothes them, teaches them the social principles and to act with deference to the father. The father in the polygamous set-up, which was generally obtainable in the traditional society, was a stranger in the family, though always revered as the head. Some may not even know all their children or their names. It is also said previously that *Ala* is sweet and therefore men traverse places in order to acquire more – this is the underlying notion about polygamy, which is economically fitting into the agrarian epoch. It simply means more women, more children and more hands in the farms.

One may say that polygamy more likely seems beneficial to men than women since it brings about competition, jealousy and wrangling but it is not so. That conclusion is as a result of inter-positioning of cultures or epochs. People read into the past with the binoculars of the present day social relations. There was an understanding then and there were rights accruing to the first wife and others. The first wife’s status was raised or more dignified at the event of a second one and this explains the reason why the women were in the forefront of taking other wives.

Nne na Nwa (Mother/Child): The mother is the repository of emotions of life, which is a tool for her pervading presence, a symbol of quiet strength and guidance, a symbol of peace, joy and life in the family. The mother affects the psyche of the child superlatively and can turn the children's hearts against their half siblings or create a peaceful co-existence. This is done through their power of socialization. Nwoye (2011) comments that women should be seen more as givers and builders of culture within the society because of their roles in the communities. One of these is giving voice to the unsung role of women in promoting the culture of peace in Africa. Peace is described as freshness, health, wellbeing, harmony, calm and tranquility and women are said to contribute to it through positive childcare, educating the child in the art of considering others, respect for the culture of life, elders and society. These are knit into the fabric of the being of persons by the mothers and it is everlasting. This is true because the mother teaches the children, male and female until puberty when the father drills the boys in the masculine tasks. Agbasiere (2000) concludes that the "bond between mother and child is the keystone of Igbo social relations." (p.85).

Social Status

African societies were internally ordered in a hierarchical fashion and both of which provided personnel for domestic and extra-domestic (or public) activities. Okonjo (1976) blames the Western world for making public-status-bearing roles the exclusive preserve of men while women, who want to achieve distinction or recognition become appendages to men. Acholonu (1995) maintains that:

What determines social status in Africa, in all parts of Africa, is economic power, and hardly gender. A rich woman, an educated woman and enlightened woman who is outspoken, hardworking and fearless can hardly expect to be looked down upon by any member of the society or of her own immediate family... Rich and enterprising women are better placed on the social ladder than poor unenterprising men, without prejudice to the individual customs of African Communities. (pp. 44-45)

Surdarkasa, N. (1989) further argues that the notion of "status", which stands for social stratification on the basis of sex, is inappropriate in describing the relationships between females and males in Africa. Male and female form two distinct genders yet make up some sort of interwoven sexual entity that propels life in the societies of African nations. In fact, Amadiume (1987) in examining the structures that enabled Igbo women achieve power, stated that roles were neither rigidly masculinized nor feminized. Women could play

roles usually monopolized by men and were then classified as males – a classification facilitated by women’s independent economic resources and the existence of a strong goddess-focused religion. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, this strong presence and reverence of the *Ala* goddess in Igbo religion is a transposition of the value of women in the said society, which has a pervading presence in all social relations.

Kinship Ties:

Fox (1973) defines kinship as “the relationship between ‘kin’, i.e. persons related by real, putative or fictive consanguinity” (p. 33). Nwanunobi (1992) itemizes the strong points in kinship by saying that: “(i) the mere biological act of impregnation and birth does not create a kinship system; (ii) for the phenomenon of birth and parenthood to have any significance, it must be given a meaning by the society” (p. 18). This is especially true with the Igbo people since every child born to a woman in marriage belongs to the man who paid the bride price despite the fact that another man may have fathered the child biologically. Also if a child is born by an unmarried woman, the child belongs to the mother’s natal kin. Among the Igbo, social fatherhood is thus created by the payment of bride-wealth and the performance of customary rituals. (Again, this creates a caveat for the prominence of economic power in Igbo social stratification). Therefore, sexual relationship cannot be equated to kinship even though it plays a crucial role in the formation of kinship. It assumes its full meaning when it has the support and sanction of the society. One such place is the nuclear family, which is at once the smallest and nucleus of kinship relations.

***Ala*, The Igbo Woman-Being**

The traditional understanding of the dignity of women in Igbo socio-cultural world is projected into the *Ala* goddess. Women are believed to take the place of *Ala* in the traditional Igbo families and society in order to perpetuate and foster life. Ekwuru (2009) sets forth strongly that *Ala*:

is nevertheless, the prototype of Igbo feminine beauty and fertility. Hence, it is said that: *Ala* bụ nma, “*Ala* is beauty:” *Nma Ala* bụ ọmụmụ, “the beauty of *Ala* is her fecundity”. This also highlights the traditional Igbo concept of feminine beauty; which comprises of “bodily fitness”, “fecundity” and “humility.” A woman who lacks any of these three qualities of beauty in the traditional Igbo society was considered to lack the “functional” ontological fitness for womanhood. (p.106)

The ontological woman-Being is the *Ala*, who exacts her ontic-ontological existence in all women, who are mothers. *Ala* is The Woman, while women share in the Being of *Ala*. In as much as they participate in this Being, they possess the integrity of being a woman; they are fulfilled. Their physical powerlessness and silence represent the humility and the unassuming characteristics of the goddess, who remains low, silent but all pervading. In explaining the understanding of the place of women in Achebe (1986), Okafor (2011) says that Okonkwo's fixation in his exaggerated masculinity to the extent of showing disdain for womanhood was ill-conceived and even naïve for a lord of *Umuofia*, who should understand the principle of *omumu* and reverence for the *Ala* goddess. Okonkwo contravened the code of silence of the sacred week in respect of *Ala* by beating no other person but a woman and mother that fully signified *omumu*, which in turn is the life giving essence of *Ala* goddess. Okafor maintains that this led to his suicidal act by hanging and so was not taken into the labyrinth womb of *Ala*. A woman who becomes a mother becomes at the same time an ambassador, a messenger of *Ala* and draws upon herself the integrity of the goddess. It is the ontological presence of this goddess in every mother that bears, feeds, cares for life and socializes the children of *Ala*, the entire society. She inspires or energizes the woman to stand for and defend the life of the goddess in her children and in the society at large. *Ala* is the goddess responsible for perpetuating the life of the Igbo society. Ene (2003) assures us that we thrive and derive life itself from the bounties of *Ala*. Little wonder, Acholonu (2009) says that they were called the children of the Goddess.

The ancient sculpture of the Igbo, especially the Igboukwu pot, has an image of a woman carrying children on her laps and having an *ichi* scarification on the forehead. *Ichi* is maintained by Acholonu (2009) to mean "the identification scar of Igbo god-men (women) called *Nze na Qzq* and of Igbo gods and goddesses." (p.82). She postulated that this was a sign of the god-man/god-woman, *Nshi* in Igbo religion. Thus the woman is the sign of *Ala* and she is really fulfilled and fully dignified to bear and nurture, suckle and sacrifice for the lives of god-humans. In short, it is evident that the making of god-humans or godly entities is the Igbo dignity for women, which every traditional Igbo woman aspires to.

Ritual of Identification with *Ala*:

From the treatise of Okafor (2011) on Achebe (1986) above, it follows then that to hurt a woman-mother is to harm *Ala*, the goddess and this has been known to have tremendous repercussions. In places like Enugwu-Ukwu and environs there are much fear about the repercussions of daughters sold into slavery, yet they were sold with male counterparts. The only dreaded male repercussions were those consecrated to *Ala* as *Nze na Qzq*. Thus the spiritual

power of the woman came naturally from her identification with the *Ala*, which was renewed monthly (menstruation) by sacrificing some of their blood to *Ala*. Agbasiere (2000) says that meeting a woman at such times may infect a man with *oria nwanyi*, (woman-sickness) named so probably because it was a breach of communion between a woman and the woman-essence. This is lent credence by the way the Igbo refer to it: *nwanyi iba na nsọ*, which literally means the woman going into being holy.

“Holy” for the Igbo means the same thing as for the Jewish word for it, *qadosh*.

Benner (2012) says that *qadosh* literally means "to be set apart for a special purpose", from worldly usage or being in ritual seclusion. At such times, the woman ceases to move about freely as usual. Egwuatu (2008) calls it a cleansing and purifying exercise that signified peace with the ‘gods’. She says that women at such times dug holes at remote or hidden corners of the compound (e.g the barn) and well away from the main house, over which they sat or squatted continuously or intermittently. Referring to the understanding of older women, she reports that sanitary pads which the western world introduced is the cause of many problems women have today as they do not allow menstrual blood to come out and freely mingle with *Ala*, the Woman. This communion sacrifice of the woman with her woman-essence, *Ala*, often brings blessings when the woman is disposed to the goddess of fertility. Egwuatu (2008) says that at Abakaliki area “The river brings good luck to any woman looking for child, if she bathes there regularly during her menses”. (p.113). The identification with *Ala* gives the *Ụmụọkpụ* the autonomy and spiritual influence they wield in social matters. They are somewhat the untouchables and their decisions and sanctions are feared, not because of physical prowess but because of the presence of the Goddess in them.

The family is known with the man’s name (even if he is not man enough to fertilize the womb of the woman) and the woman takes up the culture of life and the logic of the actualization of life. This goes in line with the thought of Chinweizu (1990), who sees male dominance over the female as more apparent than real, more cosmetic and superficial. Chinweizu maintains strongly that there are five pillars of female power which women have always manipulated to lord it over men. These five pillars are namely, women’s control of the womb, women’s control of the kitchen, women’s control of the cradle, the psychological immaturity of man relative to woman and man’s tendency to be deranged by his own excited sexual feelings. He claims that these five pillars of female power are decisive and women from the traditional societies have always *silently* exploited these weapons for their overall advantages.

Human Dignity, *Ndu na Afa* - Evidence of Gender Complementarity:

Another symbolism which the on-going stresses is the dignity of the Igbo personhood, which Ayika (2019) discovers to be *ndu* and *afa*. *Ndu* is given by God, while success or being a luminary in the society is achieved by individual prowess. It is to be noted that once a person reaches a luminary leverage in the society, he/she takes a befitting new name (*afa*), called title-name. The woman supplies the life in the home, so to say, while the man traverses lands through farming, hunting and other skilled labour that may bring wealth. This wealth, which may often be augmented by the wife's, is used in taking titles for him and the wife.

However, women have their own class, ritual and names they bear which are different from men's. Titles are not mere ostentations but a sign of fulfilment and success in life. Title-taking is simply a special consecration to the mother-earth to be luminaries in the morality of the land. It is even a way of check-mating the wealthy from oppressing the poor of the land. This is so because when one fails in this duty to *Ala* by committing *nsọ ala*, he is visited with foul diseases that often lead to death. Thus the fulfilment of one's dignity in making a name, *afa*, is a corporate affair. Thus it is by hard work and sacrifices and through the complementarity of man and woman under the social norm that one can become truly fulfilled in Igbo traditional society. Viewing from the area of the typology of the body, the woman, who occupies the heart or chest sticks the head, man, out from the neck. This is to say that the woman assists the man in becoming a luminary in the society. Of course, no bachelor can be admitted to that rank. If the head becomes a successful man in the society, the whole household is dignified. Also the shame is shared when he fails as it is said *onye gbaba ajọ egwu n'ọgbọ, ụkọ iku anya akọba ndị be ya*. (When one dances badly in the arena, the eyebrows of one's relations/household begin to be itchy).

Title-taking or becoming a social luminary presupposes a peaceful home. As Nwoye (2011) maintains, peace in the home means freshness, health, wellbeing, harmony, calm and tranquility and women are said to contribute to it through positive childcare, educating the child in the art of considering others, respect for the culture of life, elders and society. Women are the force behind the society in terms of preservation of life and socialization. The psychological instrument of female power over the society is socialization. This is the power of knitting into the being of a child the respect for the father, elders and the culture of the society through domestic education. They make the children imbibe the human culture. This is the reason why the woman should be carefully educated in the social norms more than the man. This also underlines the strict measures on the education of the girls more than the boys in the traditional set up.

Civilization is having a sense of duty and responsibility to the state or community where one belongs. It is not modernization as some may often refer to such an ordered Igbo group as uncivil probably because they were not well-lettered. Civilization is writ large in their hearts and would need no executive arm of government to enforce. This is close to the ideal human community, which is the target of all civilizations. The archaeological excavations at Igbo-Ukwu and Ugwuele in Ngodo suggest a time-honoured civilization without strong coercive arms of government. Candice Goucher of Washington State University, Vancouver was surprised at this when she commented that:

The Ibo past is now well-documented both archeologically and in oral traditions. Archeological excavations at Igbo Ukwu in southeastern Nigeria hint at rich cultural continuities over a millennium. Bronze artefacts uncovered there suggest trade connections across the Sahara and beyond, possibly prior to the arrival of Islam. The same artefacts also appear connected to modern Ibo cultural traditions such as scarification and titled political office. ... The existence of an object (known as Horseman's Hilt) depicting a human rider astride a horse suggests a date after 1000CE, when horses first appeared in West Africa as a result of the trans-Saharan trade... One clue lies in the scarification marks called *Ichi* marks, identical to those of the local *Nri* culture, which suggest the possibility of cultural continuity with the present in at least some form. ... (*despite these*) Igbo Ukwu thus did not form the foundation for a large scale political system. (pp. 37-39)

Conclusion

The Igbo traditional human world was run in two circles, man and woman and each group runs its own without direct interference from the other group. This underlines the freedom of self-determination for the groups. Even though a woman can switch roles, she does not need to seek to be like a man. She is already made differently and has a different world and destiny to fulfil from that of a man. The woman should be economically and politically autonomous in order to challenge the excesses of men and also as Okeke (2010) puts it, to possess the powers to rebuke, rescue, recover, renew, restore, reform and refill the society and reality as a whole.

Nwoye (2011) strongly highlights the power to build peace and resolve conflicts through the socializing functions of the woman. Thus for society to

achieve any lasting ideology of life, the women must not be overlooked. The women too should not compromise their dignity in the name of liberation. The way to conquer patriarchy is not to create only the male-face of reality or to dissolve the feminine characteristics that identifies so closely with life and nature itself but to restore the integrity of the femininity of life. The feminine personae are entrusted with life and they through their ingenuity can bring life to its natural and godly focus when strong challenges are encountered, like the 1929 incidence of Aba women riot. The challenges of the dissolution of the natural family life, the proliferation of single parenthood and gay and lesbian lifestyles and the laboratory production of human lives are human excesses against the natural process and these hinge on the lack of fulfilment, lack of peace.

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