SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES OF NAMES AMONG THE PEOPLE OF IGBO

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Abstract
This paper examines values of naming in Igbo land to ascertain a range of implications it entails. The study assumes a position that the Igbo generally do not give names to their children anyhow, that the names they give their children have social, linguistic, historical, religious and philosophic colouring. It argues that names of Igbo children are a projection of not only the whims of the parents but also a window through which we mirror their lives and concatenations. At times, such names constitute an aphorism unto themselves as well as an exemplum of their world view, what we may in Igbo refer to as Uwa Ndi Igbo. Naming reveals the people's sociological and ideological culture, vis-à-vis, their folkways, fears and aspirations, joys and hates, ideals and values as well as their cultural and spiritual values in which they hold so dear. The paper observes that every generation sets its own value. That is why the philosophic meanings of naming of the previous generation of our forebears sharply contrast with those of the succeeding generations. The biblical Jewish names vis-à-vis the Igbo will furnish the case study of the inquiry that is so fascinating, so intriguing, but, also, at the same time, so interesting.

Introduction
Despite the cross-cultural variations among human societies, there are some aspects of life that are common to all. One of these is name, a phenomenon that is acknowledged as universal, although it is also remarkably particularistic. It is particularistic in the sense that the style and pattern of naming varies across human societies. In Igbo land, personal names play a significant role in virtually all aspects of human life. Among African people, it is conceived that the name an individual bears can exert enormous influence on his or her general lifestyle and life prospects. On a societal level, the names people of a particular region are reflections of series of issues regarding their socio-cultural existence. However, despite the sociological importance of name in virtually all African societies, little academic work has been done by African scholars on this subject matter. With the aid of certain sociological theories, this introduction provides practical examples from various African societies to show that a name does not only have sociological connotations, but it is also a reflection of the dynamic nature of everyday life among Igbo people.

According to Madu (2009), "the question of nomenclature is closely related to what we refer to as identity, for a name identifies a person, a thing or a community" (p.145). African names are not philosophical rhetorics, but they are believed to convey deep intrinsic significance for the bearer and the community as a whole. It is argued that African names evaluate nature, essence as well as provide a string of relationship between the living and the dead. Almost everyone who writes on Igbo concept of names generalizes, undermining the increasing heterogeneous and pluralistic nature of African society. Traditional Igbo communities may have shared similar traits; it is also true that there are parallel intricate values. The cultural complexities in Africa are further ossified by the widespread establishment of missionary religions— Christianity and Islam—which have added their own cultural peculiarities to indigenous cultures, particularly names that many Africans have to bear. The influences of colonialism on African cultural values have been well documented. The adverse effects of these incursions on African culture such as religion, language, values, and Igbo names in this context

are very well articulated by Mbiti (1990), when he challenged African leaders to critically reflect on the legacies of colonialism whose emblems have continued to evoke our distant past, our living present and our future as it unfolds before us. We have chosen an ancient language of our people. This language is now extinct as no one lives who speaks it as his or her mother-tongue. This emphasizes the tragedy of the millions of human beings who, through ages, have perished and even ceased to exist as peoples, because of people's inhumanity to others. (Moran, 2009).

The obvious reality that this work provokes further is that just as many African languages are going extinct, so also are their names and identity. In this paper, we espouse autochthonous Igbo belief and values of names as well as arguing for restraint from uncritical adoption of foreign names.

African Concept of Names
Echekwube (2005) instantiates the import of Igbo names when he avers that names are not just signs but also symbols that evaluate "nature, essence, characteristics, functions, and orientation of an object, person, or place relative to what role it plays in the sight and understandings of the one who gives the name" (p.32). In other words, names encapsulate the totality of humanity and nature on the one hand, and on other, they depict intimate relationship between the named and the namer. Ekwunife (1996) does not agree less when he argues that for the African, there are pungent philosophical accounts to sustain the position that African names are both intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful. He further distils the point that some of the names which Africans bear need deliberate conscious efforts to decode. Otherwise, for the ordinary person, African names may just be labels, meaningless and dispensable (Egbunu, 2013).

Mbiti (1969), one of the most influential authorities in naming names are tied largely, in many occasions, to the circumstances of birth of the child; and to a large extent, these names influence the personality and character of the bearer, thus his/her identity. Names, he adds, are constant reminder of the composite conception of the African community because, some names borne, realistically recall the belief in reincarnation. Thus, Mbiti (1969) strong metaphysical ontology to African naming code. Hence, "the name is the person, and many names are often descriptive of the individual, particularly names acquired as the person grows." Mbiti (1969) further posits that there are no 'family names' in traditional Africa, except in a few instances. The reason for this is that individuals bear their own names. According to him, "there are no single family names shared by everybody in a given family (p.119)."

Ayandele (1969) has argued that the Yoruba do not have family names because of the sacred nature of one's father's name such that "no younger members dare mention it even after a father's death (p.259)." The adoption of surnames in Africa by the will of colonialists is believed to have destroyed the reverence and respect accorded them. In Nigeria, the British introduced it. It was compatible with the British law of property and inheritance just as it suited the individualism introduced by colonialism and foreign religions into African communal setting (Ayandele, 1966: 259).

Magesa (1997) opines that personal identity is a function of complex realities, which in turn defines the person. For him, that is why Africans do not "conceive of personal identity apart from life in its totality; that is, where they come from, what they do, whom they associate with their relations, their gods, etc" (p.82). Even though these define humanity, self-understanding is incomplete unless the 'drama of life' takes place within the natural world, in the life of nature and culture. As Sindima (1990) puts it, "as nature opens itself to people, it presents possibilities

for discovering how inseparably bonded people are to each other and to all of creation" (Pp.144-145). This bond initiates an incarnation or actualization of the named in the reflex of his/her ancestor; this brings to the fore an expected moral quality or values, power or event of the latter. It is in this sense that it can be said that "to confer a name is therefore to confer personality, status, destiny, or express a wish or circumstances in which the bearer of the name was born" (Nyamiti, 1988: 42).

Apart from that, names preserve memories of historical events just as they represent current family or personal reality, or replay the circumstances of birth. However, the ethical demand of historical names, especially the negative ones is to help the individual and community to prevent a reoccurrence of the grubby circumstances that had been experienced. The ethical challenge therefore is to place on the family and community template "the responsibility to create a new social, political or economic order in which everyone can enjoy a full life" (Magesa, 1997: 89). For the positive names, the logic is the same because they are clear expressions of desires or moral qualities, and media for "preserving the vital force of the clan" (Magesa, 1997: 89). This is partly why names may not be held in derision because they are intrinsically valuable and tied to the bearers, thereby deserving respect. An individual is defined by his name; he is his name. This is an inside name which is never lost, and this distinguished from the second name given on the occasion of an increase in strength…. The inside name is the indicator of a person's individuality within his lineage. For no man is isolated: he 'constitutes a link in the chain of vital forces, a living link, both active and passive fastened by the top to the link of his ascending line, and supporting at the bottom the line of his descent.' Bujo (1997) argues from anthropocentric dimension of African names. According to him, "the strengthening and growth of life in individual and community is the core responsibility of every member of the African ethical community in its composite nature" (p.27). The African community has a dialectical relationship, each playing its roles in accordance with the rules with the hindsight to generate rather than diminish life. With this co-responsibility of all, names function in cohering the dialectics (Bujo, 1997: 27).

Bujo (1990), Gyekye (1996) and Ezekwonna (2005) among others first and foremost debunk, and rightly so, the position of some of the first generation of African religious studies scholars and thinkers that held the view that Igbo individuality is wholly subsumed under or lost in community. Contrary to that, within the community thesis, the individuals do not lose their identity; rather it is the collective identities of the individuals that generate life for the community identity even though the latter apparently works towards the fulfillment or satisfaction of the former.

Ezekwonna (2005) illustratively uses the case of the Igbo in Nigeria to drive home the argument when he avers that though every individual belongs to the community, the community emplaces the individuals in such a way that they do not forfeit their essence, talents and skills. Bujo (1990) expatiates:

> Usually, it is not the father's name that is just passed on to the child; every child gets his or her own name according to the circumstance of birth. Therefore, the name is never without individual meaning, but expressed something of the person's being. It characterizes the personal ontological reality. (p. 28).

It is also in this sense that the community demands morality from the individual as free moral agents, thus becoming responsible for their actions. The community and the individual, by this relationship, are not opposed to each other in the generation and fulfillment of life. It is within this ambit that both individual and community names reflect the kind of values that identify them in the midst of others.

In the context of the rights of the individual in African tradition, Bujo (1997) admits that
> there are no family names in the Western sense, which are transmitted from father to son. Rather the child bears his/her names, which confers on him/her "a historical being, in its uniqueness" and espouses "the history and prehistory of a family as well as those of the entire lineage…. It contains a whole programme for life, which everybody has to realize individually and not through others. (Pp. 147-148).

Ezekwonna (2005) argues that personal names are a proof of individual identity. Researching among the Igbo, he posits that "a name is the first mark of personal identity in African communities" without which meaning and value are impossible to discern and ascribe (p.73). This argument is in tandem with Tempels (1959)' study of the Bantu that "the first criterion is the name. The name expressed the individual character of the being. The name is not a simple external courtesy; it is the very reality of the individual." It is the name that maintains individual presence in the community. Danquah (1968) relates it well when he said that in Africa, "names are not mere labels, but often express qualities for which the owners are conspicuous" (p.xi)
In the series of names a person bears, it is believed that the first defines the ontological or intrinsic reality of the bearer. This, more than any other reason, accounts for change of names in Africa. Tempels (1959) shares his experience during a baptismal rite to justify this. During the baptism, the parents of the child being baptized were asked the native name of their child, which was Ngoi, to which they responded: "that is he" rather than the Christian name which they merely said was Joseph. To compromise the African name seems to mean to lose one's identity or individuality. But how does a name confer identity and individuality if it reflects the namer's experiences rather than the named? Ayantayo (2010) answers this question partly. Engaging the functional theory of sociological investigation, he argues that "the traditional names are serving some purposes because there is much in a name as far as those who give names are concerned." This ramification is important because the act of name changing has become a global concern. If the namer names the named according to his/her condition, should not the latter have the right to determine his/her identity by changing his/her name in order to fulfill his/her own destiny believed to be attached to the name? On the other hand, when the name works in the positive side, the bearer is not likely to change it. Here lies the dilemma, which Ayantayo (2010) tries to survey among the Yoruba. He observes that:
> Yoruba names reveal peculiarity, genealogy and royalty apart from the fact that they are sources of family pride and means of historical preservation of tradition. The abandonment of traditional names is a sign of cultural disintegration, which requires drastic measures for preservation. His worry is not a recent one, but it has become widespread, it is not only in Africa but also in other places, to which we turn. (Pp. 1-16).

In the Igbo context, name is not taken with levity since a huge socio-cultural importance is attached to it. For instance, among the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, there are many proverbs which reflect the importance given to a name. Some of the sayings are: '*Ezi afa ka ego*' – meaning, 'good name is more precious than gold and silver'. Therefore, a name is not just given to a person, but rather there are some important factors that are considered first.

Igbo Concept of Names
    The Igbo people had their own religious belief and practices before the coming of Christianity in 1857. This religion according to Ezeukwu (2014), can be called Igbo Traditional Religion. It is traditional because it is handed down in a form not written, from one generation to the next. Ekpunobi (1990) states that:

It originated in the people's environment. It germinated and grew on their soil. It is indigenous, and has always been transmitted by words of mouth from one generation to the other. The idea of God in the Igbo culture is used to define human relationship and the significance of socialization. The Igbo traditional religion represents the thematic structure of the entire universe. God, as they believe, lives high up in heaven and cannot be seen by ordinary mortal eyes. The Igbo man's traditional religion is so much enshrined in his daily life to an extent that one can hardly separate the Igbo man from his religion. (p.56).

Madu (1996) asserts that, "It becomes very clear that religion is an elusive concept. One thing that runs through all the senses is that religion is a quest for the meaning of reality" (p.21). However, according to Mbiti (1969) African names are intricately tied up with the traditional religion. If for the traditional Igbo/African, to be is to be religious.

He added as a rider that for these Igbos to give a person a name is to insert him into a religious world with its multifarious relationships with both the unseen and seen realities of the African world. Perhaps the naming ceremony discovers the dearest in ritual symbolic forms. (p.78).

Ehusani (1991) opines that:

African/Igbo names are classified in three fields: Traditional classification; Linguistics classification and thematic classification. He suggested that traditional names distinguishes a man according to the source and circumstances of the naming. This is noticed in names like *Uzoezie*: good prospects, *Akuabia*: wealth has come, *Obialo*: am consoled. (p.99).

Igbo man's philosophy of life spans on the cumulative experiences of relatives as they impinge themselves on the Igbo in their various environment. The fruits of these experiences are often articulated and solemnly visualized in the conferring of names. Ehusani (1991) however posits that;

some African/Igbo names are sentential, phrased or nominal (Linguistic). *'Obialo'* (am consoled), *'Ogoma'* (good inlaw) is a phrasal name and the name *'Ude'* which means 'fame' is nominal. In nature, Igbo names could be anticipatory or expectatory; descriptive, supplicatory, prophetic, indicative or imperative and axiomatic, dogmatic or declarative. (p.114).

Ogbalu and Emenanjo (1982) state that;

As a matter of fact, Igbo personal names have higher linguistic content than cultural content. In other words, from the structure of indigenous Igbo personal names we may learn more about the grammar of Igbo language than we would the culture. (p. 35).

The Igbo traditional religion represents the thematic structure of the entire universe. God as they believe, lives high up in heaven and cannot be seen by ordinary mortal eyes. The myth of creation ascribes the creative activity to *chukwu/chineke*. God that creates, *chukwu* is said to have created things visible and invisible worlds.

Ehusani (1991) examines names under the following heading: God, Religion and Supernatural relations, anthropology, sociology and history. He sums his view thus:

Name in Igbo traditional religion expresses an inner desire to relate with and worship the Supreme Being – *Chukwu*. Igbo name are therefore carefully constructed and chosen to bring to light of faith, knowledge and understanding of the Igbo man in relation to his God or gods, fellow human being and himself. (p. 113).

Names in Igbo as in many African cultures and religions are not mere labels, rather they reflect the immutable desires of the sires and community in which the child is born to commune on the creator in designing his destiny. As Ekwunife (1996) observes, names manifest a person's inner reality and express his character. Beyond identification, name is a personification of the individual's confine of existence (Madu, 2018:97). Thus Ekwunife (1982) opines that to give a person name is to insert him into a religious world with multifarious relationships with both the seen and unseen realities of the African world.

> The Igbo name is more than just a tag or a convenient badge of identity. Igbo names always bear a message, a meaning, a record or a prayer. This is also to say that they embody rich mine of information on the people's reflections and considered comments on life and reality. They provide windows into the Igbo world of values as well as their peculiar conceptual apparatus for dealing with life and reality. This apparatus span the whole of life itself. (Oha, 2018: 97).

From the foregoing, naming in Igbo has been explained to portray various motives such as expressing the wishes of the parents based on the history of the family which in most cases appeal is made either to correct or enhance circumstances of the birth of the child; often bothering on number or gender of already existing ones, incidents in the family such as disputes, allegations, and other social problems which the birth of the child has come to bring to an end. The most germane of these motives is the appeal for destiny wrapping on the child which according to Okagbue and Eze (2017) is speaking to the future of the newly born baby and in corroboration Nze (1989) refers to as moulding him into and cutting for him, his separate identity.

Though name in Igbo has been tacitly linked with intimate connection with events which has either direct or indirect bearing upon the child's birth, the principal essence of naming is to chart a fruitful future and good prosperity for the child through presentation to the Supreme Being, the giver of the child, through appeals represented in whatever name he is eventually given.

Concept of Names in African Christian Traditions

Many African writers use Christian and Western concept of name interchangeably. In other words, they present Western names as Christian and vice versa. Ezekwonna (2005) and Ayantayo (2010) among others do not distinguish between them. The question is whether there is a difference between them. In the context of our discourse, Christian and Western traditions are different even though the former has been adjudged to have had great influence on the history and culture of the latter. It is in this sense that Onaiyekan (2001) avers that every culture that accepts Christianity must necessarily be converted into it, even the Jewish people and culture, among whom and where Jesus Christ himself came from need be converted to Christianity. Thus, it can be said that Christianity is thoroughly contextualized in the West so much so that it's to their friendship or relationship.

Akinola (2011) also anatomizes the name of the Nigerian President, Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan. According to him, the rise of Jonathan from obscurity to prominence in Nigerian politics has nothing to do with his name essentially. To think it does is to sentimentalize democracy rather than put into it some rational pill. That he is named after Nnamdi Azikwe, one of the foremost Nigerian nationalists and the first indigenous Governor-General should not be imputed into the equation. According to him, "it will be dishonest not to acknowledge that the strategic importance of the south-south geopolitical zone as the region that accounts for our nation's wealth has rubbed off in the historic achievement of Goodluck Jonathan" (N. P). He

adds: Jonathan's first name may be about luck but it is doubtful if there would have been much support for him to "continue" with the mandate originally given to the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua via the zoning arrangements of his party if he had been a Vice President from elsewhere. (Akinola, 2011: N. P)

While the above thesis bears some truth that there is no logical correlation between Jonathan's name and his political rise, one wonders how he became a Deputy Governor, who by 'providence', (his boss was impeached), became the Governor. Jonathan was said to have been struggling to retain his position in the gubernatorial primaries in his State when he was appointed as Vice Presidential candidate to Umaru Yar'Adua, to the angst of majority of his party and the country. Jonathan did not struggle to become the President when by 'providence' his boss died and he assumed the position of the President. As Akinola (2011) realizes, "the tsunami effect of Jonathanism had been unstoppable" even by the North that believes that rotational presidency was destroyed by Jonathan's ambition, and the more astute and deft politicians who consider him to be a political neophyte (N. P).

If Akinola (2011) believes that luck or name, as he puts it, "defies rational explanation" (N. P) it means that rationality has its limits in explaining itself and other realities. One can be justified to argue that should Jonathan have come from another zone, the permutations of presidential circumstances that brought him political 'luck' would possibly have worked for his favour, in the order of his name, as it is at present. After all, Boff (1979) observes rightly when he said traditions have been greatly influenced by it. Hence, Igboin (2004) corroborates thus:

> There are other times that the names changed are not contextualized; they are out rightly changed and bearers assume new names. Such common names Christians now bear include: Precious, Simple, Prosper, Gentle, Covenant, Marvelous, Promise, Treasure, Testimony, Diadem, Joy, Glory, Excellent, Favor, Righteous, Praise, Blessing, Mercy, Perfect, Heaven, Gift, Battleaxe, etc. Battleaxe, for example, is the shortened form of God's battleaxe. A pastor who named his son Battleaxe was compelled to rename him after three years because of the wild and weird behavior of the boy. It was reported that the boy would hit his classmates with his head and when cautioned, he would proceed to hit the wall. As usual, the pastor claimed that he was divinely directed to rechristen the boy. (p. 22).

These biblical adjectives, verbs and nouns which have turned names of Christians and non-Christians alike reflect the level of theological understanding of the namers. Although they lay claim to divine inspiration, it is hardly demonstrated that these names carry such import and authority. It is apparent that the namers are carving a class for themselves by their 'Christian' names. Olanisebe (2010) observes that some of them change their surnames, the names which link them with the other members of their lineage: "changing surnames is an embarrassment to the parents and a form of spiting them and it is against the biblical injunction that made it mandatory to honour their parents for longevity of life" (P.64).

Names in Jewish Environment
In William Shakespeare's 1594 play, Juliet mused "What's in a name? " But in Shakespeare's personal reflection on the subject, he said, "He who steals my purse, steals trash, but he that steals from me my good name robs me of that which enriches him not, and makes me poor indeed." Your Name communicates so much more than simply a tag or label of what to call you. Your name becomes the representation of who you are; who you are to your family, to your boss, to your friends, to your children, to the businessman in the office or the waitress at

your table. Your name establishes the beginning of a reputation, and the whole of that reputation is recalled by the thought or speaking of your name.

Throughout history, names have been of great importance. Adam, the first man, was given the task of naming all the animals, and was the only man ever to have the honour of choosing a name for his wife, Eve. And today, we still love to choose special nicknames for our spouses, and those names carry great significance between a husband and wife. Nicknames for children become as endearing as deeply engrained as the first time a parent hears "Mama" or " Daddy ". And it is for that very reason that we must wisely consider what names we give to one another, and what names we choose for our children. Good and bad, the words we hear and the names we are called, have such a great impact on our hearts and lives.

God placed tremendous significance on names, and the meanings of them, starting with the creation of Adam, "One formed of the earth". Several times throughout the Bible, God chose new names for those he loved, including His choice for His own Son: Yeshua. When the Angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream, he came with a very specific message about the meaning of a name. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name YESHUA: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1.21).

The name Jesus -or, "*Yeshua*" in the Hebrew, was the same word as SALVATION. You can see how God chose a name that directly described the life purpose for His son. "Call his name, JESUS, "Salvation ": for he will SAVE his people from their sins." The name Mary, for example. Most scholars cite the meaning as BITTERNESS. This is because they looked strictly to the language for the meaning. True, the name Mary comes from the Hebrew word for Myrrh, which was very bitter if you ate it. Even its appearance is knarled and twisted, with its long thorns sometimes even piercing its own vine-like trunk. Such was the use of the word in the book of Ruth (1:20) when Naomi had lost her husband and two sons, and spoke to her daughter-in-law, Ruth: "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

However, with a closer inspection into the use of the myrrh plant, a much more beautiful meaning is revealed. If the myrrh plant is hurt, or cut, it produces tears of sap, just as we have tears when we are hurt. Those tears of sap can be collected and if properly prepared, can be transformed into a most fragrant perfume, a costly healing balm, or even an anointing oil for burial. Those three uses are why it was so significant that the wise men who sought after the baby Jesus brought Him a gift of myrrh. Myrrh, --like the hurts and wounds in our life--, was never meant to be tasted and bitterly ingested, but to be transformed through forgiveness, into a beautiful, healing anointing to us, and a glorifying fragrance of worship to God.

A much better meaning for Mary than the literal meaning of "bitter" is one that applies the positive qualities of the plant. It's true that hurts in our lives can cause deep wounds, and we can respond with anger and bitterness, but if we respond rightly to such hurts, our forgiveness can be a sweet aroma to God, and a priceless healing balm for us, and those around us. So on our name gifts, the meaning for the name Maria reads "Fragrance and Healing from Rightly Responding to Hurts."

Inferring from the above, it could be observed that a name and the naming patterns of many African societies is a dynamic socio-cultural practice which reflects the social reality of everyday living. However, despite the socio-cultural relevance of naming practices in Africa, little sociological research has been geared towards this importance in human living. Indeed,

African naming is a dynamic socio-cultural phenomenon influenced by numerous socio-cultural factors, thus, sociological examination of these factors will bridge the gap of insufficient existing sociological literatures on the subject and serve as a means to understand the reality of everyday living of people in Africa. Based on this observation, this work intends to examine the unique socio-cultural dynamics of African naming using selected African societies as a basis of exploration. Hence, towards these ends, this paper is divided into five sections: introduction, conceptual discourse, theoretical explanation of the importance of name as an important symbol which makes social interactions possible, explored names as a reality of everyday life, and a conclusion.

Conclusion
The paper is an attempt to examine the socio-cultural aspects of values in the Igbo naming system. Igbo is a term which refers both to a people and to their language. For the people, the term is referred to as Ndigbo or Igbo people and for the language, it is referred to as the Igbo language. The language is spoken by Ndigbo who are one of the major ethnic groups in the South Eastern part of an entity known as Nigeria. The landmass of Ndigbo is divided into two unequal parts by the Niger River with the result that the greater portion lies in what constitutes the South Eastern State which comprise the following five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The smaller portion west of the Niger is part of what constitutes the present Delta State and parts of Rivers State but our data are drawn mainly from the Igbo spoken in the South Eastern States.

Name is as important to the Igbo as the birth of a child because the parents express all their expectations in life in the name they give to their children. From the names children bear, one can guess the intentions/life-experiences and or expectations of the parents. The Hebrews as well as the Igbo observe the naming ceremony with feasting and great joy. It takes place generally seven Igbo weeks (i.e. twenty-eight days) after the birth of a child. For the Hebrews as well as for the Igbo, the name-giver who is supposed to be one of the elder relatives takes into consideration the circumstances surrounding the family (the situation of the parents, the number of children and their sexes before the child in question, their social and financial standing). In fact, a lot of things are taken into consideration before framing a name for an Igbo child. Both male and female relatives are invited for the naming ceremony and they are well entertained. Two or more names may be given to a child depending on the family.

Naturally, every Igbo child has a name given to him/her by his/her 'chi' i.e. his or her personal god. This name is derived from the deity of the market day in which the child is born. Of the four native market days in Igbo (Afor, Nkwo, Eke, Orie/Oye), any child born on any of these days has the name of the market day as his/her natural or general name whether he/she appropriates it or not. The other names that follow are always more significant and meaningful for the family and the relatives. It is so because of the choice the parents and relatives have to choose a name where they can express their mind to God, the giver of the child and as a result, such names are carefully selected so as to remember the circumstances and incidents of the birth. For this reason, Igbo name is a story, a book or a dictionary itself. The circumstances may concern the mother of the child, sometimes they may concern the father and sometimes again they may concern the entire family. In some cases, the circumstances may be religious. It is probably the prophetic situation that accounts for the divine presence in most Igbo and Hebrew names. This is the most impressive characteristic of the two customs because it shows the people's close relationship and trust in God. The names in this context express the power and the mercy of God, the help expected from him, the feeling of kinship with him. Sometimes these names relate to their beliefs, the divine elements being understood.

A close examination of Igbo names shows the supreme importance attached to religion and culture in the life of the Igbo people. There are however names which show revengeful spirits, indignation or jealousy, depending on the sentiment that is uppermost in the mind of the parents, relative or the name-giver at the time. The majority of the names show in one way or the other the people's awareness of their complete dependence on the spiritual beings, namely the supreme God, the minor deities and the ancestral spirits. Just as language gives expression to reality depending on the perspective of consideration, analogously names can be used to show what the name-giver thinks and feels about the person named.

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