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SYMBOLISM IN IGBO CULTURE: TOWARDS A DECOLONIZATION OF IGBO CULTURAL VALUES

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ABSTRACT

Igbo life and culture since colonial invasion have experienced rapid structural and essential changes. The contemporary Igbo culture is simply an admixture of traditional elements and alien features. There is therefore a need for a concerted effort at restoring those parts of Igbo self, of Igbo symbols, of self identity that have been fragmented, distorted or corrupted, and strengthen the resilient ones that are still in practice. The purpose of this paper is therefore, to critically examine and decolonize Igbo cultural identity and find ways of restoring the Igbo cultural values through symbols that are found in traditional Igbo society. Employing the analytic and historic methods, the paper discusses the general notion of symbol and the importance of symbol as an agent of cultural identity, taking into account the importance of culture in the Igbo people's identity. The paper then recommends an Igbo cultural revival which should focus solely on decolonizing Igbo language, Igbo names, Igbo titles, Igbo values and symbols.

Keywords: Symbols, Culture, Igbo, Identity, Values, Decolonization

Introduction

In traditional Igbo society, as in many other societies in other parts of Africa, there exist some complex mechanisms of human communication that involve many verbal and non-verbal components. These are known generally as symbols. The Igbo world is replete with symbols. Igbo traditional religion for instance, is to a larger extent the manifestation of the symbolic in the natural and supernatural relationship. The Igbo culture is the aggregate of the symbolic life of the Igbo, and as Inyiama (2014) rightly observes, "symbols have a referential character indirectly mediating the relationship between man and the supernatural".

For long in the Igbo past, there had been a neglect of a critical exploration and investigation of Igbo symbols even though these symbols constitute the most apparent visible experience of the people. The Igbo social, political and religious life and orientation largely pivoted round these symbols. Apart from some general statements and haphazard references, it has not been acknowledged enough by past and even some present crop of Igbo scholars of Igbo thought, religion and culture that Igbo symbols are of primary importance in the systematic explication of Igbo socio-cultural life and identity.

Like the rest of Africa, the Igbo life and culture since colonial invasion have seriously experienced rapid structural and essential changes till date. In fact, the contemporary Igbo culture is simply an admixture of traditional elements and alien features. Thus the challenge of Igbo identity is the fact that authentic Igbo cultures are almost vanishing. For this reason, this papers seeks to address aspects of Igbo culture that are still suffering from colonial manipulations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Culture

Generally, culture refers to the distinctive ways of life of a people and embraces all the knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills that are peculiar to members of a particular society (Inyiama, 2014). Scholars, especially anthropologists are of the view that culture is those forms of behavior, practices and thoughts that are nurtured, held, cherished and maintained as desirable and having importance and relevance for our lives.

No doubt, culture is the oil that keeps society running and the pillar that hold every components of a society. Culture is bound up with language and language is one of the most important means of symbolizing and symbolizing is in turn an important requirement of culture. Consequently, no culture can exist without a language and no language can exist without a culture. Culture is equally learned, communicated and passed on to be received by future generations. Culture and communication are inseparable because culture is communicated through language, activities, costumes, signs and symbols which are meaningful only as the result of interpretations offered by the culture of the people. Communication therefore, is an important aspect of culture and it is a process in which two or more people mutually share information with one another by means of previously agreed symbols. The symbols may be in the form of sounds, objects, or signs; but such sounds, objects, or signs must be conventional. When language is employed, the communication is said to be verbal but when signs and symbols are involved, the communication is said to be non-verbal (Inyiama, 2014).

Symbols

Symbols literally mean anything which signifies something else. They stand for objects, actions, qualities not just for letters or sounds. A symbol is something that stands for something else. They suggest things beyond themselves. For example, flag, a logo, a trademark, a skull, a cross, colour, et cetera means another thing beyond their literal significance. It is another device of communication and aesthetic representation of fact. To a lay man, one may ask what is it about the Igbo symbols that make it so unique an entity that it demands a definition of its own aesthetic. The answer goes that Igbo symbols record or express many traditionally cherished values and ethical ideals in Igbo cosmology. In Igbo

land, ọmụ stands for war, ọji stands for welcome, ọfọ stands for leadership and so on. The most important feature of these symbols lies in their expression. That is, the ability to speak to man many things. We use Igbo symbols to represent or recall some greater reality. Symbols are identity; the greater number of it that the young ones know, the more they identify themselves as responsible Igbolites and are aesthetically established.

Igbo symbols have become a necessary feature of the contemporary academic discourse, and an indispensable instrument in the formation of culture today. Strictly speaking, in order to define Igbo symbols, the questions of Igbo belief and Igbo identity are inevitable. A sound grounding for the Igbo symbolic treasure is urgent as it is necessary in the upbringing of any Igbo child. Some of the serious problems affecting the young ones today is their ill-informed knowledge of Igbo culture. And this type of situation is crying for home-grown solutions. The roles of educating the young in the meaning of symbols are to ensure they cherish Igbo values and culture while remaining in harmony with the Igbo heritage of humanity. Makumba (2007) asserts that "today Africans are becoming more conscious of their African identity… How? For instance, could the important themes of African personality, African unity, negritude, African humanism, African socialism, African consciencism and authenticity be re-worked in our society today to help cultivate an environment favourable for the progress of our people?".

No Igbo man will deny the fact that an Igbo man who has been exposed to classical western education as the basis of his academic training will always be influenced by the thought categories and patterns of that way of thinking, consciously or otherwise; which happens to be the case with the majority of Igbo scholars today. And as such, the children of these days are denied that cultural orientation which in turn affects the way of life of our young generation. It is not lost to the keen observer that every beginnings of Igbo culture are enshrined in oral sayings of which symbols are eminent. According to Abba (2014), "the Igbo have characteristics for identification of Igbo, what make them the Igbo (Igbo people)".

Igbo people are Africans. An Igbo man carries or imbibes within himself that religious believe and sensibility, and this is indispensable in identifying Igbo identity." This is to say that when any Igbo child is religiously brought up in identifying some aspects of the symbols in Igbo land and what they stand for, the child will carry along the values derivable from the knowledge. Since symbols are means of interacting with one another through objects, actions, words, gestures; the young ones should store them up to enable them convey meaningful messages and interact on abstract level.

Classification of Symbols

Symbols are of different forms. There are public and cultural symbols. Conventional symbols relate to those symbols that connote the same meaning all over the world. For example – the cross, skull, peacock, eagle, rising and setting sun; colours like red, pink, blue, black, white etc, all mean the same thing to everyone in the world. Cultural symbols stand for belief, identity, religion, signs and moral values of a given society. According to Nwaorgu (2001), "cultural symbols are something which expresses or stands for people's beliefs, identities, traits, moral values, ethical ideals, virtues, religion, signs, sacrifices, arts and civilization. Example; ọfọnaogu, ashes, colours, ọmụ, tribal marks, carved stools, masks, crosses, etc". The cultural symbols stand for common traits or virtues among people of the ethnic group. Ndi

Igbo have so many symbols in words and objects that they use to represent things. For them, symbol means a sign or that which indicates and at the same time, reflects a part of faith made by the Igbo people among themselves to sustain their society. Igbokwe (2013) identifies: cultural, religious and plant and animal symbols in Igbo land as the different kinds of symbols we have.

The Igbo

The Igbo are found in the Eastern and Western banks of the lower River Niger, spreading across six states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. They are concentrated in Anambra, Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi, Imo, Delta and part of Rivers States. The Igbos are hardworking, versatile, egalitarian, and vastly-travelled. They are found in all corners of the country and even in other countries engaged in one type of business of the other. They are easily adapted to the environment and cultures they find themselves.

As a cultural entity, the Igbos according to Inyiama (2014), have a worldview and this worldview is expressed in the language and non-language forms, myths, legends, signs and symbols. Essentially, the Igbo worldview explains the people's understanding of the world, man's place in it, his hopes, aspirations, joys, problems and how best to relieve his distress. Such a world view dictates their attitudes, values and goals in life. Like the Western cosmology, the Igbo cosmology believes in a father-God, up in heaven, creating and sustaining the universe by his omnipotence and omniscience. For the Igbo man, God is a necessary Being without whom nothing else could be made; he is necessary as an external efficient cause, the omnipotent creator of all things living above the earth. This Supreme Being is however approached through the personal god of the individual, some personal and communal deities and ancestors.

For the Igbo, the universe is made up of three distinctive categories - Enuigwe (heaven), Uwa (earth) and Ani Muo (spirit world), (Onuoha, 1987). There is considerable contact between the world of the living and that of the dead. The dead mature into ancestorhood if they have lived well or fulfilled the following important conditions:

1. Having lived an exemplary life while on earth;
2. Died a natural death;
3. Giving a befitting burial;
4. Was successful, wealthy and prosperous;
5. Had bodily health and physical integrity;
6. Had a happy married life, with children, grand children, and great-grand children.
7. A ripe old age (Onuoha, 1987).

The above conditions are sought after by the Igbos and as such, they are communicated or handed on from one generation to another. Hence, the Igbos communicate their cultural attitudes, values and goals through expressions, observances, artifacts, rituals and festivals. Traditional marriages, rituals, ceremonies, death and births are perfect mediums through which the Igbos find opportunities to communicate and reaffirm their rich cultural heritage.

The Igbo and their Language

As earlier noted, language is the most important aspect of culture, the most effective means of communication. Every language looks at the world through its own lenses and sees only

the world within its own horizon. A language can be simple or complex depending on the complexity or otherwise of the world it sees within its own horizon. True indeed, language must be able to express the world view and culture of its people. The completeness of a language is relative to the world seen through its cultural lenses. When another lens with wider scope is employed that language may appear to be incomplete. The Igbos believe that language generally language appears incomplete probably because of the ease with which they (the Igbo) learn other languages and the readiness with which they inject foreign words and expressions into their own language or discourse. It may be revealing that Igbos lack words and expressions for common place objects, ideas or actions, and where there are none; Igbos will prefer the borrowed word to the one given to them in their language. This can be seen in the following examples:

IGBO	**HAUSA**	**YORUBA**	**MEANING IN ENGLISH**
Oya	Oya	Oya	Quick
Wayo	Wayo	Wayo	Cheat/Fraud
Agboro		Agbero	Tout
Utaba	Taba	Taba	Tobacco
Oga	Oga	Oga	Master
Wahala	Wahala	Wahala	Trouble
Oshikapa	Shinkafa		Rice

It is quite pathetic to note that majority of the modern day Igbo have exhibited their lack of cultural nationalism in many ways. First is the inability to exchange greetings and pleasantries in their own language especially those residing outside Igbo cultural area. Hence you see two or more Igbo prefer to exchange greetings and peasantries in the language of their host culture instead of their own. A great deal of traditional conventions of language is displayed in the art of conversation, stock greetings and responses. By resorting to a foreign tongue in a homely situation like this, one misses the elaborate attention required by speakers to formal conventions of address, to the minute courtesies and standard exchanges demanded by language as a means of establishing a friendly rapport between speakers and listeners (Inyiama, 2014). It is unfortunate that many modern Igbo men and women these days seem to feel that Igbo language is inadequate in expressing fully many concepts and phenomena around them. Contrary to this notion, Igbokwe (2013) has a better understanding. According to him:

> The Igbo language qualifies as any other in the world to express fully and wholly all concepts, precepts, phenomena and value systems embedded in the natural environment, philosophical, and socio-cultural existential localization. It is a living, growing and expanding medium of communication which is capable of doing what any other one does.

Hence, Igbos should be reminded that all people and races of the world have language and that is the vehicle that carries their various world views along. Igbo language is therefore, one of the many languages spoken all over the world today.

Secondly, many Igbos have so much imbibed the idea of cross-cultural adaptation so much that it becomes a pattern that mars the very foundation of Igbo cultural values or aesthetics. For instance, in the area of dressing, many Igbos living outside Igbo area or environment prefer to adorn themselves with the cultural or traditional wears of their host culture instead of dressing in traditional Igbo attires. Hence you see an Igbo man or woman living in Lagos or Maiduguri dressed in complete Yoruba or Hausa traditional regalia to the detriment or mockery of their own Igbo cultural wears.

Igbo Names and Titles

Names are not just given for the sake of giving names in traditional Igbo communities. Names are given according to the circumstances that surrounded the birth of a child and this actually makes such names to be symbolic and impregnated with meanings. The names Igbos give to their children not only serve as identification symbol for the owners but also reveal a lot about the history and philosophy of the parents or the family. In traditional Igbo societies, certain names are believed to be associated with molding of a person's character. However, Igbo names play some vital roles or significance in Igboland. For instance, some names are given in order to maintain and make peace and cordial relationship among the community members. Igbo names are also given to warn or guard against and challenge envy which usually leads to conflict in the community. Igbo names are given to challenge the prospective evil doer to enable him refrain from evil. Names are given to maintain whole some relationships between man and supernatural.. Names are given to signify the various designations that individuals hold especially in respect of others with whom he may be having interaction with, be it political, religious, social, and economic. Above all, in choosing a name for a child, the Igbo parents contemplate on two issues, namely, family history and personal experience. The following few Igbo names support our claims above:

Chinasa:	The gods speak in my defense.
Chiebonam:	May the gods not accuse me of anything.
Afam-efuna:	A plea for continuity.
Chijiaga:	God has my vindication.
Ozoemena:	May no more death or losses happen again.
Chukwu-ga-ekwu-onum:	God will speak for me.
Nnenna:	Reincarnation of the father's mother.
Chukwuka:	A tribute to God Almighty.
Chukwu-ga-ekpe:	God will judge.
Chikaodinaka:	All depends on God's will.
Ikpe-Chukwu:	God's case (is always free from false judgment.
Onwuamaeze:	Death does not discriminate between the rich and the poor.

Unlike other tribes in Nigeria (the Yoruba, for example) who even had an earlier contact with the Europeans, the Igbo contact with Western culture, especially their romance with the Christian Missionaries greatly affected Igbo identity. Consequently, many Igbo parents no longer give their children traditional names. In fact, to set the records right, the Christian missionaries were the architects that saw to the death of Igbo traditional names in many Igbo families today. The Christian missionaries did not allow the Igbos to use their traditional names during baptism ceremonies as they (the Christian missionaries) believed that traditional names are, not only barbaric, unpronounceable, backwardish, but also not fit for

Christian converts or believers in Christ. This was the beginning of the rejection of Igbo traditional names. Although, a conscientious efforts are being made or have been made by the Christian church in Nigeria towards the use of and acceptance of traditional names during baptism, many Igbos who were given traditional names still prefer to change them to English or Hebrew names. In fact, even their surnames or family names are gradually been Anglicized such that you find Igbo people answering:

Iyke instead of **Ike** (Ikechukwu)
Ejyke instead of **Ejike.**
Michael Bush instead of **Michael Offia**.
Paul Dyke instead of **Paul Dike.**
Peter Kingson instead of **Peter NwaEze.**

Another aspect of this 'madness' is the situation where some Igbo have resorted to de-emphasizing the Igboness or the Igbo origin of their traditional Igbo names. In this case you see some Igbo men with Igbo traditional names like Opara (Okpara), Nwokoye, Nwadike, Nkemakolam, Okafor, Nwike, etc, trying so much to hide the Igbo origin of the name by writing and pronouncing them thus: **Oprah, Wokoye, Wadike, Kemakolam, Kafor and Wike** respectively. Unfortunately, this anti-cultural and outlandish bastardization of tradition and culture is purely peculiar to the Igbo alone. If you listen to Yoruba and Hausa names, you are not left in any doubt about the owner's cultural background. Hence, Yoruba, Hausa and other ethnic entities in Nigeria are not as indifferent to their traditional names as the Igbo.

Igbo Traditional Titles

Naturally, the Igbo are achievement-oriented. Their life-cycle is dominated by the struggles for achievements. A typical Igbo man is known for his achievements in the society. These achievements range from the numbers of children one has, building a befitting house for one's family, training/giving the children both formal and informal education, and taking traditional titles. Traditional titles are however status symbols and not political posts. It is the ambition of every Igbo man to take a number of titles during his life time. To mark the level of success attained by the individual, there are a number of traditional titles lined up for him to take. The Igbo man starts with the simple and less expensive qualification for conferment of titles; the candidate must be hardworking and of good character. Like the candidate for an academic degree in our Universities who must be 'found worthy in character and learning,' the aspirant for Igbo traditional title must live above boards. Many of the titles are common to most Igbo communities while others are peculiar to some areas in Igbo land. Special titles are taken as a sign of specialization and expertise in particular fields, like hunting, carving, war, smiting and many more. The following are examples of some Igbo common titles, local titles and special titles:

Special Titles	**Local Titles**	**Common Titles**
Ogbuagu	Atama	Igwe
Ochiagha	Onyishi	Ozo
Ogbaturu Enyi	Owele	Ichie
Ozo Igbo Ndu	Ide	Nze

Igbo Costumes

Traditional titles are usually accompanied by costumes or regalia. These costumes or regalia are worn by Igbo traditional title holders. In fact, in Igbo traditional communities, there are mandatory items of clothing which an Igbo traditional title holder must wear to communicate his status to the public. They include: a flowing gown designed specifically for a title holder; red cap, eagle feather on the cap, anklets, necklace pearls, fan, and staff. These things are empowered with communicative powers such that whenever one meets an Igbo man dressed with the above, the message is clear without words. Titled men are addressed by their titles in Igbo land, example Igwe, Ozo, Ichie etc, as a mark of respect and honour.

It is important, and we want to make it clear here that the use of the term chief as title originated from the colonial policy of "indirect Rule" in Eastern Nigeria, when colonial administrators appointed "Warrant chiefs" to assist them in reaching the natives easily. Because of the republican nature of the Igbo people, there were no outstanding personalities comparable to Yoruba Oba and Hausa Emirs to be made use of by the colonial masters. Consequently, 'chiefs' had to be appointed and imposed on a people who by nature recognized no chiefs. These chiefs, according to Inyiama (2014) soon became agents of oppression and exploitation of their own people and those who appointed them were confronted with the problems of derecognizing and dethroning them. In Igbo land today, chieftaincy titles have become an obsession, an attention-grabber for cheap popularity and a sacrilege on traditional institutions. Local government councilors, state and national legislators, as well as their chief executives, including some academicians are all engaged in the rat-race for chieftaincy titles. Academicians, professionals, businessmen and women, politicians, even students and house wives are not left behind. Everyone wants to be recognized as somebody special in the society. Hence, you find people with the following titles:

Chief, Prof.	-	Okaomee I of Igboland
Chief, Dr.	-	Onwa Netiri Ora of Igboland
Chief, Dr. Mrs	-	Ononikpo Aku I of Igboland
Chief, Engineer	-	Ikemba I of Igboland
Chief, Barrister	-	Akukaria I of Igboland.

There has never been a time in the history of Igbo people when Governments interfered with Igbo traditional title taking. Unfortunately, the Governments have taken up the role of traditional king-makers in many Igbo communities as they presently determine who should become the Igwe or traditional ruler. This very act has in no small measure, desacralized the revered Igbo traditional culture.

Igbo Arts

In every culture, particularly in Igbo traditional culture, arts and artifacts are forms of symbolism for getting designed messages across. Whether it be painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, music, literature etc, the artist aims at conveying some information, impression, idea or feeling. The Igbo admire complex forms and elaborate surface decoration as exhibited on wall paintings and mask head dresses. Important masks in Igbo land like the Ijere have expansive heads with all sorts of beings on them – human and non-human. For the Igbo man, nature is incomprehensible just as the mask is beyond human knowledge. Everything in

nature is found on the head of the mask-human being, domestic and wild animals, reptiles, birds etc. The same thing is applicable to carvings and images found in Igbo shrines. They are symbolic of their conception of the role expected of the deity. The images of male and female, mother and child or father and son are very common in Igbo shrines. This signifies that the deity is for protection of the people and not for destruction and death.

Igbo Traditional Symbols

A symbol is an object, event or sound which suggests a range of reference beyond itself, the significance of which is fixed and traditional in a particular culture (Inyiama, 2014). Symbols can be visual or auditory. They are visual when signs, objects, colours or actions are involved and auditory when sounds other than language are used. Among the conventional sounds used by Igbos in conveying messages to members of the society outside language include, human sounds like crying, whistling, clapping, booing, cheering, etc. Information is also conveyed by means of sounds of instruments like flute, the wooden gong, the metal gong, cannon and gun shots. The type of message transmitted through these sounds can be examined under general information and announcements. Symbolic objects, food items, plants and leaves etc, are used to transmit specific messages in Igbo culture. Below are some symbols and their meanings in Igboland:

1. **Mmọnwụ** (Masquerade): The masquerade in Igbo symbolizes. The Igbo masquerade goes a long way in enforcing discipline in the Igbo society.

2. **Ọmụ:** *Omụ* in Igbo land is sacred and quite significant. *Omu* is used to place in farms, land or on anything that is under dispute, signifying "carviet emptor." No one dares enter into any land or property that has *omu* in it. Equally, if *omu* is placed on any object, that very object is considered safe from thieves as long as the *omu* is on the object. Therefore whoever sees where *ọmụ* is used to make barricade should not trespass to avoid trouble.

3. **Oji:** In Igbo land, *ọji* has a lot of symbolism. It symbolizes communion, life, hospitality, reconciliation, unity, peace, and sealing of covenant. In the Igbo traditional settings, *oji* permeates all aspects of life; political, social, economical, and religious. A lot of respect is accorded to it for its diversified importance. Osuji (2009) confirms this when he says: "Kolanut symbolizes peace, respect, goodwill, acceptability, settlement of quarrel and in fact anything that stands for love and unity". That is why kolanuts are used for every occasion in Igbo culture and it is one of the most surviving cultural practices of the Igbo man. There is a saying that others (Yoruba and Hausa) cultivate or produce kolanut, but the Igbo celebrate it. This goes to show how significant kolanut is to the Igbo.

4. **Ọfọ:** *Ofo* is known as a symbol of authority in Igbo land. Nnabuchi in Aghamelu and Asomugha (2009) described *ofo* as "the Igbo man's spiritual base through which the forces of nature are harnessed procreated, sustained and dissolved. It is therefore their symbolism of attuning with the all-embracing creative energy"(221-222). *Ofo* is a spiritualized moral agent and the philosophical world view for code. In Igboland, *ofo* is believed to have more than physical power to wreck havoc on enemies. Nwaorgu (2001) defines *ọfọ* as "a ritual, moral, social, legal, political and linguistic symbol of justice... ọfọ is the Igbo identity for leadership". The most important aspect of *ọfọ* is found in its symbolism of ancestral authority when it has been handed on to the firstborn son (*okpara* or *okpala*) for several generations.

Decolonizing Igbo Cultural Values

Symbols in Igbo traditional society are part of Igbo identity. Apart from the Igbo symbols discussed above, language, traditional titles, traditional wears, are all part of Igbo symbols and identity. Symbols have been observed to serve not only as code of conduct, but also as a yardstick for measurement which members of a society look up to. Although, so many Igbo symbols in art or expression have been wiped away by the encounter with western cultures, some Igbo symbols have kept their vitality till date. Values for Igbo symbols will enable the Igbo identify themselves with their culture.

The Igbo race is endowed with a plethora of exciting culture, custom and tradition. Starting with the language itself, the Igbo are blessed with a variety of dialects yet, have one central Igbo language which all Igbo understand and communicate with one another. Like other tribes in Nigeria, the Igbo traditional wears distinguish the Igbo and make them stand out in every crowd. The Igbo have enviable values and principles that guide and direct their lives in the community. Some of these values include sacredness of life – the Igbo abhor blood-letting. In other words, murder or man-slaughter is a taboo in Igbo traditional society. Hard-work is another important value the Igbo uphold in their lives. In Igbo land, hard-work is rewarded and praised, while laziness is abhorred and ridiculed. That is why till date, an average Igbo man or woman struggles to make his life better through hard-work. Honesty or truth is a value that the Igbo cherish above many things as they say that *ezi okwu bu ndu,* meaning that truth is life. A good and an upright man in Igbo traditional society is a man who is honest or truthful. In addition to the mentioned values and more, the Igbo value and cherish their language, tradition and customs. This has always been seen in the way they dress and communicate.

Now, in spite of all that the Igbo hold sacred and valuable, there is still need for a restoration of certain values, customs and traditions that have been or are currently been bastardized or eroded by the influence of foreign cultures. Thus, we call on the Igbo to re-evaluate their priorities and return to those values, customs and traditions that make the Igbo great and outstanding wherever they go. First, the Igbo must, as a matter of urgency, cherish, advance and promote their language. Every Igbo must be able to speak Igbo fluently and as well teach the young or the growing youths their language. Presently, Igbo language is dying and unless the Igbo wake up and shake off the roots of neo-colonization or colomentalism in their lives, there will be a time that Igbo language and culture will experience what Latin language and culture experienced. No one speaks Latin as a language of communication anywhere in the world today. Latin can only be heard in the Catholic Church or in the phrases or adage used by public speakers. Therefore, to forestall such ugly experience, the Igbo must wake up and take up the challenge of promoting their language. Secondly, the Igbo must learn to appreciate their culture especially in the areas of traditional dressing and in the names they bear and give to their children. English names should be dropped and replaced with Igbo names. In the Church, Igbo names should be used as baptismal names as against the English names imposed on us by the White Missionaries who, to our opinion, were forerunners of colonialism and imperialism. Most importantly, the Igbo youths especially, should stop Anglicizing their Igbo names. There is nothing wrong with our Igbo names; they are beautiful and philosophical.

Other areas that need decolonizing include names of towns and villages in Igbo communities. As a matter of urgency, the Igbo need to restore the original form of spelling and pronouncing

the names of Igbo villages and towns. Instead of writing and pronouncing *Enugu, Aukunanaw, Awka, Owerri, Nsukka, Obollo Afor, Onitsha,* we should henceforth spell and pronounce them thus: *Enugwu* instead of *Enugu*; *Ọkunanọ* instead of *Awkunanaw*; *Ọka* instead of *Awka*; *Owere* instead of *Owerri*; *Nsuka* instead of *Nsukka*, *Ụbolo Afọ* instead of *Obolo Afọr*, *Ọnucha* instead of *Onitsha;* etc. To continue to retain these colonial imposition or adulteration of Igbo names is a clear indication that the Igbo are yet to be free from colonization and colomentalism. Again, the Igbo need to maintain their culture and stop copying other cultures. Every culture is unique and so does not need to copy from another culture in order to be unique, authentic and presentable. The issue of *Aso Ebi* copied from Yoruba culture which has now become generally accepted and used in every part of Igbo land during traditional marriage. The Igbo have their own pattern and ways of conducting their traditional marriage. They don't need to copy other cultures in things that concern traditional laid down principles and mode of life. These days, you see an Igbo man and his wife to be, dressed either in traditional Yoruba attires or Hausa or Fulani other than their own Igbo traditional wears. The implication of this is that those who do that do not like their culture, because no Yoruba, Hausa or any other tribe in Nigeria has ever worn Igbo traditional wears during their traditional marriages. Hence, there is a need to break away from foreign cultures that influence our Igbo culture negatively.

Recommendations

At this point, it is pertinent to recommend the ways forward for an authentic and unadulterated Igbo culture. For this reason, the paper recommends an Igbo cultural revival. This revival is a call to conscientize the Igbo to reject harmful foreign influences. It is also a call for the Igbo to throw off the yoke of cultural inferiority and to resuscitate the spirit of self confidence and self pride which would ensure the perpetuity of Igbo culture and customs. Finally, an Igbo cultural revival is a call for a conscious battle against various forms of cultural imperialism and neo-colonization.

Conclusion

The thesis of this paper is that the Igbo need a reappraisal of their culture in order to avoid an uncritical condemnation of their culture as uncivilized and or unChristian. Thus, we discussed the areas in Igbo traditional culture that have been seriously affected by the influence of foreign cultures. We observed that the Igbo are still suffering from colonial mentality or what Ejeh (2021) calls colomentalism. The Igbo have plenty of symbols in their culture which are used for the transmission of knowledge and communications. These symbols must be maintained and not thrown away as barbaric or unchristian. Symbols like *Omu, Mmonwu, Oji, Ofo* are so important in the life of the Igbo and must be preserved. The paper therefore is an attempt to conscientize the Igbo on the danger of an imminent disappearance of Igbo language, traditional and culture. Hence the paper calls for an Igbo cultural revival to salvage the already mutilated and adulterated Igbo traditions and culture.

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