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## Reviving Some Igbo Traditional Practices: A Panacea for Resolving the Crisis of Moral Values in Nigerian Modern Society

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### ABSTRACT

*The contemporary Nigerian society is faced with several societal cum religious challenges amongst many other challenges facing her. This paper tries to x-ray some of those socio-political, socio-cultural as well as the socio-religious challenges by looking into some of those Igbo traditional or cultural practices as well as how these traditional practices or foremost ways of living could become possible solution to the very many moral crisis facing our today Nigerian society. The emphasis here is on revitalizing those our core moral African values through these 'forgotten or passing' Igbo traditional Practices. A critical method of inquiry is employed in this discourse. The paper concludes by citing few of the Igbo traditional practices and how they have aided the primitive Igbo society as well as how they could be a solution to today modernized Nigerian society in resuscitating the dying moral values.*

**Keywords:** Reviving, Igbo Traditional Practice, Panacea, Values: Moral Values.

### Conceptual Clarifications

Revival /Reviving: According to "Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary", 10th edition, defines revival as bringing back something into life. So from revival, we get 'reviving' - a process of bringing about something into life.

Igbo Traditional Practices refers to those core practices found among the primitive Igbo traditional societies. They define who they are. The Igbo traditional practices are unique with the Igbos alone, and they make up their belief systems, world-views as well as form the traditional moral values of the primitive system.

Panacea is thus, any universal remedy, principle or pattern of treatment that when followed or taken, is capable of healing or treating a disease. It is a cure to problems, diseases and in fact, multiple issues. For the essence of this paper therefore, Panacea is seen from the lense of 'a solution, gateway' to the existing problem, the problem in this sense here is the crisis of moral values prevailing our modern Nigerian society.

Value/Moral Value: Broad Conception of value refers to anything perceived as good or bad (Pepper, 1958:7) or even anything of interest to man (Perry, 1854). We cannot speak of value without a mention that it stems from that branch of philosophy called "axiology". Axiology is rooted from the Greek words 'axios' and 'logos' to mean valuable and study respectively. It is also rooted in its Latin etymology as axiologia to mean science or study of anything worthy, valuable. Axiology therefore, is a theory that studies values and anything worthwhile. For the purpose of this paper, axiology, as a branch of philosophy is basically divided into two major branches: Ethics and Aesthetics. While Ethics concerns itself with those things that can be judged morally right or morally wrong, aesthetics focuses on what can be seen as beautiful or fitting. Therefore, Moral Values belong to those ethical principles that can be morally right or wrong in every society.

## INTRODUCTION

Value remains an essential aspect of mankind. Mankind does not act indifferent to the world and things around them. He is not contented with just having factual knowledge of the world. Rather, they judge or perceive things as either good or bad, true or false, virtuous or vicious, beautiful or ugly as they make their choices of things. That is to say, they give meaning to the world based on their preferences. Mankind usually attach values to things around him, thereby, giving them significance in their lives.

In his perception of what value means, Pepper posits that: "The term values may refer to interests, pleasures, likes, preferences, duties, moral obligations, desires, wants, needs, aversions and attractions, and other modalities of selective orientation" (1958:7). It implies that we value things based on our desire and preference for them. Although how we perceive these things may differ. Our highest interest or desire forms the basic or fundamental value from which other values can be appreciated. For instance, an Anglican or Roman Catholic priest whose highest interest is to be in union with God, would most definitely value other things of life based on how they bring him closer to God. The grand (or fundamental) value gives worth to human needs and existence. It is basic in determining human desires, norms and existence. It follows that when the fundamental value is most explicit and fully conceptualized, it becomes a yardstick for preference, choice or even judgement. And even when it is implicit or not well defined in a code or document, values still provide level ground (basis) for man's decision making. Values serve as guide for the identification and actualization of mankind's promotion of human welfare as well as his aspirations. Although the branch of philosophy that deals with the study of values is called 'axiology', has its dual branches in philosophy as: ethics and aesthetics. Ethics therefore, deals with moral values while aesthetics focuses on the artistic values that deal with beauty and fineness. Thus, ethics which is a branch of axiology would be our main focus since it focuses on moral values.

Ostensibly, morality as it pertains to the nature of man, is one of the most difficult issues to deal with. It requires pragmatic approaches which is the direction of this discourse -scouting avenues to maintain a healthy approach to life especially in our contemporary Nigerian society. There are thus, various divergent views and theories which make up the true nature of morality in man's time and space. In his August, 1993 encyclical letters, entitled *veritatis splendor*, St. Pope John Paul II carefully articulated the definition of morality as "the relationship between man's freedom and God's law which has its ultimate and living centre in the moral conscience as manifested and realized in human acts. It is through His acts that man strains perfection as one who is called to seek his creator of his own accord and to freely arrive at full and blessed perfection by cleaving to Him." It is premised on this that Albert Schweitzer in Mbiti (1969) affirms that "the prosperity of any society depends on the moral disposition of its members."

Going further, every society even right from the primitive to the contemporary society, has known values, norms and laws which shape, govern or direct the conduct or behavior of such societies. In the primitive and even modern Igbo-African traditional context, values include cultural and moral heritage transmitted from one generation to another. It involves hospitality, honesty, etiquette, respect for human life, reverence or respect for elders, the positive spirit of courageousness, humility, not obsessed with perceived 'bad or evil' things amongst others. It infers therefore, that values entail a healthy but positive connotation and if a society encourages behavior that suffers positive qualities either by omission or by commission, such society is said to be morally bankrupt. In the Igbo traditional society, values are heavily manifested and preserved in their cultural activities. It follows therefore that this cultural activities even begin from birth usually known through initiation rites (naming ceremony), rite of puberty, the age grade system, the marriage institution, adult roles- from adolescent to adulthood until death etc. They all form the Igbo-African traditional practices or moral way of life. They are also interspersed with other cultural norms like folklores, tales by moonlight, *oji* (kola nut) presentation, artistic and masquerade ceremonies among others. These are rooted in the people's world-view which make for orderly functioning of the society. The significance of the values are quite too numerous but the focus of this

paper is to highlight, compare and contrast the traditional and contemporary (otherwise seen as primitive and modern) values of our society, especially among the Igbo people who are very receptive to change to rediscover our traditional *cum* communal values which are made for a human society. We would achieve this by taking into cognizance, few aspects of primitive and modern values in Igbo world-view. This assessment I believe, would help shape and re-align our decaying Nigerian society.

### ***The Igbo Modern Value System: A Preponderance of Crisis***

Many have queried the transition that got us to where we are today. They are concerned with the shifts in character or lifestyle of the Igbo race, although the truth remains that it is not only the Igbos that have transitioned into such modernity. Change truly is constant but when such change or transitioning does not guarantee a people what they should look back to and be happy about, having transitioned or changing with time, it beckons for a retrace. As the Igbos change, instead of counting continued successes or growth in her socio-religious, socio-political, socio-cultural as well as in her moral underpinnings, what appears to have been the resultant effect has been the state of the moral decadence prevalent in our Nigerian society. And one may ask: what are those moral lapses like? They include but not limited to quest to get money, get-rich-quick mentality of her youths, the state or level of indifference to love, apathy to unity, communalism and socialism just to mention but a few, which although, have all been what the primitive Igbo society celebrated. The contemporary or modern society is thus embodying a quasi state, a pseudo state it in turns infuses in those who live in it. Another big question remains: does every growth truly entail healthy living? If the answer is not in affirmation, it presupposes that our change to modernity even within these years of changes or transitioning could thus mean negativity, thereby, unhealthy. Hence, the need for a discourse as this. This beckons for urgent solutions to the challenges, else, the damage it may create may be unthinkable in the near future.

Values exert an enormous influence on the moral attitude of the young people and the damage the today's moral crisis may create in the near period may not only be deeper but deadly as well. If a society abandons a particular way of life, behavior or attitude, to adopt a new one without a thorough examination, such society is said to be in a crisis. That is to say, we do not truly change with time and the global society as supposed, we have within these years been borrowing and adopting to those exogenous cultures, morals and practices that continue to communicate or portray bad of us. And I think this could be true: that we do not truly change as time and all things are in constant motion says the philosopher Heraclitus (c. 535 - c. 475 BCE); but rather, we have been borrowing and adopting to alien cultures, moral values and practices without critical examination. A condition that has thrown the Igbo-African people into regret rather than celebrations. The imprints it continue to deposit both in our young ones and in the land are as well perilous.

It is true that colonization gave rise to urbanization or if you like say modernity: acceptance of modernized currency, modernized or Westernized education, foreign religion (Islam and Christianity alike etc) as well as modernized character. Whereas, in the traditional society, people, especially the Igbo people lived in their towns and villages. Urban areas were established for easy administrative conveniences. Consequently, this has turned back to be an montage of people with cultural diversity. Part of the problem stems from this assemblage of people from different cultural backgrounds which made the entire moral structure of the Igbo people, which were although held in high esteem, to begin to crumble. The results are the current state of things: morals, attitude and aptitudes. The known family bonds seem to have been weakened. Emphasis shifted from the group (otherwise seen as communal and social life) to individualism (egocentrism). We are aware that the movements from rural areas to urban areas were primarily in search for white collar jobs and ofcourse, to enjoy social and other infrastructural amenities as secondary aim. Technology and infrastructural amenities made life easier in the urban and sub-urban areas. Such amenities as pipe-borne water, electricity, good roads, fancible schools as places of learning/acquisition of Western education (i.e schools), cinemas and stadia, all transformed the cities to fun centres. This could be said to be both the genesis of our liberation as well as our damnation in its figurative sense. This era was when we started to own radio, television, video sets and even mobile

phones at recent as well as enjoy other facilities which are not tenable in the rural areas. Through the established globalization and urbanization, a person does not necessarily need to go outdoors in search of comfortable living, because right from the comfort of your room, one can stay indoors and be entertained, one could travel by air through aeroplane, helicopter etc. With it, we are able to communicate or interact with someone in a far distant area simply with our mobile phones, teleconferencing can take you to a purely different zone right there in one's living room. Even post offices have become obsolete with the existence of e-mails, except for the purposes of carrying parcels. With the use of Televisions now even modernized to plasmas connected with Gotvs, DStvs etc, movies and films have taken over the moonlight tales and fables and no doubt, these constitute major value crisis.

It is no news that youths and even adults (or the aged) now hook to the electronic medias to watch the good, the bad and the ugly. They are also exposed to aggressive images, wars, violence and other vices through these uncensored programmes from the hard and electronic media. A UNESCO study uncovers TV's prominent role in the lives of young people all over the world and its influence on the development of aggressive behavior. Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Newslines programme report on Sunday 15th July 2007, shows that most CD sellers in Lagos and elsewhere in Nigeria survive on the sale of pornographic films. When further interviewed, dealers acknowledged that they sustain their livelihoods through the purported sale of pornographic films; they further revealed that their patronage rely majorly on the young people. Here, one can plus and minus such a society where a heavy patronage to and on pornographic films and similar movies as such is truly healthy or sick. And if such society is truly morally upright or morally bankrupt? You can whisper the answers to yourself. It is also in the face of such globalization and urbanization in which we all currently share that the sale of abortion pills, enlargement pills and oils for men's sexual organs has become not only normal but even advertised on our various telecommunication channels. And one asks oneself: is this the 'supposed' practice, is this healthy, does this promote the Igbo traditional value system? These and many more have seriously contributed to the reason why we are not only morally depreciating day after day but we keep crying woes about the worst state of practices in our modern Nigerian society without taking a look into the contemporary practices and possibly juxtaposing it with the way things have been from time immemorial.

Consequent upon the above, it is unarguably obvious that the influence of the electronic media as well as the consequences from the very many physically borrowed practices as a result of the trending modernity and globalization are not far-fetched as our streets have been turned to theatres of violence. Often times, the reports of violence of the ugly scenes are carried even in our print and electronic media. An obvious instance to this incessant deaths and quest to grab power, money, and land was the Facebook media post made on June 3rd, 2025; wherein the Governor of Benue State reported via his Facebook page: (Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia) that over 23 lives have yet been lost again by suspected Fulani herdsmen. Although he had earlier reported through the same Facebook page that about 20 lives were lost in April, 2025 and about 59 on April 19, 2025 while 56 lives were also killed in April 20, 2025. This is not just demeaning but but also shameful to a nation as Nigeria. So from April to June 3, 2025; about 43 lives have been lost in what appeared to be a political drama. This is the number they want us to believe, which many people believe is higher than the reported figures. In his June 3rd recent post, the Governor had claimed that 12 people were killed in Apa Local Government while 11 murdered in Gwer West Local Government Area of Venue State, Nigeria. Totally it to be 23 innocent lives. And the only things we saw and have continued to witness is the usual appearance on Televisions and social media handles to announce the number of lives lost without proactive steps or measure. This is truly a genocide, no longer a mere killing. And one asks: is this the society we have lived and grown in the primitive era and were the primitive people not better off than the so-called 21st century generation, the perceived 'Genzees'? And the above report is only a few out of the many incidents in the Nigerian internal crisis (obvious war scenes). Similarly, ritual killings are on the high increase even in Igbo land. A clear instance is the reported abduction and attempted murder case of one innocent girl by one popular *Eziagu* ritualist often referred as a native doctor, but these are not how core Igbo native doctors behave, he can simply be seen as a *juju* man (one who foils in evil acts) by name Mr. Ezeani, exactly on May 27, 2025. The said man,

popularly known as *e dey play e dey show* confessed when interrogated at the 'seme border' when he tried to escape the country, good enough, he's been handed over to the security officers who many have been championing that justice should be served in such ugly incidence. They are concerned that such case should not be treated like others or similar news which have been swept under the carpet by those who are supposed to be protecting her masses. The situation is terrible and can be seen in almost every state in the country. The examples are numerous to mention, from Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Kaduna, Abia, Adamawa, Benue and almost every state in the nation. Corpses are dumped at every nook and crannies oftentimes with some human parts missing.

The rise and spread of cult activities in our tertiary institutions is a clear indication that Nigeria in general, not only in Igbo land, is passing through the throes of negative values. Cultism in our institutions is purely an organized lawlessness by young people who have never been cultures in the pursuit of the positive values. Some of these higher institutions in Igbo land include but not limited to Federal Polytechnic Oko, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, College of Education Technical Umunze, Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe in Anambra State, Paul University Awka, Alvan Ikoku University of Education etc. Not only does such practice exist in public universities, they could and still take forms in our private institutions. One author reckoned that the dangers they are creating even in the primary and secondary school cannot be over emphasized. The truth is that Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Provost of these institutions may not tell what they are passing through in curbing or trying to eliminate the rate of cult-related practices in these higher institutions of learning in Igbo land but the truth remains that such cult activities and tendencies exist therein. And where or through what means did our young people get this practice (s) from, where would it lead them to, where these one of the missions and visions of our forefathers who also acquired higher education in the 70s, 80s and even 90s? Some of the actions of these young Igbo cultists are influenced by drugs. The negative actions include robbery, disruption of examinations because they're never prepared for exams in schools, blackmailing of lecturers in order to be favored. They even go to the extent of murdering their fellow cult rival groups with knives, guns and cutlasses for reasons quite difficult to believe. Agujiobi-Odoh in Ali posits that "They do not bother about the consequences of spilling blood or taking human life" (2007:56b).

More so, prostitution and sexual harassment have been on the increase. This unwholesome act is not only degrading but equally exposes those who indulge in them to various forms of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), early pregnancy or even deaths from or through abortion. The moral values of virginity is today an outdated phrase to Igbo young people. The Igbo youths seem not to understand the good effects of virginity, responsibility and control of one's emotions and feelings. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS, Gonorrhea, Syphilis etc have all been given a significant media as well as academic attention. These may not be too bad in themselves since the awareness of them all contribute to the state of the nation's healthy living but their negative effects still abound; one of which is, in our contemporary society, people boldly come out on social media as well as on other e-medias to declare that he or she is HIV positive. With this, the ugly effect it may create on the younger ones could entail feelings of anyhowness, because after all, since Mr. A has it, if I have it, it is a no death sentence. And the big question could be: what type of morality are we portraying when everyone knows that about 86-98% of HIV/AIDS cases are from sexual immorality? The list continues. The modern society is such society where our aged parents are dumped at old people's home under the care and support of social workers with little or no attention from their family members. An upgraded abandonment. In some cases, they may die not fulfilled as though their family members were never in existence which security authorities like the police in alliance with the judiciary may make decisions not *in tandem* with moral justice.

The dressing codes of our young Igbo male and female are not only troubling and alarming. The dressing ethics of our women has been usurped. They call it Western code. The men have adopted to the 'genzee' sagging of clean and ugly boxers, under wears that were supposed to remain private have been turned to 'style' and as a means of sexual seduction. The prevalent incidence of immodest dressing among women in our society calls for the adoption of dressing ethics. The exposure of what needs to be concealed is as a result of influence of Nollywood film stars on movies. Even our average and middle

aged women go to tailors or seamstresses to demand that their blouses be cut so mini or short so as to exhibit their cleavages. The same is the scenario among our public office holders who have children, one wonders how such parents could be parenting their children well or upright to imbibe excellent moral values.

We also witness cases of materialism - where possession of money in our contemporary society seems to be the yardstick or measure of all things. In fact, we can go on and on, the list is endless. The society is in no doubt, bedeviled with sexual immorality, immodest dressings, negligence to duty, thuggery, forgery, ritual killings among others. We cry woes today that the sense of brotherhood, oneness, communal living or hospitality has been merely virtual or academic concepts usually mentioned on the e-medias or on papers. These moral values seem not only that they have been relegated to the dustbin but that they have equally been moribond. Put simply, they have disappeared in our contemporary or modern society. With monetized economy and spirited competition, parents seem to have joined the bandwagon all in pursuit of wealth and affluence. The thirst and competition of training one's child according to the laid down traditional values of the Igbo people seem to be a chorus we only hear in churches and in other religious as well as communal gatherings in our different clans or community, usually when they visited 'village'. The modern teachers and bankers give reasons such as not having time in order to pay attention to these things that ordinarily should be their obligations -training the children in the right way of the customs. They now rush off to schools, work places for government employees or to banks for bankers only to come back in the evening being very tired and weak to even recognize what their wards did in the day, the friends they keep, the hooks they make with their android phones or not etc. Everyone is now busy. And one asks: a teacher who can't teach and raise his or her child appropriately with the right moral inculcations, what could such teacher impart on others. This raises the question: are all teachers truly one? For the attention of this paper, we may leave such discussion to a later date. All these beckons for an urgent answer with proactive steps. The children on the other hand are either conveyed by their drivers and after school are either taken care of by their nannies or they take care of themselves alone. These are at the expense of good training and adequate moral formation. No doubt, these instances paint a gloomy picture of the future of our society. It is thus pivotal we take a look into the primitive or foremost to see how the value system of the traditional Igbo society ensured the functionality, stability and orderliness of the society as well as draw inferences for ways forward especially in our contemporary Nigerian society.

### **Igbo Traditional Value System: Need for Revival**

Moral formation in the Igbo traditional society is taken into high esteem, reason while when a person does something it is easier to differentiate the tribe such a person comes from. This is because the Igbo traditional values do not condone such illegal practices as ritual or occultic killings, robbery, individualism and covetousness. The Igbo traditional values however, do not support laziness or any idea targeted at getting rich or wealthy without proper or known skills and sources of such income. It is not out of place to say that the Igbo people are industrious and hardworking. These are important because they are aimed at bringing up behaved, disciplined as well as aid the young Igbo people to becoming well trained and responsible leaders in their varied chosen areas of careers in future. This is who a typical Igbo person is known for. He is not known for an otherwise to these moral values. It must be noted that in the core Igbo traditional moral upbringing and formation, there are no final point to which a person could reach and we say that such person has reached the end of Igbo moral formation or training. There exists nothing as such. Their formation is a continuum until death. This can be compared to the Western education where a person learns, unlearns and relearn daily in South far as life continues. Everyone can assume the role of parenting to every young person. This signals an act of love wherein a person cannot shy away from any perceived acts by any person, whether young or even old. Here, we see the Igbo adage *onye aghala nwanne ya* (be your brother's keeper) at play. They direct, bend, transform, parent or guide one another when one deviates or seem to be derailing from the supposed, known or perceived moral statutes of the Igbo nation. This they believed, is because it truly takes a village to raise a child. Although there are still laid down social and traditional institutions for imparting these norms yet, the

load and responsibility hovers on every person of the land. This is the spirit of an Igbo person. Some of such traditional institutions including initiation rites, masquerading, sharing and presentation of kola nut, moonlight tales among others.

### **The Initiation: The Thrust of All Igbo Traditional Institutions**

Initiation for some means an evil thing, for others, it is a practice of welcoming a person into a perceived occultic or secretly established institution. But this is not purely so. Initiation is not a dangerous or an evil phenomenon. It can as well mean something quite good or positive depending on the context upon which it is used. Initiation here is a traditional rite, ritual or practice done after a child's birth which welcomes and helps such child to grow towards adolescent, adulthood and even unto older age. In fact, it is done to give meaning and value to life till death. Even in their book *African Art and the Cycle of Life*, Seiba and Walker (1988) conceive that in Africa, a child's birth is celebrated from childhood to youthful age, adulthood until death to give reverence or value to life. Even death itself is also celebrated in Igbo traditional society, this is to accompany the dead to his or her ancestral home to meet our ancestors. Without accompanying the dead home as it should be, the Igbos believe that such person may not only that he would not reach destination, he would not also reincarnate again; because they strongly believe that after death, the good ones will only meet his fellow ancestors and that it is only ancestors who can reincarnate. The notion of reincarnation is undebated. That is why a child could bear such name such as 'nnanna' (to mean Grandfather) and 'nnenna' (Grandmother among other ancestral names that they bear. A name a child bears serves as a mirror or pointer to the child's moral character. There is no such thing as changing a different name. A child maintains such name to death.

The initiation into adulthood on the other hand takes place when one is believed to have reached a certain age bracket, usually 16-18 years of age depending the community and their traditional laid down norms and practices. The young boys are ofcourse initiated differently from the girls and are mostly excluded from their homes to where the various initiations take place. The boys are formed under the tutelage age the elder men while the girls are guided under the surveillance of either their mothers, grand mothers or a selected women of the community whose responsibility it is to form the girls either into how to become a mother when married into another family or learning similar formations relating to motherhood. There is also the *ibe-ugwu* ([circumcision]) formation (wherein girls are put through to learn how they should circumcise their child), this for the Imo women, serves as a gateway to motherhood. You cannot claim to be a mother when you don't know or passed through this stage in Imo State, especially in Osina, Umuobom, Umuaka, Urualla and Orlu towns and in fact, within Akokwa axis in Ideato Local Government Area of Imo State. This is called *Iru Mgbede* for the girls' formation especially in some parts of Imo State. It is the successful passage of completion of the *Iru Mgbede* that ensures a woman into marriage. It implies that a girl is thus, ripe for marriage and would become a responsible mother both to her husband and to her children and even to the family she was born into and the one she would be married or was married into. The good news reaches everyone. In some Igbo communities, the location for the girls' formation varies depending on whose tutelage such girl is to undergo her formation. For instance, in some Nsukka areas, it is shifted to hold within the masquerade seasons, it takes usually 3 to 6 months. This is to ensure core or integral formation. The men call theirs *Ito Okorobia* or *Iba mmanwu*. This stage signifies that a boy has now come of age to become a family man as well as to join the cult as one of the village warriors. These stages are non-negotiable, no one tends to give any flimsy reason whatsoever not to undergo the established cult of initiation process. By and large, these formations ensured healthy upbringing, discipline in the society and helped sustain the traditional moral values for which the Igbos are known for. There were no cutting corners, it was an era of due process, of respect, of consciousness to events around us, upright living amongst others. In Igbo land, during and after the ceremonial formations, their bodies are decorated with that beautiful ornamental stick called *uli*, these several initiation practices engage the attention and energy of the young ones to be busy with something meaningful in order to be docile, disciplined, humane as well as to acquire such values as endurance and

self-esteem in the society. No wonder, Mugambi and Kirima (1976) conceived that through formation, young people acquire habits, beliefs, skills, motives and attitudes which enable them to perform obligations as growing members of the community.

The initiation for the adult ones in Igbo traditional society comes as title taking ceremonies such as the *Ozo*, *Ichie*, *Okonko* and *Nze* titles among many. There are other quasi initiation and association like *Ito Ogbo* (age grade), this is an association mapped out to identify persons or adults of the same age levels or brackets in the society as there were no such things as formal education, keeping record of birth certifications or any archival documentation within the primitive Igbo traditional society. The age grade association known as *Ito Ogbo* helped the people to know adults or each other with whom they fall within the same age bracket with. They also assist in community building and all other things concerned with sustenance of the future of their community. These various titles are achieved by the village standards and are respected in the community. The reverse is the case with our modern title holders, who more or less, bought their way out. Some of them today are the ritualists sponsoring robbers and killers in our various states and communities. Today, title holders are almost registered with the state and federal governments; wherein a political party favors their own member with community title ship and the division it creates within the community are endless. Such was never the scenario in the Primitive Igbo traditional or primitive society. Titleship was a merited practice. For Cole and Aniakor (1984), in the North East region where *Ichie* and *Ozo* were executed, the body itself is decorated with *Uli* patterns as well as scarifications for *Ichie* or *Ozo* title holders. Except if a person is a bad person, the death of every elder calls for celebration in the Igbo traditional society because they believe that the dead person, if he is a good person and lived uprightly, would reincarnate fast. The present day Igbo are abreast with what they call giving a dead person a befitting burial but their notion today differs with the primitive Igbo people of 30-50 years ago. The burial rites then were usually fulfilling because the dead is ranked with the ancestors, those known to have lived upright, this was their sense of befitting burial; hence, the reason why they usually own numerous yarn barns and farm lands in order to withstand future demands of life or unforeseen circumstances amongst many reasons as to why they own many properties. For Opata (1998), parents have great regard for their children not only because such children will continue the family name or lineage but because the children will take care of them at their old age. These all denote the regard Igbo people have for human life. Life for them is a sacred thing and must be respected.

### **The ‘Oji’ (Kola nut) Institution**

The *Oji* specie in Igbo land represents so many things. Its sharing and presentation is another practice that is till today held in the highest esteem. Thus, every Igbo person has special regard for *Oji*. The *Oji* serves various things in Igbo land, one of which it is used to welcome visitors; showing the hospitality nature amongst every Igbo person. They also use it in their rituals: their morning, noon and in fact their everyday prayers. The *Oji* nut is widely known and used in various parts of the country but among the Igbo people, it is highly valued as it not only serves as a symbol of good public relations but also plays an pivotal role in the life of the Igbos. It plays a special role both in their socio-cultural, socio-religious as well as in their psychology. It cannot be broken without prayers, showing their moral standard especially with the divine popularly known as *Chi*. It is a unifying symbol just the same way kola nut lobes are sealed together even if a species when broken is into 3,4,5,6, 7 or more; each, representing or signifying several things. It can either be broken by the youngest or the oldest of the community depending on a particular community's way of practice. It is used in almost every celebration since it is a species of love and peace. Even oaths are bound with kola as an act known as *ita Oji ani* (meaning eating the Kola of the earth), as well as disputes settled under kola's influence (Cole and Aniakor, 1984).

### **The ‘Mmanwu’ (Masquerade) Institution**

The Igbo people have masquerade both as a religious, social and traditional institution. It serves for them several things at different times. In his study of masquerades in Igala land, Illah (1983:220)



contextualizes that, "what is expressed in masquerades is a belief and when the belief is translated into a performance.....the masquerade becomes a function." It is thus, believed that masquerade is a bridge by which our ancestors are placated. It embodies the aptitude of unifying both the living and the dead. And for Poynor (2001), "masquerades are normally performed as an element of still larger rituals especially rituals of human passage, the passage of season, or the stage of the agricultural year." It follows that there are many occasions in Igbo land at which masquerades can perform ranging from boy initiation into the *Otu Ogbo*, age grade ceremony, burial and funeral rites, installation of an *Igwe* (traditional ruler) in a community, *Iri ji* festivals, *Igba nkwu*, among others. This highlights the importance of masquerade as a phenomenon that sanctifies both the people and one that appeases the gods and ancestors. It is what brings people together, an act that is rare in our modern Nigerian society. In Igbo traditional society, it is usually not an act of compliment to hear that a masquerade visits a person or a family unceremoniously. When such happens, it signifies danger or an abnormality. This uninvited visit only happens to defaulters of people who have violated one value or the other. Hence, everyone in the community strives to keep to the moral obligations/values of the land. Masquerades therefore, project high degree of a community statues, respect and social pedigree by their sizes, decorations, complexes or forms.

### **The 'Oha' and 'Umunna' Institutions**

Among the Igbo people, exists what is called the *Oha* and *Umunna* Institutions. One is not to be mistaken to another. The 'Oha' is also called the 'Council of elders'. What then differentiates the 'Oha' from the 'Umunna'? The 'Umunna' is a system where every adult male in each family units (nuclear and extended) takes part in the issues, cases or affairs bothering the community. Whereas, the *Oha* (Council of elders) is made up of only the male head of each family (nuclear and extended families alike) and the head of each village or clan as was mostly used, they automatically make up the village council called the *Oha*. This council is both democratic, legislative, representative and consultative in nature, to the decision-making of every community in the Igbo traditional society. The *Oha* decides cases and apportions blame duly with the fear of the divine (Chi-Ukwu Okike[supreme God]) and the various deities they worship which are enforced by the law enforcement agents such as the *Umunnas* and the age grades and even the masquerades. The clan or village representative is called the *Ofo* title holders. He is the mouthpiece of his village or kindred members. And the *Ofo* holder is highly respected. He is the middle man between his kindred members and their ancestors in his own level after the *Igwe* of the community. No wonder, Cole (1982) in his book "Mbari Art" confirms that each household or compound is under a recognized leader who holds the *Ofo* (a symbol of communion). This symbol on its own, is also a symbol of leadership in its own level.

### **The Moonlight Tales**

The moonlight, usually takes place at the village square or sometimes in specific families. Children were gathered at moonlights so as to listen to elders or those regarded to have been bequeathed with wisdom. Imageries like animals are used during tales. Proverbs, idiomatic expressions are used to create stories and portray scenes of humility, honesty and obedience. Tales by moonlight are highly regarded. Even Basden (1982:273) concurs that the stories narrated by the aged people or adult ones are not only absorbing but usually interesting to children. Proverbs as I already stated, including fables, and stories are almost applied in ordinary conversations in order to gauge or ascertain the level of intelligence therein in a subject matter. In affirming this, Mbiti (1969) believed that Africa used riddles in treating moral values. And it is believed that if these are revisited, it'll continue to communicate to our young people, through the voice of conscience, to conscientize them on the Igbo moral or value systems.

### **Implications**

1. There are no gains saying that traditional practices in themselves are excellent or devoid of flaws and imperfections. However, it is believed that if some of the traditional practices are revived, they can help strengthen cultural identity amongst modern Nigerians. Especially through the traditional formations of

the male and female genders who undertake one cultural formation or the other, aimed towards helping both genders become worthy agents of moral values, the question of moral lapses amongst modern Nigerian youths would become a thing of the past. When revived, they would aid to counter the erosion of cultural values in the ever-changing and challenging globalization and Western civilization.

2. On a flip side, it must be noted that the modern globalization has ofcourse helped in the areas of education, healthcare and even in technology, cultural prunings amongst many of its benefits, yet, this discourse believes that re-introduction of those Igbo traditional practices would help re-awaken the Igbo sense of communalism (Igwebuike and Ubuntu philosophies) which seems to have eroded in our contemporary society. Again, they would aid revitalize our cultural identities which would enhance social cohesion, eliminate feelings or sense of alienation especially amongst Nigerian youths who often grapple with crisis of identity in modern Nigeria.

3. No doubt that reinstating these traditional practices would help curb problems of unemployment since her youths would be re-informed on the essence of dignity in labour, curb issues of corruption, get-rich-quick kind of today's approach (informally called yahoo-yahoo) by providing viable economic alternatives. Hence, issues around accountability both politically, culturally, religiously would be positively better sustained, collective responsibility will be re-engineered.

4. Empower our Social Fabrics and Nigerian Economy: Practices such as *ichu-uchu* (hardworking/industrious in business or area of work), *igba -odibo* (apprenticeship), *igba-oriko* (collective/shared belongings) amongst others, with which the primitive Igbo societies were known for, would not only be revived but would once again be re-engineered among our modern Nigerian youths.

5. Conflict resolution and infact, our inter-personal relationships as well as social harmony would be strengthened.

### **Challenges to these Revivals**

1. No doubt, the above revivals would be met with some degrees of restiveness especially by the modern youths who may have been much accustomed with/to the modern lifestyles and may still prefer them to these traditional practices and see them as either archaic or old-fashioned, yet, every good gospel begins with a good preacher.

2. It is undeniable that reviving some of these traditional campaigns might be met with some contemporary selective adaptations such as rituals and gender roles that may conflict with modern human rights standards (urban lifestyles) which may lead to continued resistance from either the government, legal authorities and the younger generations.

3. These traditional practices may create further social divisions as the tensions between the traditional and modern adherents may exacerbate more if not carefully adapted instead of bringing about social cohesion.

4. On the other hand, religious and traditional tensions may even be heightened as there may exist this idea of 'we' versus 'them' kind of mentality especially if not tactically approached. Hence, religious and traditional cohesion might not only be incompatible but also impossible.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. In achieving the above, there is need for a synergy between both adherents (traditionalists or modernists alike) to identify and prioritize those practices that may not conflict with a community or a particular region's practice; one that would be in congruent with modern practices for swift adaptability. This is to enhance social, religious and cultural cohesions.

2. There is need to infuse these practices (by action) into our educational curricula. That is to say, there is urgent and practical need for education awareness wherein subjects, courses or modules like traditional values should be introduced in our various school systems: primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, vocational institutes and ofcourse in our higher institutions (universities). This is to help our youths to unlearn, relearn, appreciate and teach their customs called *odinaala* or *omenaala* as the case may be to future generations.

3. There is need for collaboration amongst our religious, traditional, modern social institutional leaders in today's Nigerian society. This is because, to sustain moral values, no institution can claim independence, there should be social collaboration.
4. The government on her part, should establish heritage or cultural days in our calendar. This way, our Nigerian youths would begin to learn, adapt, celebrate and appreciate their cultural norms and values as well as its relevance in our modern age.
5. One of the benefits we enjoy today through to globalization and Western civilization is the use of improved technology. Therefore, the government, private and public partners, philanthropists amongst others should recognize the importance of digital media and leverage on them to create digital archives and museums since modern Nigerian youths just like her other counterparts in other countries are accustomed to the use of social media and in fact, all other standardized technological tools and platforms in order to penetrate into the fabrics of every Nigerian youth whether Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba etc.
6. In order to take this campaign to a higher level also, governments should see the need to fund academic research and researchers as well as community-based documentations that focus on traditional practices.

## CONCLUSION

By and large, the initiation which is not just mere traditional practice, when revived especially in our contemporary society, it is believed that things would not only turn around, by that, our young people would recognize and reaffirm the unavoidable moral values embedded in these ritual practices because they would continue to be formed, pruned at every stage of their youthful growth. A formation we lack in our modern era, where individualism has crept in, and created a scene where every young person now feels that he or she knows it all and as such, no need for any iota of formation whatsoever. As has been demonstrated in this discourse, our traditional values are anchored on the Igbo cultural heritage and their world-view. This made sure that the society was stable, solid, functional, orderly and sanity maintained. Therefore, if those Igbo traditional values inherent in these traditional practices and institutions are revived, our modern Nigerian society would be restored from the many moral crisis facing her.

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