

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Igbo Traditional Religion is the religion that Igbo ancestors handed over to generations after them. This religion has no clear historical origin like Christianity and Islam. It is truism then that the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria recognize the place of their ancestors as well as indulge in some socio-cultural cum religious ceremonies in their honour. Several kindred, communal and clan celebrations cut across Igbo land show-casing this reverence for the ancestors or the living-dead.

Some of the visible celebrations to show the belief in the existence of the ancestors as well as their functions include, giving of their names to new born babies, answering of their names by the communities and constant remembrances in social gatherings. Others include carrying out their enactment or customs/culture to guide the vertical and horizontal relationship in their communities and kindred's, propagating community celebrations for the purpose of unity and identifying with one another, such as new yam festivals, *ojirituals*, *ofala*, cultural dances, *igba nkwu*, (Traditional marriage ceremony) communal ownership of land and common activities in their respective families and kindreds.

Although dead, an ancestor is believed to enjoy a sacred super human status with special magico-religious powers that can be beneficial or even harmful to the earthly kins. Because his form has changed from human being to spirit being, his power has also ontologically increased. The consequence is that the ancestor now with the Supreme Godpossesses the power to bi-locate clairvoyance and indestructibility. Ancestral cult underscores the respect, love and dignity; the Igbo give to their dead heroes, progenitors and matriarchs. It is the pivot or centre of Igbo family identity, legal status and social bond. It is

the source of the families and by extension the whole kindred, villages and clan. Everyone is descended from a particular family, kindred or clan. The individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people including those of past generation and his contemporaries. Whatever happens to an individual is believed to happen to the whole group. No one exists in isolation. Everyone has a beginning in the first place. This awareness of belongingness is re-enforced and supported by family, kindred and communality.

In the olden days, the above was the case where ancestral link formed the basis of social integration, cultural cohesion and religious mindset of the Igbo people. The influence of the ancestors reigned supreme as acts of the individual, family and kindred were hinged on the laws, conventions and philosophy of the ancient. It was then easy to unite descendants of the same parents into one family. This was the case in Igbo-African societies before the emergence of a new socio-ideological order influenced by foreign religions and foreign social understandings.

In the present Igbo cultural-religious settings, there is an observed gradual shift of emphasis from great “ancestors-centred consciousness or mindset” among the Igbo, to my father’s honour mindset. The reason for this diversion is that the present crops of Igbo indigenes think that “the honour given to great ancestors of a kindred or village is rather too bogus or extended because it has produced several ancestors. The thinking now is on how to honour “my own father dead or alive if dead he is equally recognized as an ancestor” as his great grandfather has long been honoured by their immediate descendant. This present thinking can be proven in the way some Igbo families refuse to answer the name of their grandfather. They argue that it was their own father who gave birth to them not his grandfather or great grandfather. Honour to own immediate parent is emphasized as against the proto ancestor. Such mindset certainly devaluates the level of honour given to Igbo

ancestors. It tends to rubbish cultural norms, values and respect given to African or Igbo forebears. It tends to send their remembrance into the land of forgetfulness or negligence. Another sorry state of affairs against ancestor veneration in Igbo society is the problem of shift or abandonment from community consciousness in sharing and living together as offspring of an ancestor to individual life style which is a life somewhat independent or foreign to Igbo communal life style. The matter is not only associating with other people from different socio-cultural background, personal idiosyncrasy is another issue to contend with. Some people by nature are individualistic both in thinking and acting.

Even though they are aware of the necessity for ancestral cult among their own kindreds, they however, show nonchalant attitude to things which border on culture and tradition. To such people, matters on ancestral origin or cult practice may mean little to them. Apart from two situations militating against the respect of ancestors in Igbo society already itemized, one should not fail to mention the influence of foreign religions on the way of life of Igbo people. Western and Arab ideologies have certainly played down on the respect the Igbo/Africans have on their forefathers. There is gradual but consistent shift of concentration or emphasis on ancestors rallying point in Igbo community consciousness to church authority. This was done at the inception of Christianity through indoctrination and acceptance of a new religion which came with new world views and hierarchy of beings. In the Igbo traditional religion, the ancestors formed the bases of peoples social engagement, rules of conduct were made by them which made them reference point of cultural and social setting. The diversion of obedience and regard came with new religion namely Islam and Christianity. For the Igbo people Christian saints and martyrs took over the honour and regards originally given to Igbo ancestors. The same condition was applicable in the northern part of Nigeria where Islam through the sharia, changed both the religious and cultural values of the people before Islamization. The eclipse of this honour given to our forebears because

of foreign religious influence and western culture brings about loss of identity. If these regard for our forebears suffer decline, then there is every possibility that the people will suffer disunity and where there is no unity, development is difficult to achieve. In addition, this enactment helps Igbo people to understand their community history and philosophies of life made open or visible. In this process, positive values are thought, deviant behaviours are criticized and well behaved community members praised. This encourages people to mould and re-mould positive behaviours. It becomes clear from the above that decline on ancestral veneration is disastrous to Igbo people because if it suffers gradual and consistent decline, the young stars will not know their own culture which may result to a loss of cultural identity. The issue of in-fighting, serious quarrels or even pre-meditated murder occurring among children of the same ancestor is prevalent in many Igbo families in the present era like communal clashes in Izzi and Ezza of present day Ebonyi state, in-family fighting as found in a notable family of Okowjo Ngwo in Enugu state that has led to loss of lives of prominent citizens in the family, disrespect to elders that is prevalent in all Igbo communities un-healthy competitions resulting to civil court cases among members of the same family unit. There is a clear sign that there is a crack in the ancestral wall which hitherto united people from the patriarchal structure. Unity among brethren these days in Igbo society is something that can be described as cosmetic. People of the same parents and ancestry have been seen to go to village meetings and civil courts over issues that should have been amicably settled if parental link is that strong. In those good olden days kingship was strong both in words and deeds, there was unity among people which account for why the Igbo race was able to transfer its communal spirit from one generation to another, and these observed sorry situations or negative conditions have been affected to a great extent ancestral cult in Igbo societies. To jettison ancestral veneration is to attract moral bankruptcy and impede

community development as they help to reaffirm those axiomatic values which are considered right and natural because they constitute the essence of community life.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

There was a robust ancestral cult which was the centre piece of Igbo social, cultural and traditional cohesion. The ancestors in Igbo traditional religion enjoyed a sacred superhuman status with special magico-religious powers that were believed to be beneficial or even harmful to the earthly kins. In the present times the Igbo people are not conscious of the institution or cults of the ancestors given the observed shift of emphasis from “my father’s respect” as against that of the forefather or great ancestor. With urbanization which is now in vogue among modern Igbo people living in townships and with the advent of Christianity constituting a clog on Igbo cherished ideals and traditions including ancestral cult, one becomes worried of what the Igbo traditional society will be like in the near future. These cherished custom, laws, cultures and traditions that have distinguished us as a people and above all promoted community consciousness are obviously becoming extinct. Observing this trend one is forced to ask,

To what extent can it be said that Igbo traditional societies have been seriously affected by foreign religion and western ideologies?

What effect can this have on Igbo family solidarity, vis-à-vis Igbo ancestral cult?

The above questions provoke an investigation into Igbo concept of ancestor and the traditional function originally accorded to them. It is the intention of this researcher therefore, to investigate the meaning, content of the ancestors and their socio-religious and cultural functionality in the dynamics in Igbo family solidarity and community consciousness.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

To what extent can it be said that Igbo traditional societies have been seriously affected by foreign religion and Western ideologies? What effect can this have on Igbo family solidarity, viz-a-viz Igbo ancestral cult?

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### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study is to show that what the Igbo do when they venerate their ancestors is family-root consciousness, identity, affinity, antecedent recognition thereby promoting community consciousness and solidarity and in return, expect and receive blessings from the ancestors who do not only serve as guardians but also mediators between their living family members and the Supreme Being.

The purpose of study is as follows:

To investigate the meaning, contents of an ancestor and their place in Igbo family and cultural life.

To ascertain the reason for the gradual shift of attention to the respect given to Igbo ancestors from ancient times in the modern time.

To examine the influence of ancestral cult to Igbo cultural society.

To assess the institution of patriarchy in relation to ancestral cult in Igbo society.

To evaluate the role of Igbo ancestors in fostering unity, obedience of *Omenala* and community among Igbo people.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This work is intended to be of benefit to the following persons or groups: the Igbo nation, the academic world, economic researchers, traditional religionists and the Igbo Christianity.

**Igbo Nation:** This research will be beneficial to the Igbo people in that it would promote Igbo regard for the cult of ancestors. It exposes the cult of ancestors to Igbo people. This will certainly assist young Igbo men and women in appreciating the role of Igbo ancestors in Igbo communities.

**The Academic World:** This work is for public consumption especially for those in academic circles who are desirous to improving their knowledge concerning African ancestors and their traditional roles in their families. It will be of gain to those interested in understanding various cultures of people. This will benefit students of African traditional religion both at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. It will help them in understanding and investigating Igbo-Africa concept of ancestorship better.

**Promotion of Further Research:** The outcome of this work can promote more research into the existence, function of Igbo ancestors in Igbo societies. It can also engender similar research into ancestor cult in other African nations. The result will lead to greater understanding of the position of the ancestor in Igbo-African world-view.

Economic Benefit to the Researchers on Igbo Studies: There is economic benefit accruing from this research. Apart from providing intellectual gain to others, this research work can fetch a lot of money when published and sold to people who are interested. It can also attract financial grants to tertiary schools under which supervision the research is carried out.

**To the Traditional Religionist:** This work will serve as a documentary evidence to avoid the loss of priceless information as a result of non-documentation of some Igbo cultural practices.

**To the Igbo Christianity:** This study will clear ignorance on aspects of traditional custom, beliefs, and practices which when properly understood will justify such action, and bring out the rationale for accepting the truth of such actions, beliefs and practices.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This work covers mainly ancestral cult as a demonstration of community consciousness in northern Igbo traditional society. This society worked on here is made up of mainly Udi and Eziagu Local Government Area of Enugu State. This work tried to see how Igbo cult of ancestors fosters unity, communality, brotherliness and oneness of purpose among Igbo people. The study among other things isolated patriarchy as the basic community meetings or social occasions.

## **1.7 Methodology**

The method of data collection and interpretation will be discussed in the following sub-section.

### **1.7.1 Method of Data Collection**

The method of data collection was basically primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources of data were taken from group discussions, interviews and observation of



events by the researcher. Many adherents of Igbo traditional religion were interviewed and the researcher did a participant observation study in many events rites, rituals and ceremonies. Secondary sources of information were drawn from journals, textbooks and seminars

### **1.7.2 Method of Data Interpretation**

This was multi-dimensional. It incorporated the historical, sociological and phenomenological methods. Historical approach of this dissertation establishes Igbo people as a group with historical undercurrents. The work tries to situate Igbo people of Nigeria as a nation with its peculiar culture and traditions and which tries to exist like other groups in her present geographical expression. History in this case adds value to a people's identity, development and progress.

The sociological method of analysis employed here tries to explain Igbo concept of religion as a societal tool for controlling people and moulding their values, scales, behaviours and level of social interactions among her citizens. The sociological method justifies Igbo ancestral cult as a rallying point of the family, kindred, and community. It sees the ancestral cult as the trusted and most functional meeting point of all descendants of the patriarch. The phenomenological approach in the dissertation underscores the given, that is, Igbo cult of ancestors as a demonstration of community consciousness in Igbo societies. This approach tries to interpret the functionality or the present level of acceptability of ancestral cult among the Igbo in the present situation. This appraisal is germane here because of perceived negligence of this in Igbo society. This method helped us ascertain the present mindset of Igbo people as regards respect for Igbo ancestors in Igbo communities.

### **1.8 Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of clarity, the following concepts are defined to indicate a sense in which the researcher is using them in this work.

- 1.8.1 Ancestors:** In this work, Ancestors are pristine men and women who originated the lineage, ethnic groups or clan and who provided the people with their identity. They consist of founders of the clan following the order of the primogeniture. In traditional Igbo life the ancestors are for the living, models and standards of behaviour as well as sources of tribal tradition and stability.
- 1.8.2 Ancestral Cult:** In this work, ancestral cult implies offerings, prayers and sacrifices to ancestors to solicit for their aid. This is evoked by mere fact of the belief on their powers and mass dependence on them.
- 1.8.3 Community:** In this work, community for a traditional Igbo man is more than simply a social group bound together by a reason of natural origin. It is both a society and unity of visible and invisible worlds. Igbo society comprehends the totality of Igbo world-view including the physical environment as well as spirit beings acknowledged by a living group.
- 1.8.4 Demonstration:** According to Hornby(2000), to demonstrate is to show clearly by giving proof or evidence, to show by your actions that you have a particular quality, feeling or opinion. This also applies in this work.
- 1.8.5 Consciousness:** This is the state of being able to use your senses and mental power to understand what is happening, it also means being aware of, noticing, and being particularly interested in.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Preamble

There is no gain saying that in every research work, or rather any investigative process, a review of related literature is very imperative as it avails the researcher the opportunity to get acquainted with the past and present works as related to the topic under investigation. It serves as a step to contribution of knowledge and aids clarification. This review is done under the following sub-heads: conceptual framework, theoretical framework, empirical studies, and summary of literature review.

##### 2.1.1 Conceptual Framework

The word concept, for Hornby (2000), “is an idea or principle that is connected with something which is assessed” (p.234). Our discussion, centre on the concept of ancestor vis-à-vis ancestral cult. The idea revolves around the reasons for ascribing respect to the departed African heroes or heroines. It tries to establish cogent rationale for propagating the decree the ancestors made for the observance of their descendents. For Munter (1996), concept is that:

Which incorporates sentences, propositions, beliefs, theories and doctrines that can be said to be false or true. The cult of ancestors is an aspect of Igbo or African religious belief or practice which has shaped their identity and social cohesion for ages now. As a matter of fact, it has become a mark of recognition or identity in the community of kindred’s village-wise (p.103).

**Ancestors: Meaning-Content:**

At this juncture, it is proper to examine who the ancestors are in the mindset of Africans. For Ajaiyi (1981):

What becomes of someone after death has been an issue that has preoccupied people's mind. Various religion of the world has tried to resolve this issue, with each coming out with their own versions of the destiny of dead members. But what is common in the answers given by different religions is that those who lived worthy lives will find themselves happy and those who failed to live the life of probity will be unhappy at death where they will suffer endlessly. Though, some atheists opine that soul is the principle of life which comes to naught at death. Death to the traditional Igbo person is a change in form and space and not a total annihilation. It is an avenue through which someone goes to continue his existence in the underworld. An ancestor to a traditional Igbo man is not just a person in your family who lived a long time ago as explained in (Horby 2000). Rather they are though dead, but in continuous relationship with their family and community, but not linked in the same way to every member of the group.

The ancestors are not ordinary spirits. They are in a state of personal immortality (continued life). Ancestors are believed to be past heroes and heroines who had contributed significantly to the achievements of the family while on earth. If the ancestor is a man, then his spirit is still interested in his wife and children who are still living. There is a strong connection between those living and the ancestor's spirit (p.61).

The Igbo man and woman are very conscious that their dead parents and beloved relatives are still part and parcel of their families. They believe also that they watch over their compounds from the invisible land of the dead where they now live. They are believed to be

the custodians of the laws and customs of the tribe and are prepared to punish those who infringe upon them. West Africans also believe that their ancestors are watching them and that one day, when they join them in the world of the spirits, they would give account of their stewardship before them. This is a very potent sanction of morality.

Igbo people dread any punitive measure that can befall them from the ancestors as a consequence of moral breaches. Efforts are therefore, made to avert all seen and unforeseen punishments. The fear of retribution or punitive action is at the heart of ancestral cult in Igbo society. Without this threat to life, many cultural activities in Igbo would have died natural deaths.

One visible ceremony the Igbo perform to run away from ancestral anger and discipline is to stage a befitting burial celebration for the departed hero or heroine. Ezenweke (2008) explained befitting burial of the deceased in Igbo society as a conscious effort done by the Igbo family to accord their own respect or reverence. This action is in conformity to traditional rite of the departed hero or heroine. Ezenweke (2008) has this to say:

The goal of life is to become an ancestor after death. This is why every person who dies must be given a correct funeral supported by a number of religious ceremonies. If this is not done, the dead person may become a wandering spirit unable to live properly after death and therefore a danger to those who remain alive (p.50).

Ezenweke's view can therefore explain why the Igbo try to do everything in their power to accord respect to the departed because they can open doors of blessings for the family. Departed parents, so properly buried are expected to cause the businesses of their children to flourish because they have honoured them. It is theirs to attract from the ancestral

world favours unto their children, wards and relatives because they had spent their monies, items and time for their honour and prestige.

In the ancestral relationship, the idea of kinship is fundamental; one is only an ancestor or an ancestress for a particular kinship. An ancestor is blood relative of a living community. This relationship could be of common parentages or shared ancestry. Not all ancestors have blood connection with those who venerate them among many of the African cultures. Ancestors are venerated according to their level of accomplishment. There are primordial ancestors, transnational ancestors, national, communal and family ancestors. The family union or blood relationship is a serious identity within Igbo community genealogy. Basically, everyone would like his own parents or primordial ancestor to be remembered in the annals of great men in the community or kindred. Apart from the punitive aspect in ancestral cult, there is also the psychological and social dimension as demonstration of ancestral consciousness in Igbo enclave. Oribator (2008) has this to say:

In many Igbo communities, even during burials of important elders of the community, sharing of items is strictly done under kinship. The cult of the ancestor is not only a demonstration of community consciousness, social wise, it is also a demonstration of right to succession, right to fairness, right to belongingness and right to self expression in terms of injustice and any form of denial of one's rights or privileges in one's community.(p.109).

Uzoma (2002) reflected on Igbo kinship organization when he said;

An Igbo offspring is a product of his father's lineage and there his *chi* is patrilineal in outlook. When one attains the age of puberty, then one is introduced to both the mother's side lineage and his father's lineage. When one marries, his wife's lineage plays a very important social role for his children. In fact, in the entire society of Igbo

people, there exists a series of agnatic groups. For inheritance and succession, a person takes the lawful right property from the lineage of his father (p. 1)

The concept of Ancestral respects in Igbo land is anchored on Igbo culture which recognizes achievements and bestows honour. Etta (2012) sees self identity or group identity as foundational to one's origin and genealogy. He submits that:

An individual's identity cannot be discovered until he/she finds its origin and this genealogy cannot be found elsewhere but within culture. Culture, as a way of life, thus becomes a spring board which guides men in all societies in terms of how they relate with their physical environment, how they think, relate with supernatural beings and how feelings are expressed within, and among different social group (p. 11)

Etta's view above indicates culture to have the ability or potentiality of discovering a people's philosophy of life, its value orientation and social interconnectedness. Since Igbo culture elements are promulgated by the ancients while alive, the celebration of such culture and tradition will naturally elicit memories of the ancestors.

These memories make them agents of communal rebirth or community consciousness. The practical proof of what the ancestors are to us, the living, is the continuity and practice of the laws, values and norms which they left behind. It is in the awareness of the Igbo man that attempts not to accord them their rightful religious observations have attracted severe punishment in the past. Since no Igbo family wants a repetition of punishments from the ancestors and deities of the land, ancestral cult must necessarily be maintained. Ancestors are pace setters and it is safer to accord them befitting rites than try anything which can be detrimental to the head of the family or the entire family.

Apart from the prevalent fears of retribution, Madu, (1997) explained that ancestral cult among the Igbo of Nigeria is anchored on a robust relationship between a forefather and the members of their physical families. He explains that:

The unifying view of reality among the Africans has a profound influence in African religiosity. Since there is no line of demarcation between the spiritual and material realms, then, the living and the dead are always in continuous interactions, to the extent that the spirit world is only an extension of the material world. As the living lives in families and clans, so also, it is believed by the Africans that the dead line also in families and clans. This philosophical belief underlies the interaction between the living and the dead (p. 65).

The Igbo ancestors were the first human beings to settle in their respective homesteads, families or villages. They were, as a matter of fact vanguards or pacesetters in any conceivable way possible. Since, they laid the customary religious and governmental structures of their communities or kindreds the Igbo should not only appreciate their invaluable contributions to the existence of their families and kingship but also constitutes, as it were, ceremonies and traditions in their memory. Every Igbo man believes he has an ancestor from where he begins to claim his right and place in the community assembly. The Igbo man believes that no one fell from heaven. It simply means that everyone is descended from particular kindred which you are part and parcel of the entire village. The Igbo man believes to be demonstrating community consciousness in ancestral cults since the ancestor form the bedrock of Igbo families, kindred or villages.

In the observation of Honderich (1995), two important actions of man stand out very clearly in relation to consciousness. These are experiences and awareness's. Awareness or knowledge of a phenomenon becomes possible because the mental state of an individual is



able to interpret- sense perceptions. Surely, the Igbo have experience of their own world. They recognize the importance of ancestors as foundation of society, Igbo moral corpus (*Omenala*), Igbo communal spirit and other important norms and values so promulgated. Ancestral veneration promotes Igbo identity and sense of family or kindred pride. This tradocultural practice hinges on Igbo *Omenala* which for centuries now have been able to uphold ancestral cult as an inexorable law in Igbo culture.

### **2.1.2 The Igbo Family In Relation To Ancestral Cult**

The Igbo family is unlike the European family which is composed of the man, his wife and children and as such a domestic family often referred to as nuclear family. It is limited to few members. The Igbo family is referred to as '*Ezi na ulo*'. To this Ogbalu as quoted by Nwabude (2001), says

Igbo family is called '*Ezi na ulo*' (the outside relations and those in the house) and differs from the English concept of family in that it those not only apply to husband, wife and children but also includes somewhat vaguely other relations such as in-laws, cousins, nephews, uncles, or even maids and servants (p.81).

Igbo concept of family as a social institution is more expansive than the Europeans. Its expansiveness is seen in the incorporations of uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, in-laws and servants as members of the nuclear family including the dead and yet to be born. This primarily is to provide some level of support at various points of need. Any negligence is frowned at. Igbo idea of family is not only limited to the living, it also includes the dead and yet unborn. We noted that death for the Igbo is not a total annihilation but a change in form and space. It is an avenue through which someone gives to continue to live in the underworld. This accounts for why the Igbo see the family to also include their dead member as constituting part of the family. They the dead are the invisible members. The Igbo believes

that they still influence the activities of the living from the spirit world. This is an eloquent testimony of Igbo belief. The spirit of oneness continues even after physical departure. These create room for the creation of the visible members of the family and the invisible members. Both affect the other through spiritual or social activities like burials, cultural activities and religious ceremonies. The relationship with ancestors and with others of the extended family who have died is not merely a chronological one, in as much as they are the source of those who are still living under the sun. It is something contemporary or as it said, diachronic, because all these dead people continue to be part of the whole family and to shape it in their special ways towards the same ideal. This makes the whole family a reality with two faces, one in the visible world and the other invisible beyond the grave. The African family has a cosmic dimension.

The cosmic dimension of Igbo family expresses a web-like relationship that cuts across the visible world of men and the invisible world of the living dead. Madu (1996) captures these thus:

Life for an Igbo man is therefore a continuum. There is no break or annihilation. One dies an honourable death, goes to sit with the ancestors and comes out again through reincarnation. Life therefore, is cyclic for the Igbo. There is no room for eternal damnation in hell or permanent residence in haven as in Euro-Christian world view (p.6).

Igbo understanding of the concept of family does not only include the living and the dead. There is a place for the yet unborn. The Igbo family includes the yet unborn. The Igbo always pray for the unborn children and even those that are yet to be conceived who they consider as part of the family. The reality of which is just a matter of time. This explains the joy and celebrations with which a new born baby is received and welcomed into the family.

The child is received like one who has gone on a very long journey and is now safely back home. In many occasions you see a new born child called Nnanna or Nnenna meaning Grand Father or Grand Mother, showing a belief that the dead are not gone. The Igbo believe in sacredness of life, family institution and providence are means to enhance life and promote community consciousness, since to the Igbo to exist means to exist in a community. So the family, being the oldest and most common institution yet remains ever new, for the families have existed since earliest time and will undoubtedly exist as long as man lives on earth. Family is the basis of every society. And for the Igbo to live be to live in a community, for in it the individuals' psychological and ultimate security are assured. The community will always remain as the individual comes and goes hence the community interest is more valued than that of the individual, although it is the individuals that make up a community. The Igbo regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition amongst us but as deliberate act of God to make us community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for composite answer to the varied problems of life. All our actions are usually community oriented actions rather than individualism.

From the above it becomes evident that among Africans especially the Igbo, the sense of community consciousness is very strong. So instead of "*Cogito ergo sum*" (I think, therefore I am) of Rene Descartes, the Igbo conception is "*Cognatus ergo sum*" (I am, because we are or I am related to others, therefore, I am). This is the idea that pervades Igbo communities. This idea gives them identity. It is part of traditional education for Igbo communities. It helps them trace the genealogy of their descents. The genealogy gives a sense of deep historical belongingness, a feeling of deep rootedness and a sense of sacred obligations to extend the genealogical line which if lost amounts to loss of identity. Njoku (1990) echoes this thus:

If being does not have identity then everything will be everything given birth to one thing since nothing can be differentiated from the other. In this case, there will be no subject and object relationships. This will create a casual traffic in the order of being and knowledge (p.9).

Genealogies are sacred means of orientation showing where foundation of different people lies. Through genealogies the living and the dead become contemporaries in the timeless rhythm of human life. Genealogical ties establish relationships between individuals showing how one person is link to another and how the visions evolved among different people demarcating the larger society into clan's families, households, and finally individuals. When genealogies are traced, identities are traced as its loss will amount to social problem as people will be neither here nor there. It is therefore not surprising why religion like Christianity acknowledges ancestors as documented in first Samuel 28:4-25, how Saul consulted the spirit of Samuel for guidance. It is also shown where some ancestors have been canonized in daily liturgy and prayers for intercession in personal matter of importance made in their names. The purported graves of many biblical heroes like Rachael tomb in Bethlehem, Simon Bar Yochaic in Meron have become the focus of pilgrimages for divine intervention among the Christians and Muslims. On attitudes of many indigenous Christians on ancestral veneration, Ezenweke (2012) says:

It may be noted that one hardly finds anyone who is an adherent of African traditional religion, yet many Nigerian indigenous Christians testify that ancestors do appear to Christians but they usually reject appearances on the ground that ancestors are believed to be demonic spirits which need to be bound or exorcised. It has been observed that a spirit is branded a demon if this involves ancestor veneration and such spirit is rejected and exorcised. Here the Holy Spirit and

ancestor spirit are usually diametrically opposed and it is a matter of confrontation rather than identification (p.189).

Ezenweke observed on the other hand that many highly educated Africans and westernized Christian theologians speak of their passionate desire to be linked with their dead ancestor relatives. She quoted Gabriel, cited in Fashole (1978), thus:

They are present with us, they are not dead, they are near us, approving and disapproving all our actions, they chide us when we go wrong, bless us and sustain us for good deeds done, for kindness shown and for strangers made to feel at home. They increase our store and punish our pride (p.407).

It becomes obvious that the cosmic dimension of Igbo/African concept of family cannot be overstated.

### **2.1.3 Rationale for Igbo Ancestral Cult**

Reasons undergird any human activity or engagement. Reasons and objectives form the rational basis of almost every human endeavour. There were reasons for industrial revolution in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe. Reasons and objectives are equally posited for colonization, slave trade and quest for African independence from colonial masters by African elites in those days when there was the necessity for such political awareness and activity. Reasons were equally given for missionary activities by both Christian and Islamic proselytes in the African continent. Ample reasons stand out for African honour of their forebears. African ancestral cult just like Christian cult must have begun in time to either express certain religious beliefs or perpetuate common fraternity already existing in African social relations. The conception of honouring Igbo forefathers cannot be divorced from the Igbo conception of the family as one which continues to exist and flourish even after death of

the member of family. Madu (1997), tries to posit a rationale for African or Igbo religious duty. He says;

One interesting thing about cult or worship is the seriousness with which the worshipper performs his or her worship. In the course of the religious ritual, the worshipper is so confident that his actions must invariably produce the result. This confidence is borne in mind when he performs some sacrifices, when he says some prayers etc. The issue here is that he is performing a religious ritual, a ritual based on the conviction that the Supreme Being is his sovereign Lord (p.64).

In the postulation of Madu above, Africans are convinced about what they do in matters of religious practices. The perpetuity of actions implies some level of rationality. The reason or reasons of human actions in any conceivable way is for achievement of a certain object. Without the idea of achievement, man would relapse into the state of idleness or the state of irrationality. Human conscious mind is rational and creative. Ideas and concepts for instance are products of human reflection. These are put into use for various purposes. It can be religious, scientific economic, political or any other area of human concern. It can stand to reason that if an economic, social intellectual concern of man is fashioned to make him happy and contented in life, then the African idea of honouring a departed member of the family becomes apt, reasonable and cogent. Religion is dear to humans just like music, honour, success and wealth. The satisfaction from religious practices cannot be measured to those offered by power, wealth and social levels, in the attainment of power and social level, we still find man mourning for internal pains or satisfaction. Madu articulates the gains religion offers men which do not in any way isolate worshippers of African Traditional Religion. He averred that:

Religion affords man the insight into the reality of the supra-mundane making us to realize that life has meaning, a meaning which must be sought in union with God. Religious cults and rituals to God which give man the sense of friendship with God are pointers to the positive value orientation of reciprocal relationship in human enterprise. Man in his vertical dimension finds fulfilment, self realization and self actualization in God who, he believes cannot fail him or disappoint him in the manner of human beings (p. 62).

In the above view, Madu vividly explained the possible reason adduced by man to practice religious cult to the Supreme Being. One of such sentiments is self fulfilment or actualization.

Igbo veneration of their ancestors elucidates some measure of confidence in their ability to assist them without fail. If this were not the case, we will not have these celebrations in their honour in Igbo communities up till date. Ajaiyi (1981) maintains that man is capable of interpreting revelations around. He argued that the rational potentiality of man aids in interpreting phenomena. He debunked earlier claim by Emil Ludwig that the African is incapable of responding to God's revelation. Ludwig premised his argument on the ground that God is a philosophical concept which the untutored African cannot conceive. Ajaiyi opined that man, by his own rational mind is capable of interpreting what is revealed to him (p.14).

Since the African is capable of rational thought by way of reasoning, discernment and judgment, the Igbo can postulate reasons to embark on any religious activity of his choice. The practice of ancestor cult among the Igbo can therefore count among other variables on religious experience and religious practice. Ajaiyi tries to clarify this thus:

There is difference between the experience of religion and the expression of religion. In the experience, there is something universal and permanent which has its roots in human's nature. Man lives first and thinks latter. Experience precedes expression. The expression of religion on the other hand depends on local and temporary conditions, physical, neutral, moral and social conditions of the persons involved. (p. 16).

In the context of our present discussion on the practice of Igbo ancestral cult, both religious experience and religious practice are involved in Igbo man's conception and practice of religion. Ajayi was right to say that experience precedes practice. Experience of the power and influence of Igbo ancestors and ancestresses on the living cannot be downplayed. This experience which has formed our socio-cultural background, psychology and disposition is put in a formal method for its preservation and elongation. This is where experience leads to practice. We can see this in many cultural expressions across Igbo land in cultural festivals, marriage rites, and rites among other examples. Practice of religion can therefore be said to be concretization of religious beliefs and experiences, it is germane at this point to carry out a brief investigation into Igbo concept of personality, the issue of *chi* and *akara aka*. The exploration is necessary because it can help us to understand better as it links to ancestor and provoke veneration, Igbo concept of person and possible reasons behind his overall achievement. The following subsection therefore articulates this.

#### **2.1.4 Igbo Interpretation of Personality and the Problems of *Chi* and *Akara Aka***

It has not been an easy task for scholars to evaluate a personality. The problem lies with man's complex nature which makes him to showcase a somewhat un-predictable appearance. Characteristic trait is not what an observer can tackle in a few months study or with hasty conclusions empowered by suspicion, bias or prejudice. A person is understood in



many schools of thought as that which cannot be eliminated from the assessor's mindset or background. Onyeocha (1998) captures these diverse personality evaluations thus:

The science of anthropology is the science whose object is the human being precisely as human in all its various aspects. Both ancient and medieval thinking tended to reduce the human being to merely an aspect of something else. While ancients saw the human being only as an aspect of nature, the middle ages saw it as part of the order established by God. Modern mind went rationalistic. It is only in contemporary times that the human being is being seen as a person incorporating all the aspects highlighted by previous epochs. (p. 85).

The above are ancient pointers to human understanding highlighted by Onyeocha. He was able to expose earlier conception of the human person .While past epochs in the study of man were different in their understanding of man ,the present crops of scholars, in the view of Onyeocha, approached the issue from integrative perspective. This is to say that present or modern anthropology combines the theological, sociological, political and economic potentials of man to give him a holistic definition. This level of definition, to some extent, has a higher level of acceptability when compared with the lens of interpretation of human beings during past epochs. At this point, it would be reasonable to investigate the place of the individual in the African or Igbo world view. Mbiti's (1970) contribution to this is relevant here. He posits:

The human being is not just thrown into the world, as Heidegger would have, it nor was he born to die. Rather he was born into this world first of all through his or her parents and into his or her community of many ancestors, some of which are said to have reincarnated him or her. He or she grows into the lineage unit, into the village, country and ward communities, (p. 96).

In the African understanding of a person as portrayed by Mbiti, one is born into a family where there is warmth of recognition and care. The prior arrangement for the welcome of the new born goes to explain the value of the individual in Igbo society. The practice of welcome as a matter of fact expresses the Igbo logic that the human being is not meant to live in love-isolation but must co-habit with others. Giving the overbearing influence of communality in Igbo social structure, one may appreciate the “we mentality” of the Igbo. Onyeocha (1998), clarifies thus:

In African thought, the individual affirms himself or herself, not by isolating himself or herself from others, but by constantly relating and exchanging with them. The individual exists because the group exists. For the traditional African, the human being was never regarded as a mere economic animal as was done in the theories of Marx and Engels, nor as a moving machine, as was claimed by “Newtonian materialists and mechanists, nor as a mere thinking thing as was thought by Rene Descartes, nor as a mere bundle of instincts, as was thought by Sigmund Freud, The African considers the human being as integrating all the aspects of his or her activities rather than being reducible to, or blankly identifiable with merely aspects of them. (p. 89).

Onyeocha’s argument identifies the individual in African/Igbo appraisal as one who exists in collegiality with others and one who also has every liberty to aspire to greater levels. The community is only there to shield the individual from external aggression, a platform to showcase achievements and a judge to get acquittal. This is to say that the community or group is there to boost the enterprise of each member of the community. It is also there to honour their own that has made an outstanding achievement. It is against this backdrop that the Igbo thought it wise to honour their own sons and daughter who have such degree of successes. This degree of achievement is bestowed on the living in visible forms of

chieftaincy titles and traditional ancestorization of the departed heroes and heroines in communities with matriarchal backgrounds.

### **2.1.5 *Akaraka Mmadu* and the Problem of Greatness and Failure in Igbo Traditional Religion**

It is the understanding among Igbo scholars that any discussion on Igbo concept of personality without looking at its ontological influence or background is incomplete. Since the Igbo believe that to some extent, man's role and functions in life are pre-determined by his God or *Chi*, some eminent scholars of Igbo extraction have tried to express their understanding in relation to the vexed issue "*Akaraka* and *Chi* in Igbo religious belief. Some of the Igbo scholars include; Ilogu (1974), Nwala (1985), Ezekwugu (1987), Metuh (1988), and Abanuka (2004). It is the intention of this researcher not to look into individual merits or demerits. It will nonetheless use some of their explanations and insights to explain the possible interpretation of origin of greatness of someone as far as Igbo sense of judgment is concerned.

According to Ekwuru (1999), Among the Igbo of the south east, fate and destiny has two functional meanings: the inner (internal) spiritual meaning and the outer (external or physical) and material meaning. The first has to do with the quality in the human Igbo life, whereby one is what he is and the later deals with the capacity or the propensity by which the human Igbo genius does what he or she does.

In the strictest sense of the use of the terms, we can call the first meaning 'fate' and the second 'destiny'. Though, it must be admitted that, earlier than now, scholars have generally referred to the two meanings as destiny.

General and wide reference has been guilty and responsible for the confusion of the Igbo fate or destiny terms like *chi*, *mmu*, *agu*, *ikenga*, *omaaku* and all that. The Igbo term *chi* (or even this other name *mmuo*) underlines the strictness and even proper meaning of Igbo understanding and meaning of destiny, ‘fate’ which operates in the inner or internal man and is spiritual.

To be precise, whenever you talk of the Igbo individuality as an undivided spiritual unity and flesh and blood, or of the personhood, you are sure operating from this inner or spiritual dimension of meaning.

The rest of the Igbo destiny, namely; *agu*, *ikenga*, *omaaku* and so on, underlies the outer, external, physical or material understanding and significance of Igbo destiny. The Igbo inner, internal or spiritual destiny and the outer, external, physical or material destiny are not two different sides of heterogeneous Igbo realities, but rather, two different sides of a homogenous Igbo reality of destiny.

*Akalaka* means the lines on the palms of the hand but as a concept in Igbo thought and culture, it means more than just hand palm lines. It is the personalization of the past, the present and the future conditions of an individual’s possibility and reality of life and being. In Igbo understanding, it is the star, the life propeller, predictor, controller, manager and administrator.

Scholars are yet divided in their conclusions concerning the freedom of determining destinies. For instance, in the Igbo proverb, “*Onye kwe, chi ya ekwe*”, *akalaka* argues for freedom or freewill. Given this understanding, destiny can be changed. Another proverb, “*Ebe onye dalu ka chi ya kwatulu ya*”, means no choice but to follow the dictates of “*Akala chi*”.

According to Nnabuchi N. (2009), determinism and freewill are indispensable arms of destiny. None does exist without the other. Our starting point is a function of determinism while the finishing point rests completely on freewill.

For Echeruo (1995), *Akalaka* is one's personal destiny, or its predetermined work: literary lines on one's palm (p. 15). For the Igbo in the expression of Echeruo, *Akala aka* is destiny or pre-arrangement action of an individual before coming into the physical world. This implies that this order in the individual has been pre-arranged by the divine and no one may change it. This is where the Igbo are confused, can be it that the divine will come to another? Some opinions have it that a person's measure of luck or good fortune and bad luck is pre-arranged by the divinities and ancestors. Ilogu (1974) captures the ambiguity in Igbo ontological judgment of destiny. He opines that:

Man is believed to be created by *Chi-ne-eke*, the creator God who also is the Great Spirit or the world's over soul. At the time of birth, this Great Spirit, *Chukwu*, gives to man a part of his divine nature called *Chi* which becomes the spiritual double of the man throughout his life. Whatever abilities, good or bad fortunes, success, failures or weakness possessed by man are often attributed to his *Chi*. (pp. 34-38).

Igbo belief in pre-destiny, as expressed by Ilogu, anchors personal achievement on *Chi* or personal god. Both success and failures are directed to a person's *Chi*. The Igbo ascription of blame or failure is slow, that is, it is not immediate. The judgment may come towards the end of one's life when they can evaluate one's contribution to his immediate and extended family as well as his kindred. The relaxed judgment is to give someone time for his *Chi* to act according to its predestined time table. If one becomes active and successful, it is taken as positive, the contrary is the case, if there is failure. Can it be that those who become

great in Igbo society are as the divinities arranged? If this is the case, why do the Igbo hinge ancestor ship on personal achievement? If it is personal achievement, certainly, personal efforts are there to cooperate with divine decree. Adibe (2009) echoes the observation thus:

The issue of human destiny of success or failure as portioned to individual at birth by God has placed Igbo religion at cross roads with individual attainment. When life is at its worst, an Igbo person would attribute that to *Akara aka*, his destined lot. This creates a lot of confusion in the understanding of reality. (p. 71).

Adibe's contention is in line with Igbo expression of determinism- "*Onyekwe, chi ya ekwe*", if one is determined to achieve a feat, his *chi* or god affirms. The *chi* affirmation supports that someone's effort and his *chi* are partners of equal participation. Igbo process of ancestorship is never premised on the destiny but on the ability of the forebear to use his personal efforts to an advantage. This can be reasoned in what is celebrated when they are honoured by their descendants.

Ezekwugo (1987) upheld Igbo view on providence, fate and destiny as that which comes with one's birth. He maintains that:

The Igbo believe that before a child is born, his life course has been charted and fixed by *Chi* (in corporation with *Eke*) and it is along the line of his decree of fate that *Eke* guide his ward. So whatever happens to a man, whether he meets with successes or failure in his undertakings, it is all attributed to his predestined fate. People say: *Obu Chi*, (*It is fate/Divine will*) or (*obu onatalu chi*): It is consequential on providential decree. In mode of expression, *chi* becomes synonymous with destiny, providence, fate. (p. 147).

If Ezekwugo's argument is anything to go by, personal effort or achievement or greatness in life can be predicated on destiny – certain success in life have the Igbo surprised as to what might be the origin of such in moments of great deliverance from dangers like serious motor accident, fire outbreak in one's house, or escape from an assassin and supernatural cure of serious ailment that his *Chi* is awake. This can be interpreted to mean that his god is very protective and caring. In this case, *Chi* bestows favours, honour and riches to someone. *Chi* therefore, is the guardian spirit that disposes itself to attract favour, honour and dignity to someone that is his client or ward.

Ilogu (1971), further contends that children born of the same parents have different *Chi* which makes them different. This, of course, is as decreed by the creator of human kind. Ilogu, explains that every personality proves the worth and power of his *Chi* in his physical achievements. He inferred further that;

Through this *Chi*, *Chineke* connects himself with all created human beings and the closeness such men are to one's ancestor the nearer they are to each other. Because individual *Chi* differs, every man is expected to prove of what kind his own *Chi* is, by various economic and social activities. This is the background of the strong achievement motivation said to be possessed by Igbo people (pp.34-38).

Abanuka (2003), does not think differently from his kinsmen in situating human success as that tailored according to divine providence. He opined that human desire for goodness and greatness is principally provoked by his *Chi* (God's spirit) in man. Proper choice which is in line with divine mandate will certainly launch one in the corridor of success. Concurring with Ezekwugo (1987), Abunuka said;

The longing for goodness which cannot suffer any threat is the fundamental characteristic of human desire and is closely connected with inner most centre of human reality, China *agu* (concrete individuating principle) whose real content is spirit. In so far as *eke/Oke* (destiny) is a part of divine reality allotted to man understood in the personalized form as talent (*Akala aka*), it seems evident that desire is movement back to the ultimate ontological characteristics which found the goodness which is manifested in particular things. (p. 78).

We have tried in our brief exposition of Igbo concept of *Chi* and *Akara aka*, to explain the possible foundation of greatness among Igbo sons and daughters. For the average Igbo, it is destiny showcased in the individual achievements. For the more radical ones, it remains a problem to be solved. The fact we can establish however is, that the Igbo crowns outstanding personal efforts. This forms the basis for her ancestor veneration and propagation. This outstanding personal efforts as noted above, may account for why Ezenweke (2012) stated that:

The ancestors are dead forbearers of the family. As well, death does not necessarily confer ancestorship on a person. To be considered an ancestor, one must have lived an exemplary life and must have done much to enhance the prestige of the family, clan or tribe as in other African areas (p.177).

So the ancestors remain members of the family just as the living and the family and the honour given to them is promotion of family solidarity in particular and community consciousness at large.

We have to reflect a little here on Igbo concept of value in regard to the place of the ancestor in her religious consciousness. For Ilogu (1974):



Value is the quality of a thing that makes it more or less desirable or useful. It expresses the significance, which is ascribed to a particular experience, activity or life in general. This significance gives the guidance and decisions man makes in daily and behavioural traits. Value is objective when it is guided by laws and customs, but subjective when it is guided by individual whims and caprices (p. 119).

From the point of view of Ilogu, values are created by both the law and customs of a people and individuals. Values guide individual and group conduct. This is to say that it is a psychological power which directs levels of actions on daily basis. Values have to be put to use or experienced in the life of an individual. An instance may be cited here. If an Igbo son sees how another late father is buried, he will like to give the same honour and dignity to his father whenever he dies. All that he saw in the burial just referenced is value orientation, it is experimental. It lives with the Igbo on daily basis. This value orientation can be said to be the reason why burial ceremonies are very costly in Igbo society. And most surprisingly instead of making effort to curb this cost, most people are striving to improve on the one they witnessed and regret if they cannot. It is inherent social disposition of the Igbo which likely informs that a befitting burial has significance in Igbo world-view. Ukaegbu (1991), joins his voice with Ilogu in explaining the concept of value. He opines that value reflects the personality in an individual and they are the expression of cultural tone, moral, effective, social and spiritual, marked by family, the school, the institution and the human society (p. 33).

Ukaegbu's view states the mind of the Igbo person in ascribing value of respect to their forebears. It identifies worth of personality as part and parcel of Igbo culture and tradition. This value is accepted by the community and the family respectively. Ukaegbu agrees with Worsley (1973) when he said, "Values hold the society together because they are

shared in common. Values are made that everyone must accept the content. Common values give rise to feelings of solidarity and unity among the people. (pp. 362-369).

We can clearly see from the insight of Worsley, that the Igbo are rational in practicing ancestral cult because it holds the community together. Again, in the perception of Worsley, it is a shared value promulgated for common acceptance and use. This can explain why no Igbo man grudges at expenditure after burying his parents or loved ones. Everyone accepts it as climate of opinion. The practice of ancestor respect can therefore not be vitiated because of great value of respect placed on it in Igbo laws and custom. For Izibili (2005); therefore,

Value has three dimensions to a human person, which are respect; this is fundamental attitude of giving value to somebody or something. It demands non destruction of the being or functioning of the other being who has a right to be and operate within common values governed by rules of law and healthy customs. The second is solidarity which demands togetherness in good deeds plans and reflections as characterized by sharing of human good qualities of productivity. The third is liberties, which demand not inhibiting human person to self-development and expression (pp330-331).

Izibili primarily identified award of honour on someone as a value placement;

This is what the Igbo do in canonizing ancestors. In his view, John Paul II (1995) identified Igbo love for life as a motivational principle for ancestor veneration. He says ‘‘their love of human life leads them to the veneration of their ancestors as they believe that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them (pp.44-45).

The brief citations above attempts to explain Igbo value on ancestor veneration.

### 2.1.6 An Ancestor in Igbo Cosmology

It becomes germane to note at this point that an ancestor is not just a person in a family who has lived a long time ago as defined by Hornby, (2000). In traditional Igbo setting, the condition for admittance into ancestorhood is summarized in the work edited by Ezenweke and Kanu (2012). In this work titled: **Issues on African traditional religion and philosophy**, the duo included uprightness and good moral life as a condition for admittance to ancestor-hood. It is expected that one must have lived a good and exemplary moral life and contributed to the growth and development of his community while on earth. Lazy, reckless, irresponsible thieves, criminals, murderers may not be admitted. These conditions intrinsically induce good behaviour in people to qualify for admittance.

Due to the Igbo belief that nothing happens by chance, that sickness and calamities, failures, unfavourable situations are from malignant spirits or from ancestors as punishments for misdeeds, good deeds signify that one has clean hands and a qualification for ancestorhood. One is also not expected to die of unexplainable diseases such as swollen abdomen, diarrhoea, chicken pox, small pox or by suicide. These help people to as well improve hygienic status and avoid loose living. When all these positive conditions are observed, one is expected to die at ripe old age as a condition for admission.

For the continuity of the lineage, male successor is a condition for admittance because spiritual beings are believed to link with the living family members through the oldest male relative or family head. This may be as a result of patrilineal system witnessed in many parts of Africa and accounts for multiple marriages in case of childlessness or absence of male children in many traditional African families.

Proper burial and funeral rites are vital conditions for admittance into ancestor hood. The Igbo argue that these rites assure deceased members peaceful passage and admittance to

ancestor hood and protect the living from wandering spirits of deceased members of their family. In many Igbo families, poverty, business failures have been believed to be linked to improper or lack of funeral rites to their deceased relatives.

## **2.2 Igbo Concept of Morality**

The need for a brief survey into the concept of morality in general and Igbo concept of morality in a study on ancestral cult is obvious. This is because death does not automatically qualify one to status of ancestor-hood. There are conditions for this enhanced status and very prominent among them is sound moral uprightness. This accounts for why this survey is imperative.

### **2.2.1 General Concept of Morality**

The term morality derives from the Latin plural “mores”, meaning “morals” or “manners”. It is used to mean the generally accepted code of conduct in a society or within a sub – group of society. It is also used to mean the pursuit of good life. It is a ‘set of principles’ and certain attitudes and behaviours towards fellow men. Principles concerning right or wrong, good and bad. A system of moral principles followed by a group. The degree to which it is right or wrong. It is a state of affairs involving human relations which are consistent with the conception of the greatest good. It could also mean the differentiation of human actions into good and bad in accordance with accepted norms of human conduct. What readily comes to mind when we talk about morality is conduct and attitude of man. And an observation has shown that attitudes and conducts of man are functions of one’s dominant beliefs.

Agha (2003), opines that:

An act is right if it conforms to the society by which it is judged. Therefore, moral conduct of a man is that which produces the greatest possible good in a situation. It means that the conduct has desirable qualities which satisfy some valuable need. A thing can only be said to be good when it makes for social welfare. (p. 35).

Morality is the attitude of man with regard to the moral law which is based on his free decision. Morality sometimes is taken to mean definite character based on the predomination of one whole people or a social group (p.246).

So we notice from the above that morality in a way is the sense of what is wrong or right, good or bad human conduct. Morals relate to principle of consideration of right and wrong actions or good character. Aghas (2003), further explains that action is right if it leads to physical, intellectual and spiritual development or to a more harmonious personal and social life (p.35). Action is right or wrong if it is detrimental to individual or society. It is an observance of the laws of whole-some living. To be moral is to be intelligent and to be sociable in the process of living. The right choice is the selection of the greater of greatest value while the wrong choice is the selection of some lesser good or value. Most people or many people look at morality as something to do with corruption or problem of sex.

These are but aspects, or forms small aspects of morality. Morality is a wider concept as it entails all aspect of our lives. Some of our actions are morally good, while some are morally bad. Example of morally bad actions includes cheating, stealing, telling lies and other actions that are destructive to the society. Morally good actions include being honest, truthful, obedient and all the actions that protect, enhance and ensure habitual co-existence of individuals and entire society at large. These good actions do not only help to ensure the survival of our society, they improve the dignity of man. Morality leads one to leave out

some evil mind or thought. Agha (2003), maintained that a moral person does not consider it right to commit action of plunder, theft and robbery action against anybody. The moral person is one who is responsible and self disciplined. Morality is significant because it leads to self awareness, responsible self and crime control. In views Bourk (1967),

Morality is the science and art of proper behaviour. It is the branch of philosophy that studies human action in terms of their being right or wrong licit or illicit. In order words it is the science of good and evil. The good is what is to be done, and evil is what to be avoided. It is also the science of what is to be permitted, may be done or what is forbidden, and may not be done. The motive in morality is goodness. It inquires into what makes a man a good man, not just a good painter or excellent footballer. The good is symbolized as well as expressed in words and actions. At the same time, the good resides in the person of human being, irrespective of his or her professional success or failure. A bad man (morally) thus can be great warrior, he is morally moribund, yet in battle field he is great (p.557)

But the prime purpose of life is to be good ultimately. Hence morality goes to that profoundest level of the being of man: his goodness, holiness in a word, his perfection. Morality promotes the best and discourages the worst in man and society. It is the conscience of people and nations. This means that, morality must lead not just to clear ideas but also to clear acceptable action. To the question of why morality? Why should we do good and avoid evil? Higgin (1956), states that:

It is for the welfare of all individuals and society. For failure to do good and failure to avoid evil will inevitably lead to chaos and to decimation of human life (p.3). Higgins went further to state that: to do good would prolong and advance

the human family. It is even from the practical perspective better to do good than to do evil. In the long run, to do good is for the ultimate welfare of the human beings. To do evil, the same logic, leads to the disintegration of the evil doer. For anyone who continues a consistent evil life, will end up in an evil way. For evil ends up in evil. This is why morality is both a normative and practical science. As a normative science it sets out norms that would help the human being arrive at good order and required order. As a practical science, it tells him or her right steps to take for such arrival at the good. There is in morality the question of intimacy of human acts and life. (p.557).

The final purpose of morality is the finality of human life in the world. Such finality is ultimate happiness. Every human being desires to be happy not only in this life, but ultimately after wards. Hence, morality aims at teaching man how to live well so as to arrive at happiness, he desires in long run which is the status of ancestor- hood in Igbo traditional world- view.

### **2.2.2 Morality in Igbo Perception**

The common characteristics of Igbo society is the existence of norms called “*omenala*” that is what happens on the land, as the dictates of the earth goddess for guidance or norms that were made by the society but handed over to the earth goddess for guidance. Also affirmed, was the fact that “*omenala*” has social, moral and political implications, based on some specific rules or laws and given a religious undertone. They are derived from the worship of the same mother earth “*ala*” –the earth goddess who regulates the moral life of the Igbo. Hence Igbo concept of morality is akin to general concept which aims at promoting the best and discouraging the worst in man and society which can sumup as the conscience of people and nation. Uchendu (1965), opined that:

There exists a divine tie to be a kind –hearted mother who protects all her children, hence, no deity may exercise a fatal influence over any member of the society without first going to tell the “*ala*” the offence of the individual. (p.96).

Every person is expected to be his brothers’ keeper. The ability of “*ala*” to safe guard his people are told in different stories and different towns and villages among the Igbo. In Obinagu in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, there are several stories of people who lost their lives while trying to poison others. The ancestral shrines “*ojezulu*” and “*aniezi*” strategically located in the town are anti-poisonous and any one, be he an indigene or foreigner cannot cross any of these shrines carrying poison or deadly medicine.

Prior to the advent of modernity and western religion, most traditional Igbo families has “*ogilishi*” trees planted before the entrances and any attempt to cross such compounds with poisons or deadly medicine is highly resisted and most times resulting to the death of carriers. When certain things happen in the present dispensation old men grind their teeth and often says “*mgbe ala bu ala*” –suggesting that *ala* has been weakened in many communities. The actions of the earth goddess in the guidance of and enforcement of order, is most reflected in the moral life of Igbo. Thus, in considering this, Ilogu (1974) stated;

That the key point to be noted are, the existence of a moral code built up from the injunction of the earth goddess *ala* through the ancestors (*ndi ichie*). These injunctions made up of approved observances and prohibitions constitute what the Igbo call “*omenala*” (the “doings” or ways of the land that is the people, the community, the clan or village). Those prohibitions are referred to as “*nso ala*” (the actions that are abominable to *ala* the earth goddess) (p.123).

In this vein Meek (1974), reiterates that on the role of the earth goddess in the area of morality, one sees that approved observances have been called *omenala*, the question that



readily comes to mind is who approves observances and who prohibits and in what way specifically is the earth goddess involved? It has also been observed that the usage of the term *omenala* has often been too inclusive of practically all that happens in Igbo land. On distinction of offences, Green (1964), states thus;

Those who think that there were no distinctions in offences, have at times use the terms “*aru*” or “*alu*” and “*nso*” inter-changeably. This has been source of confusion especially when they are applied to offences that are not “*alu*” or “*nso*” in Igbo society. But we have studied the Igbo society with some depth of understanding and have come out to affirm that there is difference between “*nso*” “*alu*” and “*iwu*” (p.10).

The inability of some people to note this distinction is because, in Igbo society, what constitute an offence is what is contrary to “*Omenala*” and what enforces the compliance to observances is also the same “*omenala*”. Malinowski (1970), stated that the only way in which we can classify rules of conduct is by reference to the motives and sanctions by which they are enforced (p.56). *Iwu* are offences that are breaches of purely social sanctions and laws that are enacted to regulate inter-personal relationship between individuals in the society on a purely social sense starting from relationship in the family to the community as a whole. We have in mind, “*iwu*” (man – made laws), the breaches of which need not involve the deterioration in the “socio-ritual” status of the defaulter as “*aru*” (taboo). Igbo land is hemmed round with laws – “*iwu*”. There are private and public “*iwu*”. Private “*iwu*” refers to those laws guiding different societies exclusively. Thus, all laws guiding women organizations are private to women and may not apply to men or children. Any woman who breaks any of them, the women takes step to punish her so it is also for other societies like title holders and age grades. The greatest measure used to discipline an offender of the laws is ostracism. And if he pays the fine imposed on him, he becomes a member once more. If one

is ostracized by the members of a specific society, (group) the non members of that society (group) in community maintain their moral relationship with the person. But an offender of “*iwu ala*”-the law of the community attracts a public opprobrium and is ostracized by every member of the community till he has paid a fine imposed on him. For instance, a young woman fighting an older woman (her mother in-law) is considered a serious offence for which the women folk will exact some on the young woman and this is their private affair. The younger woman could refuse the judgment of the other women and may report her to the village council. But if a youth refuses to join his age grade in clearing the village roads, and refuses to pay the fine for such offenses he cannot bring his case to the village council because, he is going against the law of the community, and his offense has passed from being “private” to “public”. We now see the difference between the private wrong and public wrong. According to Lewis (1969), many cases are complaints of injustice, but others are forms of behaviour which are contrary to social peace. The second class of offences refers to those laws made by the community and handed to the deity to enforce in such a way that any breach becomes disrespect to the deity on one hand and over throw of social order on the other hand. This class includes those acts that are not bad in themselves but considered as such within a given community for the purpose of peace. The punishment due to such offences have dual dimension because they touch and upset social; peace and the decorum on one hand and breach of relationship with a deity –*Ala* on the other hand. For instance, in Abor, Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, it is an offence for a man to raise his voice on his wife at dusk to the extent of beating. We have to remember that they may not be anything morally evil in husband and wife having misunderstanding, but there may be time when this happens it becomes a serious offence. Here, the case of Okonkwo in ‘Things Fall Apart’ comes to mind. There Okonkwo beats one of his wives during the week of peace and this was an offence to the community and earth goddess “*Ala*” in Umuofia. The priest of

“*Ala*” was attracted by Okonkwo’s offence just as each member of Umuofia community. According to Achebe (1958), the priest outlined the offence and time and its consequences as follows:

Listen to me, he said when Okonkwo has spoken, you are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do know that our fore fathers ordained that before we plant any crop in earths, we should observe a week in which man does not say harsh words to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crop will not grow. You have done a great evil. The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish. You will bring to the shrine of “*ani*” tomorrow, one she goat, one hen, a length of cloth and hundred cowries. (p.221).

Here one notices that it was the fore fathers of Umuofia who made this law and instituted it in the name of earth goddess by making it an act of respect to it. That a sacrifice is necessary here for the propitiation of the earth deity, and that the sacrifice is not to be delayed is to be noted. This sort of sacrifice does not qualify as those called “*ikwa ala*” because it does not involve “*igbaoriko*” meaning to enter into covenant. To make up for such offences, if delayed, the Igbo said that “*echi abanye n’ ime ya*” the process of propitiation of the deity becomes more elaborate. The codes of conducts prescribed by this class of laws, at times embody negative and positive sanctions sometimes (together). For example, the tradition forbids a maiden from breaking her virginity before marriage. Umeasiegbu (1974),

Observed that the idea of chastity before marriage has positive sanction the girl and her mother will receive some reward from it. They will enjoy the good

opinion of their neighbours. While the breaking of virginity has a negative sanction since the girl can be sent home and the marriage broken (p.10).

In which case, the girl is ridiculed and this is punishment. When this law is handed over to the deity for enforcement, one sees that the punishment becomes heavier, “the keeper of virgin law” the girl becomes his “*osu*”. The enforcement of the laws that regulate those acts that are not per-se bad to perfect and practical realization in traditional Igbo society is because they are invariably associated with the earth goddess and surrounded with the believe that breaking them becomes a source of calamity for the community. It is the belief and not the actual experienced activities of the deity that is responsible to the conformity to these rules. Now we come to those actions that are in their nature and offence against religion and morals and detected as such the earth goddess. In this realm, we are concerned with those offences the Igbo call “*nso ala*” “*aru*” and the commission of it which is described as “*iru ala*”, “*imeru ala*” or “*ime nso ala*”. What constitute “*nso ala*” are normally organized and diffuse sanctions in any Igbo community. As organized sanctions, they are definite, regulated and when committed, a recognized and specific procedure must be undergone. As diffuse sanctions, they are taken for granted as wrong acts though no specific procedure may be given before the action has been committed, usually, people react spontaneously in an unorganized way against the culprit to show a general disapproval of his action, especially when an action has never been committed. According to Ilogu (1974):

“*Nso ala*” is norms pertaining to things sacred and important. These are primarily backed up by super natural sanctions and by the strong feeling that sacred matters must not be tampered with. Once committed, the culprit is believed to lose socio-ritual status, to gain which he must have to procure rites of purification of himself, and his community called “*ikwa-ala*” and this involves a sacrifice

known as “*nsuju-ala*” which in turn culminate in “*igba oriko mmuo na mmadu*” that is communion with the gods and men (p.129)

Cult offences are manifestations of ill religion in Igbo traditional society and though left to the gods for punishment. If the culprit refuses to purify the community and appease the gods he is driven out of the community as a sign that they do not support his action. Forcing out, is the punishment for the offence but to drive him outside with the rage of the god that must haunt him. If the “*nso ala*” is an offence against morality, it is the earth goddess that is specifically involved. In a case of homicide, there is a difference when the man killed is his clans-man and when he is not, and when a murder takes place outside the clan and an outsider too is involved. In traditional Igbo society, if a man kills an enemy or a man of other clan and comes home safely, without involving his clan into a vendetta with the other clan, he is honoured. He only needs to wash the blood of the slain-man off his hands and this is called “*igwa aka*”. It does not, properly speaking involve rites of purification. After it, the man wears an eagle feather. When it is known that a man killed a clans-man, consciously and premeditatedly, he must be killed himself to placate the earth goddess. But if the killing is accidental, the punishment is different and does not involve actual rites of purification as the killer must be exiled for some time and his house burnt down. In the case of Okonkwo who accidentally killed the son of the clan, Achebe (1958) writes:

The only option was to flee from his clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clan man, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female because it has been inadvertent. He could return to his clan after seven years. The purification rites here were simple and as soon as the day broke, a large crowd of men from Ezeudu’s quarter stormed Okonkwo’s compound dressed in garbs of war. They set fire to his houses, demolished his red walls,

killed his animals and destroyed his ban. It was the justice of the earth goddess and they were merely her messengers. They had no hatred in their hearts against Okonkwo. His greatest friend Obierika was among them. They were merely cleansing the land which Okonkwo has polluted with the blood of a clan's man.

This brief exploration constitute Igbo concept of morality and attendant sanctions which must be strictly adhered to, to be morally upright as it is a pre-requisites to the attainment of the status of ancestor- hood.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

In the preceding section, conceptual framework of cult of ancestors in Igbo traditional religious climate, this work tried to explain the concept under our investigation. It tried to pose reasons why the Igbo indulge in robust veneration of their departed heroes and heroines. It saw ancestor cult as a common value of respect shared by all Igbo. It found out that the Igbo is very conscious of the role of the ancestor and retributive justice the ancestors can unleash on their families if they stubbornly neglect to carry out the demand of the tradition they left behind. Be that as it may, the research looked at some theories which the Igbo use to interpret or back up their religious practice of honouring the spirit members of their families. The theories helped to clarify ambivalent issues as well as give social, philosophical and cultural relevance surrounding ancestor cult in Igbo society. For purpose of clarity and understanding, it is germane at this juncture, to define theory. According to Hornby (2000),

Theory is a set of assumptions, propositions or accepted facts that attempt to provide a plausible or rational explanation of cause and effect (causal) relationships among a group of observed phenomenon. The word's original meaning is from the Greek, Theoros (spectator) stresses the effects that all theories are mental models of the perceived reality. (p.1542)

Theories are mental constructs for rational explanation of a phenomenon. It is meant to guide understanding and appreciation of such. Theories embedded in Igbo practice of ancestor veneration are the channels of understanding and appreciation of the existing common religious and cultural practices as it were.

Webster (2006) has a similar understanding of theory. It states that;

A theory is an idea that are intended to explain facts of events, an idea that is suggested or presented as possibly true but that is not known or proven to be true.

The general principle of ideas is that it relates to a particular subject. (p.1386).

The presentation of a theory, is an effort by someone or a group to provide reasons undergirding events in human society. In this case, theories serve the purposes of elucidating concepts as well as rational explanation of certain human events which may appear as conventions. The following theories are therefore examined to help us understand the topic “ancestral cult as a demonstration of community consciousness in Igbo traditional society.”

### **2.3.1 Theory of Immortality of the Soul**

In this theory as propounded by Swinburn, Plato argued not in favour of the convenience of accepting the belief in immortality but for the belief itself. He dramatically represented Socrates’ final discussions with his disciples, just before drinking the hemlock. Plato’s first argument is based on the observation that contraries are followed by contraries. According to the argument, contraries produced contraries and are followed by contraries. For example, light is followed by darkness, while darkness is in turn followed by light.

Strength is followed weakness and vice-versa. The state of being asleep is followed by state of being awake and vice-versa. Now, life and death are contraries like light and darkness, and since life is followed by death, it is only expected that death in turn will be

followed by life. This shows that there is life after death. This argument is based on the assumption that contraries always follow contraries. But it has been argued that it is not always the case. Can there not be weakness that is not followed by strength? The state of being asleep that is not followed by being awake? Or darkness that is not followed by light? Granting that life is followed by death, there is no guarantee that death will in turn be followed by life.

Plato also advanced arguments to show that soul pre-existed before coming into this world. He assumed that if the soul can be shown to have existed prior to its union with the body in this world, then it follows that it can also continue to exist after its separation from the body at death. If the soul pre-existed prior to its union with the body, then it means that the soul does not depend on the body for its existence. Its separation from the body does not mean the end of its existence.

To prove that the soul pre-existed prior to its union with the body in this world, Plato points out that there are certain things we know but which we did not acquire through the senses or in other words through the sense perception. For example we do not perceive absolute standards but we know them and make use of them in comparing things. For examples, we say that one thing is better than the other, and later we find another one which is better than the previous one. We are making this comparison against the background of an absolute standard of goodness. When we say one thing is better than the other, what we are actually saying is that, it is nearer (closer) to absolute standard of goodness than the other. The standard we are using in making the comparison is absolute goodness and the more a thing approximates with it, the better it is. Now, how did we come to know this absolute goodness which we are using as standard? We do not perceive it with our sense, yet we know it. This shows according to Plato that the soul is brought to this knowledge with itself from the other world, in its previous existence, prior to its union with the body in this world. This



shows that the soul did not begin its life here in this world, it existed in another world prior to its union with the body. It was in its life in the other world that it knew absolute goodness, and brought the knowledge of absolute goodness to this world. The same applies to mathematical truths. A boy who has not been taught mathematics can, when questioned, show evidence of knowledge of mathematical truths. How did he get to learn these mathematical truths without having been taught? The soul (of the body) brought it along where it pre-existed before coming into this world. And if the soul pre-existed prior to its union with the body, it can also exist without the body and with the body and will continue to exist after its separation from the body at death. This shows that there is life after death. There are two loopholes in this argument. Even if it is true that we know certain things without having acquired such knowledge through sense perception, it does not follow that such knowledge was brought by the soul from another world. It could be acquired by intuition and pre-existence of the soul could not be the explanation and if it were even shown that soul pre-existed prior to its union with the body, it does not follow that it will continue to exist after its separation from the body at death. Its contact with the body through its union could have adverse effects on it that it would no longer continue to be what it was prior to its union. Plato also advanced the argument that soul is able to know the forms and they are immaterial, eternal, immutable, and indestructible realities.

In other words, the soul is immortal. The argument presupposes that the forms are immaterial, immutable and eternal and real entities actually existing somewhere. But this is an assumption which cannot be proved and as such a belief. In another argument, Plato says that the soul is a principle of life because it participates in the form of life. As a principle of life, it cannot at the same time admit the contrary (death). In other words, since the soul is a participation in the form of life, it cannot at the same time admit the contrary form (death). This means that the soul cannot die. This argument is also based on belief in the actual

existence of the forms of real entities. Also in other argument Plato says that something can only be destroyed or perished by its own internal evil. But the evils of the soul (such as injustice, intemperance, cowardice and ignorance) do not destroy the soul. An unjust man for example can live longer than a just man.

Since the soul is not destroyed by its inherent evil, it would be unreasonable to suppose that it could be destroyed by external evils. The very first premise that something can only be destroyed by internal evil inherent in it, and not by evils external to it, is an unproven assumption. There is no reason why a thing cannot be destroyed by evils that are external to its nature. And again Plato says that a thing that moves by the action of something else ceases to exist anytime the other thing which moves it ceases to do so. But the soul is self moving principle which does not depend on the action of any other thing. This means that as a self moving principle the soul is uncreated and as such, it is indestructible and immortal. This argument can only apply properly to God and not human soul, it therefore shows immortality of God and not of individual human soul.

The Christian philosophers hold that souls come into existence at conception or birth though they continue to exist after death. In this work, theory of immortality is endorsed. The immortality essence is conditioned by the fact that the ancestors are now pure spirits and by nature of spirits, they are embedded with super natural powers though unequal with the ultimate being. Their status of immortality makes them to be conceived as clairvoyance, and bi-located. This understanding of the ontological status as a matter of fact makes the Igbo person, to be cautious about his actions because, the ancestors are aware of the happenings in their families or villages. Immortality as described by Hornby (2000) is that which has the character, of everlasting remembrance. This is the juncture where the Igbo people portray the regard for the ancestors the most. The Igbo has the belief that "*nacheta ka*" (remembrance is greater). It is understood by the Igbo and indeed other cultures, that one's parents,

benefactors, and important friends are always remembered in the scheme of things. But the most effective remembrance is that of our late parents and departed ancestors and ancestress. The reason is simple and logical. A robust relationship had been established when they were alive. Since consciousness is an integral aspect of humans, the possibility of remembrance is there. The same level of integral is also accorded to family patriarchs or kindred ancestors and the like. The notion of immortalization of them rests on the need to keep track of their contributions to the origin, development of their families and communities. Most Igbo communities, families and kindreds name their children, businesses, schools or organization after their fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters. This is but immortalization in action. Ezechi 2011 did not see the need for this immortalization differently. According to him;

It has been argued in the favour of belief in existence of God and immortality because, if we rightly believe that God exists, we gain eternal bliss. If God does exist, we lose nothing, in as much as there is no final judgment to account for our error. On the other hand, if we rightly believe God does not exist, we gain nothing in as much as there is no final judgment to reward our belief. But if we wrongly believe that God does not exist, we lose eternal bliss and are therefore damned to everlasting hell. By a calculation of risks and benefits we should conclude that it is better to believe in God's existence. This argument is extensible to the belief in immortality. (p.52).

It is better to believe that there is life after death because if, in fact, there is life after death, we shall be rewarded for our faith and yet lose nothing if we are wrong, on the other hand, if we do not believe in a life after death, and we are wrong we will be punished by God, and if we are right there will not be a final judgment to reward our belief. Martin (1992), argued that this argument does not take into account the risk of believing in false God or the risk of believing in the wrong model of immortality. The argument also assumes that we are

able to choose our own beliefs, something most doubtful among most philosophers. There are pragmatic benefits of the belief in immortality. Belief in immortality is a pre-requisite for moral action, if people do not believe that there is a final judgment administered by God to account for deeds, there will be no motivation to do good. It is very important that happiness which human beings seek coincide with moral action. This can only be guaranteed by the belief in after life, because moral actions do guarantee happiness. Thus, the only way that a person may be moral and yet preserve happiness is by believing that there will be an afterlife, justice that will square morality with happiness. Belief in immortality is necessary to avoid desperation in face of life's absurdity. Only by belief that our lives will have an everlasting effect do we find motivation to continue to live. If on the contrary, we believe that everything will ultimately come to an end, nothing will survive it, becomes pointless to carry-on any activity. Death strikes fear and anguish in many of us and belief in immortality is a much needed resource to cope with that fear. A famous phrase states thus; "if there is no God, then everything is permitted if there is no immortality, there is no virtue" (Martin, 1992).

Some kind of distinction between physical body and material or semi material Soul seems to be as old as human culture. The existence of such a distinction has been indicated by the manner of burial of the earliest human skeleton yet discovered. Anthropologists offer various conjectures about the origin of the distinction or, perhaps it was first suggested by the dead person by dreams of them by the sight of the reflection of oneself in water and on other bright surfaces or by meditation upon the significance of religious rites which grew spontaneously in face of the fact of death. It was Plato (428/7-348/7) the philosopher who has most deeply and lastly influenced western culture, who systematically developed the body-mind dichotomy and first attempted to prove the immortality of the soul. Plato argues that although the body belongs to sensible world, and shares its changing and impermanent nature, the intellect is related to the unchanging realities of which we are aware when we

think of no particular good things but the goodness it-self, not of specific just acts, but of justice it-self and not of other “universals” or external ideas by participation in which physical things and events have their own specific characteristics. Being related to the higher and abiding realms, rather than the world of sense, the soul is immortal. Hence, one who devotes one’s life to the contemplation of eternal realities rather than the gratification of the fleeting desires of the body will find at death that whereas one’s body turns to the dust, ones soul gravitates to the realm of the unchanging, there to live forever. Plato painted an awe-inspiring picture of hunting beauty and persuasiveness which has moved and elevated the mind of men and women in many different centuries and lands. Nevertheless, it is not today as it was during century of the Christian era. The common philosophy of the West and demonstration of immortality which pre-supposes Plato’s meta-physical system cannot claim to constitute a proof for a 20<sup>th</sup> century person. Plato used the further argument that the only things that can suffer destruction are those which are composites, since to destroy something means to disintegrate into its constituent parts. All material bodies are composites, the soul, however is simple and therefore imperishable. This argument was adopted by Aquinas and became standard in Roman Catholic theology as in the following passage from the catholic philosopher, Maritain (1953) who in agreement with the immortality of the soul stated that;

A spiritual soul cannot be corrupted, since it possesses no matter, it cannot be disintegrated since it has no substantial past; it cannot lose its individual unity since it is self subsisting, or its internal energy, since it contains within itself all the sources of its energies. The soul contains within itself all the sources of its energies. The souls cannot die. Once it exists, it cannot disappear, it will necessarily exist forever. (p.17).

This type of reasoning has been criticized. It has been pointed that although it is true that a simple substance cannot disintegrate, consciousness nevertheless ceases to exist

through the diminution of its intensity to zero. Modern psychology has also questioned the basic premise that the mind is a simple entity. It seems instead to be a structure of only relative unity, fairly stable and tightly integrated but capable under stress of various degrees of division and dissolution. This comment from psychology makes it clear that the assumption that soul is a simple substance is not an empirical observation. As such, it cannot provide the basics for a general proof of immortality. The body-soul distinction, first formulated as a philosophical doctrine in ancient Greece, was baptized into Christianity, ran through, medieval period, and entered the modern world with the public status of self evident truths. Since the Second World War, the Cartesian mind matter dualism having been taken for granted for many centuries has been strongly criticized by philosophers of contemporary analytical school. It is also argued that the words that describe mental characteristics and operations such as intelligence, thought, carefree-ness happy, calculation and the like apply in practice to types of human behaviour and behavioural dispositions. They refer to empirical individual, the observable human being who is born, grows, feels and dies and not to be shadowy proceedings of mysterious “ghost” in the machine. An individual is thus very much what he or she appears to be, a creature of flesh and blood who behaves and is capable of behaving in a characteristic range and ways rather than a non-physical soul, incomprehensively, interacting with a physical body. As a result of this development, much 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers have come to see human beings as in the biblical writing, not as an external soul temporarily attached to mortal body but as a form of finite mortal, psychophysical life. Thus the Old Testament scholars like Pedason (1982.) stated thus: “the body is the soul in outward form.” (p.17). This way of thinking has led to quite a different conception of death from that found in Plato and the Neo-platonic strand in European thought. Commonly speaking, the difference between immortality and after-life is not very clear. After life is the confirmation of existence after death not minding whether or not the continuation is

indefinite. Immortality implies a never-ending existence, regardless of whether or not the body dies. The belief in models, viz: the survivals of the astral body resembling the physical body; the immortality of the immaterial soul; resurrection of the body (or re-embodiment in case the resurrected person did not keep the same body as at the moment of death). It is of crucial importance in discussion on immortality to address the fundamental question – do souls exist? Analysts believe souls do exist and survive the death of the body. Materialists believe that mental activities are nothing but cerebral activities and thus, death brings the total end of a person's existence. However, some immortality advocates believe that, even if immortal souls do not exist, immortality may still be achieved through resurrection. Pertinent issues of immortality must address how the dead person could be identical with the original person that once lived. On this, traditionally, philosophers have considered three main criteria: the soul criterion, the body criterion and the psychological criterion. In discussions on immortality, definition of the word 'death' need be made clear. Rosenberg (1998) stated that if we define it in philosophical terms as the cessation of biological functions that make life possible and immediately as continuation of life after death; a confirmation appears to come up. He explained that it makes no sense to say that someone has died and yet survived death. To be immortal precisely is not to suffer death. Thus, whoever dies stop existing; nobody may exist after death, precisely because death means the end of existence. So for convenience, however, we may agree that death simply means the decomposition of the body but not necessarily the end of a person's existence as assumed in most dictionary definitions. This implies that a physically dead person may continue to exist in an incorporeal state, with ethereal body or with some other physical body. There are varieties of beliefs in immortality but may be reduced to three basic models: Flew (2000) reduced these models though not exclusive into: the survival of the astral body, the immaterial soul, the resurrection of the body. Many religious thoughts conceive that human beings are made up two substances: a

physical body that can be touched, smelt, heard and seen; and an astral body made by some sort of mysterious ethereal substances that cannot be touched, that has no solidity but that cannot be touched, that has no solidity but that can be seen. This astral body detaches the physical upon death and mourns in some region within time and space. Though, to Edwards (1997), some philosophers and theologians see this claim simply too extravagant to be taken seriously. The immortal soul model conceives that the substance that survives the death of the body is not a body of some other sort rather an immortal soul that has no extension and thus, cannot be perceived through the senses. Henry (2007) believes that for something to exist it must occupy space (although not necessarily physical space) and hence, souls are located somewhere in space. A good number of philosophers believed that the body is mortal and the soul is immortal and that the soul is identical with the mind and whenever a person dies, that their mental contents survive in an incorporeal state. Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism believe that immortal souls abandoned the body upon death, may exist temporarily in an incorporeal state and may eventually adhere to a new body at the time of birth. This is the doctrine of reincarnation whereas the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) consider that immortality is achieved through resurrection of the body at the time of the final judgment. None of these great faiths has a definite position on the existence of an immortal soul. Jews, Christians and Muslims have believed at the time of death, the soul detaches from the body and continues on to exist in an intermediate incorporeal state until the moment of resurrection. So others, however, believe that there is no intermediate state with death, the person ceases to exist, and in a sense, resumes existence at the time of resurrection.

Plato believes that the soul is immortal. He believes that everything has an opposite as implied by it. Something to be hot means that it was previously cold. To be awakened means that we were previously asleep. So is life opposite of death. This supposes that there is life before death and life after death. This is akin to Igbo-Africans cyclic nature being in its world



view. Plato, further illustrated this belief with a slave boy he asserted to have known various truth of mathematics which no one thought him. This he must have learnt in his previous existence. The belief and conception of notion of clairvoyance, and bi- location ability of ancestors in African/Igbo worldview endorses the status of immortality as argued by Plato. This belief is dramatized by the African/Igbo through the reverence given to the ancestors by naming their children, business and organizations after their fathers, mothers, brothers, or sisters. This belief has a pragmatic benefit as it is a pre-requisite for moral action and helps to avoid desperation in the face of life's absurdity and gives Igbo man motivation to live. Plato argued that it is only the body that belongs to the sensible world, the intellect belongs to the unchanging realities. Plato opine that at death, one's body turns to the dust, one's soul gravitates to the realm of the unchanging to live forever. The theory of immortality by Plato suppose just like Igbo / African belief in after life but in a different status. Like the problem of the existence of God, no argument can without some loopholes here and there prove that the soul is immortal or that the soul is not immortal –that there is life after death Or there is no life after death. Nevertheless, some of the arguments advanced in favour of immortality of the soul successfully established a certain degree of probability. Such arguments can in any rate strengthen the faith of those who already believe while at the same time they can stimulate the philosophically minded people to reflect and re-examine these vital issues. Since man is the measure of all things in Igbo- world view, pragmatic benefits should be prime in consideration on issue of immortality. Belief in immortality is a pre-requisite for moral action. If people do not believe there is a final judgment administered by God to account for deeds, there will be no motivation to be good. In order for happiness to coincide with moral action, the belief in an afterlife is necessary, because a moral action does not guarantee happiness. Only by believing that our lives will have an everlasting effect, do we find motivation to continue to live. If in the contrary, we believe that everything will ultimately

come to an end and nothing will survive it becomes pointless to carry on any activity. For moral actions to make sense, we must regard the *summum bonum* as attainable and so regard ourselves as having an endless life. Moral actions are in general fully worth doing for totally mundane reasons, even if there are also reasons connected with an after-life for doing them. If the soul is not immortal, then the action of some supernatural law (Karma) or agent (God) is required to make it immortal.

### **2.3.2 The Theory of Reconstitution of Humanity**

In this theory, Saint Paul believes strongly that everything created by God is good. He also, at the same time, insists that not only man but also all creation have fallen. Both man and creation to him are waiting the final redemption. Thus, in spite of the fact that all things created by God are good; the devil has temporarily become the “god of this age”. St Paul presumes that, although the world was created by God and as such good, yet now, there rules in it the power of Satan. The devil, however, according to him is not absolute; since God has never abandoned his creation. Evil, he opines, can exist, at least temporarily, as a parasitic element alongside and inside of that which God created originally good. St Paul sees creation as far as being normal or natural. In the views of St Paul, there is no such thing as a natural world with an inherent system of moral laws, because all of creation has been subjected to the vanity and evil power of Satan, who is ruling by the power of death and corruption. For this reason, all men have become sinners. For St Paul there is no such thing as a man who is sinless simply because he is living according to the rules of reason. The possibility of living according to universal reason entails, also, the possibilities of being without sin which to St Paul’s a myth, because to him Satan is no respecter of reasonable rules of good conduct and has under his influence all men born under the power of death and corruption. However, in St Paul’s submission, Satan is not simply a negative power in the universe. He is personal with will, with thoughts and with methods of deception against which Christians must wage an

intense war because they still can be tempted by him. Satan, according to St Paul is active in a dynamic manner, fighting for destruction of creation and not simply waiting passively in a restricted corner to accept those who happen to rationally decide not to follow God and the moral laws, inherent in the natural universe. He said that Satan is even capable of transforming himself into an angel by light and has at his disposal miraculous powers of perversion and has as co-workers armies of invisible powers. He concluded that he is the “god” of this age and the one that led all the creation into the part of death and corruption. The power of death and corruption according to St Paul is not negative but on the contrary, positively active. The sting of death he said is sin which in turn reigns in death. Not only man but all creation have been yoked under its tyrannizing power and are awaiting redemption. Along with the final destruction of all the enemies of God, death – the last and probably the greatest enemy – will be destroyed. Then death will be swallowed up in victory. For St Paul, the destruction of death is parallel to the destruction of the devil and his forces – salvation from one is salvation from the other. It becomes very clear from St Paul’s expressions concerning fallen creation, Satan and death, that there is no room in his thinking for any type of metaphysical dualism, of departmentalization that would make this world an intermediary domain which for man is merely a stepping stone leading either into the presence of God or into the kingdom of Satan.

The idea of a three storey universe where God and His Company of saints and angels occupy the top floor, the devil, the basement and man in the flesh, the middle has no room in the Pauline theology. There is to him no middle world of neutrality where man can live according to natural law and then be judged for a life of happiness in the presence of God or a life of torment in the pits of utter darkness. On the contrary, all of the creation is the domain of God who himself cannot be tempted with evil. But in his domain, He can choose either the kingdom of God or the kingdom of death and destruction. St Paul stated that creation is for

God and essentially good but insists that the devil at the same time has parasitically transformed these same creations of God into a temporal kingdom for himself. Both the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light are battling hand in hand in the same place. For this reason, the only true victory according to St Paul possible over the Devil is the main creator. To him, there is no escape from the battle field. He concludes that the only choice possible for every man is either to fight the devil by actively sharing in the victory of Christ or to accept the deception of the Devil by wanting to believe that all goes well and everything is normal. It is obvious, according to what has been said about St Paul's views concerning the dualistic nature of fallen creation that for St. Paul, there cannot exist any system of moral laws inherent in natural and normal universe. Therefore what men accept as just and good according to his observations of human relationships within society and nature cannot be confused with the justice of God. To St Paul the justice of God has been revealed uniquely and fully only in Christ, no man according to St Paul has the right to substitute his own conception of justice for that of God. The justice of God in Christ does not operate according to objective rules of conduct but rather according to the personal relationship of faith and love. The law is not made for a just man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners. Yet the law is not evil but good, and even spiritual, however, it is not enough. It is of a temporal and pedagogical nature, and in Christ must be fulfilled and surpassed by personality love, according to the image of God's love as revealed in Christ. Faith and love in Christ must be personal, for this sake. According to St Paul "though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not love, I am nothing", likewise, act of faith bereft of love are no avail. "Though I bestow all my good and though I give my body to be burnt, and have not love, it profited me nothing". There is no life in the following of objective rules. If there were such a possibility of receiving life by living according to the law, there will be no need of redemption in Christ. Righteousness should have been by the law. Life according to St

Paul does not exist in the law. It is rather of essence of God “who alone hath immortality”. To Paul, only God can bestow life and this he does freely, according to his own will, in his own way, and at the time of his choosing. He opines that it is a great mistake to make the justice of God responsible for death and corruption. He on the contrary, states that nature was subjected to vanity and corruption by the devil who through the sin and death of the first man managed to lodge himself parasitically within creation, which he was already a part but at first not yet its tyrant. For Paul the transgression of the first man opened the way for the entrance of death into the world, but this enemy is certainly not the finished product of god. The death of Adam or each man cannot be considered the outcome of God’s decision to punish. To get at the true nature of justice of God, one must abandon any juridical scheme of human justice, which demands punishment are reward according the objective rules of morality. The relationship which exists among God, man and the devil are not according to rules and regulation, but according to personality freedom. The fact that there are laws forbidding one from killing his neighbour does not imply the impossibility of killing not only one but hundreds of thousands of neighbours. If a man disregard rules and regulations of good conduct, certainly the devil cannot be expected to follow such rules if it can help it. St Paul’s version of the devil is not that one who is simply obeying general rules of nature and caring out the will of God by punishing souls in hell. The devil is fighting God dynamically by means of all possible deception, trying by all his cunning and power to destroy the works of God. According St Paul, it is God himself who has destroyed “principalities and powers” by nailing the hand writing in ordinances, which was against us, to the cross of Christ. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their offences. God declared his own justice to those who believe in Christ. The justice of God is not according to that of men which operates by laws of works. For St Paul, the justice of God and the love of god are not separated for the sake of any juridical doctrine of atonement. The “love of God” could very

easily be substituted for the “justice of God”. Worthy of notes is that each time St Paul speaks of the wrath of God, it is always that which is revealed to those who have become hopelessly enslaved, by their own choosing, those without the law are without excuse in worshipping and living freely, because the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. This giving up God of people who have already become hardened in their hearts against his works is not restricted to the gentiles, but extends, also to the Jews. “for not hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” And “for as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law”. The gentiles, however, even though they are not under the Mosaic Law are not excused from responsibility of personal sin, for they having not the law are a law unto themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and among themselves accusing or else excusing their thought. At the last judgment, all men whether under the law or not, whether hearers of Christ or not shall be judged according the gospel as preached by Paul, and according to any system of natural laws. The gentiles who “have not the law” but who do by “nature things contained in the law” are not abiding by any natural system of moral laws in the universe, they rather “ Show the work of the law written in there, their conscience also bearing witness”. Paul has a conception of a personal relationship between God and man. St Paul does not believe that human destinies consist simply in becoming conformed to the rules and regulations of nature, which supposed remains unchanged for beginning of time. He claims that we are “co-workers of God”. Our relationship of love with God is such that in Christ there is now no longer need for law. The love and justice of God have been revealed once and the body of death and sin know that man may actually become an imitator of God himself, who has predestined his elect to become “conformed to the image of his son” who did nothing to please himself, but suffered for others. The destiny of man to St Paul is not happiness and self satisfaction, but rather

perfection in Christ. To become perfect, man's body of humility will be transformed to become conformed to Christ body of glory. "He who raised Christ from the dead shall bring to life also your mortal bodies by his spirit which dwells in you". For Paul, the way from death to life is communion with dead and life of Christ in baptism and a continuous life of love within the body of Christ. This new life of love within the body of Christ, however, must be accompanied by a continuous death to the ways of the world, which is dominated by the law of death and corruption in the hands of the devil. In (1cor. 15:20-28, 35-57) St. Paul believes that everything created by God is good. But, that the Devil has found its way into this God's good Creations and has taken over control. But even at that, God has not abounded his creations this makes the rule of devil temporal. To St. Paul living according to the rules of reason does not make you sinless, because Satan does not respect rules of conduct. Satan Paul opines can transform into an angel and has miraculous power of perversion with his armies of invisible power. This has made man and all his creations yoked under the devils tyrannizing power and are awaiting redemption.

St. Paul believes that all the enemies of God will be destroyed including death, the greatest enemy. Akin to African/ Igbo traditional religious world view, for St. Paul all the three orders of existence interpenetrate. In Paul's thinking, there is no room for any type of metaphysical dualism. The devil and death are reigning in this world not in another. The kingdom of darkness and light he opines are in the same place. And for this reason the only true victory according to St. Paul over the devil is a resurrection of the dead. Various scholars have advanced different views on issue of resurrection of Jesus. According to Ronald (2008), an important distinction exists between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. The historical Jesus' refers to the earthly life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. While the Christ of faith refers to the risen state, the Christian affirmation that he's the lord and Christ. There is a wide spread agreement among scholars today across a broad spectrum that the

resurrection of Jesus is the central claim of Christianity. This has long been asserted by Orthodox believers based on New Testament passages such as 1cor 15: 12-20 (Gary 1989). Marxsan (1970), points out that of all the current issues which face Christian's theology, the question of Jesus resurrection plays a decisive part. He continued that if in fact we are uncertain or closely connected to resurrection then there is a risk of jeopardizing more or everything to which a Christian cling.

Moltmann (1967) asserts that "Christianity stands or falls with the reality of the rising of Jesus from the dead by God. In the New Testament, there is no faith that does not start a priori with the resurrection of Jesus.

Bornkamm (1960) admits the ultimate importance of this event thus: there would be no gospel, not one account, no letter in the New Testament, no faith, no church, no worship, no prayer in Christendom to this day without the message of the resurrection of Christ (p.181). This makes the issue of Christ resurrection of prime importance. In the light of this importance, contemporary approaches on the issue of the event will be looked into briefly. The historicity of this event is a major question for it is upon this aspect that the truthfulness of Christian's theology depends. Today most critical theologians find much less history in the gospel than their 19<sup>th</sup> century counterparts. Yet, a substantial number of historical facts are recognized with regard to the death and resurrection of Jesus. (Gary 1989). Virtually all scholars agree today that Jesus died by crucifixion and that his body was afterwards buried. Due to his death his disciples were despondent believing that all hopes were gone. At this point, many contemporary scholars add that the burial tomb was found empty a few days later, but that it did not cause belief in the disciples. It is virtually unanimous that, soon afterwards the disciples had experiences which they were convinced were appearance of the risen Jesus. This experience transformed their lives as they believed that Jesus was literally alive. These experiences also emboldened them to preach and witness in Jerusalem, the very



city where Jesus has been crucified and buried only a short times previously. Here it was the message of Jesus resurrection which was the central proclamation for these eye witnesses. History also relates that, due to this testimony; the Christian church grew, featuring Sunday as the primary day of worship. Some scholars add here that one of the earthly church leaders was James, the brother of Jesus, who was a sceptic until he believed he saw the risen Jesus. Basically all agreed that a persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, was converted to Christianity by an experience which he also believed was the appearance of the risen Jesus. The minimum number of fact agreed by almost all critical scholars are (1) Jesus died due to crucifixion (2) and was buried afterwards. (3) Jesus death caused the disciples to experience despair and loose hope, believing that their master was dead (4) although not widely accepted, many scholars acknowledge several weighty arguments which indicate that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty just a few days later. Almost all the critical scholars agree that (5) the disciples had real experience which they thought were literally appearances of the risen Jesus. Due to these experience (6) the disciples were transformed from timid and troubled doubters afraid to identify themselves with Jesus as bold preachers of his death and resurrection who were more willing to die for their faith in him (7) this message was the centre of preaching in the in the earliest church and (8) was especially in Jerusalem, in the same city where Jesus had recently died and buried. As a result of this preaching (9) the church was born (10) featuring Sunday as the special day of worship (11) James, a brother of Jesus who had been sceptic, was converted when he believed he saw the resurrected Jesus. (12) A few years later, Paul was also converted to the Christian faith by an experience which he, likewise, thought was an appearance of the risen Jesus. Such facts in the words of Gary (1989) are crucial in terms of contemporary investigation of Jesus resurrection with the possible exception of the empty tomb. As such any conclusion concerning the historicity of the resurrection should at least account for them. It needs now to be carefully

noted. That the actual resurrection of Jesus in the sense of his exit from the tomb is nowhere narrated in the New Testament (Gary 1989). The teaching that he actually rose from the dead was a conclusion drawn from the fact that literally dead followed from his appearances in a transformed body to numerous individuals and groups.

For King,(1976), the resurrection is not to be considered as a supernatural intervention which can be located which can be located and dated in space and time. Again, it is not an event in human space time. All that can be known is that Jesus died, followed by the rise of faith and the Easter message of the disciples. But nothing objective can be apprehended or checked out with regard to either the resurrection itself or Jesus appearance (p.248).

Buren (1963) holds that; something happened which changed the disciple outlook from discouragement to faith. Although these experiences were more than subjective and were expressed in terms of actual appearance of the risen Jesus, their nature cannot still be ascertained (p.126).

Perrin (1977) concluded that the tradition behind Jesus appearance was firmly based in fact, his synopsis of what actually happened appears at least to allow for some sort of objective visions whereby Jesus commissioned the apostles for a new mission (p.77).

Kierkegaard (1962) held that resurrection should be accepted by faith as a literal event, but cannot be ascertained by any historical investigation (p.188). Bornkamm (1960), states that resurrection appearance can only be accepted by faith apart from historical examination (p.180). Rahner (1967) points out that just because the resurrection cannot be incorporated "into the normal world of space and time" it does not mean that the event should be denied (p.127).

Jeremiah (1971) holds that the resurrection appearance of Jesus was spiritual visions of shining light by which the disciples experience Jesus as the risen lord (p.308).

Collins (1978) postulates that Jesus appearances ought to be termed 'christophanies' since they involved manifestation of Jesus as glorified and divinized as fully as that is possible. And once again, such appearance cannot be known except in faith as an actual event or that some sort of appearances (abstract or bodily) may be, postulated as historical realities. According to Torrance, (1976) in a more apologetic vein, New Testament thesis is that the resurrection is the chief evidence for crucial areas of Christian theology. Resurrection ensures the truthfulness of great doctrines such as the person and deity of Jesus, the gospel message and the reality of heaven. In particular, the resurrection of Jesus is the pattern for the believer's resurrection as well. The belief in resurrection forms connection between Jesus and eternity just as believe in reincarnation/ancestor hood forms the connection between traditional Igbo/African man and eternity. Common to both these world views is attainment of enhanced status when duly qualified.

According to St. Paul "though I have all faith so that I can move mountain and have not love, I am nothing". This brings out the sense of community consciousness as found in Igbo /African world view. To become perfect Paul opines, man's body of humility will be transformed to be conformed to Christ body of glory "He who raised Christ from the dead shall bring to life also your mortal body by his spirit which dwells in you". Just as the diamond may be turned at various angles to expose its brilliance, so believers need a vision of the awesomeness of the resurrection event. It too, has various 'faces' which can, alternately confront and answer critical objections, enjoy the spotlight of historical (and other) investigation, and at the same time address needs in life of the believer, such as dealing with doubts, fear of death, and obtaining daily power. Further, this event is also at the centre of the Christian gospel and ensures the believer's eternal nature. Then, when it is remembered that

the resurrection also addresses the deepest practical fears and needs of Christians, as well, we perhaps begin to understand its multifaceted nature. It was the centre of the early church's gospel proclamation, and we need a vision of how it still occupies this position of importance in both theoretical and practical aspects today. For the believers, it forms the connection between Jesus and eternity itself.

The belief in resurrection forms connection between Jesus and eternity, just as believe in reincarnation/ancestor hood forms the connection between traditional Igbo/African man and eternity. Common to both beliefs is a pre-requisite for attainment which includes moral uprightness. This theory by St. Paul has evidently endorsed an afterlife in different status and just like Igbo traditional religious world view giving conditions for the attainment of this enhanced status which put differently is resurrection/sainthood in place of ancestor hood.

### **2.3.3 The Theory of the Shadow Man**

This theory was propounded by Vendeget et al and it states that; The life mission is one's primary purpose in life, true talent which when discovered and begins to be used with dedication privately as well as professionally, his or her life will flourish and may overcome even great adversities in life. To Vendeget et al (2003), the life mission theory claims that the core of human existence is to have a purpose in life, a life mission that can be articulated into words. With some practice, a person may be able to capture his or her life mission in one single short sentence like "I create" or "I bring joy". The life mission can be seen variously as your purpose in life, your existential duty, gift to the world, true nature, greatest joy, and path in life, key intention or the realization of your greatest talent. Continuing, Vendeget (2003), et al said that, it is often very difficult to pursue life mission and most times very frustrating. Major failures to bring out our potentials can cause considerable pains. And when these pains become unbearable, one is induced to shift from one's intention and one's talent to another

that better allows us to adapt and survive. Thus, we, according to Vendeget become set on a course that brings out a secondary or tertiary talent instead of the primary talent. This talent displacement may be expressed as a loss of our true nature or true self. This new purpose in life now functions as the core of a new personality; The EGO. This ego like a 'shadow' has a structure similar to that of the true self. It is anchored in a talent and it draws on sub talents. But the person who is centred on his or her ego is not as powerful or talented as the person he or she originally was, living the primary purpose of life. This is because the original personality (The true self or higher self) is still there, active and alive, behind his ego. In this case of loss of true self, disorder, loss of energy, joy in life and intuitive competence may be explained because of inner conflict. This can account for reduced ability to function physically, as well as psychologically, socially and other wise. This person can be cured by what is referred to as salutogenic process (Antonovsky, 1987). Compared with the real self Vendeget et al (2003), opines, the ego is weak. It seems that energy; joy in life and intuitive Competence pour from the true self the primary purpose in life. The life mission theory noted emphatically that the plan for development laid out by the theory is not to eliminate the ego but for its cultivation. This according to the theory is that an existentially sound person still has a mental ego but it is centred on the optimal verbal expression of the life mission. Such an ego is not in conflict with ones true self, but supports life and wholeness of the person, although in an invisible seamless way. The more developed the person, the more talents taken into use. So the core of existence remains the same throughout life, the healthy person continues to grow. As the number of talents, we can call on is unlimited, the journey ends only at death.(Vendeget et al 2003).The concept of the ego is only meaningful if one acknowledges the concept of a more real, more valuable and more natural self. We know this other self indirectly through our relationship with our self. You can only have such a

relationship with yourself if you have yourself relating to the other. So introspection is obviously the hard road to information about the human psyche.

According to life Mission theory the essence of man is this purpose of life which comes into existence at conception. The first purpose is always positive and in support of life. This is not in accordance with every day experience that man also engages in evil enterprise born out of destructive instructions. The evil side of man is the 'anti-self' the 'shadow' because it mirrors the self and its purpose of life with an intention that is opposite of the intention of life mission. This evil side of man arises when as the life mission theory proclaims man is denying his good intention to avoid existential pains. The present theory of the anti self 'shadow' claims that all the negative or dark self as complex, multifaceted and complete as the self. All the negative decisions taken through personal history build this solid, negative, existential structure, the anti-self or shadow as Jung (1968), used to call it, are a precise reflection of man's basically good and constructive nature. When mapped, it seems that for most or even for all the many fine talents of man, there is a corresponding evil intention and talents in the person's anti-self. As man is as evil as he is good, he can realize his good nature and constructive talents by making ethical choices. Ethics therefore, seems to be of major importance to every person engaged in the noble project of personal growth.

When man becomes more conscious, he acknowledges that he has to choose between the good and the evil. As he grows, he must confront the basic ethical choice in life. Since the two sides, good and evil, are balancing each other, man is free to choose between the good and the evil; the choice decides which side will consciously be lived out. The side that is not chosen by the half-conscious man will not disappear, however, but is projected to the surrounding world. A person who chooses to be good is in this phase of his personal growth denying his own hidden evilness, and can now only indirectly observe this denied black side, which appears as evilness and darkness around him. Unfortunately the repressed evil

intentions are still highly active in man and more so, if he consciously chooses the good; as he unconsciously still balances the good and the evil to avoid the severe existential pain that according to the life mission theory is inevitably linked to the denied life purpose. (Scientific world journal, 2003).

Very often the “ethical person” ends up in a colourful and dramatic battle with his own shadow, unwillingly and unconsciously causing harm to self and others. The conclusion is that evil is difficult to get rid of. Even the person who consciously chooses to be good will often unconsciously be evil, but still this person is likely to be far less evil than the opportunist, who lives completely without ethics. The person who contrarily chooses the evil and denies the good will be unconsciously good in spite of this, but still worse than the opportunist. The hidden goodness and the internal battle between the good and the evil in man explains why the person, who in his madness chooses the evil path to solve his problems, is often not successful in living out his evilness, but ends up stuck in his own existential problems. According to this theory, the person who admits that he contains positive as well as negative intentions in his unconsciousness, and strives to embrace both with his existence, can in time observe and acknowledge the sides in himself and can thereby gradually take responsibility for all aspects of his existence. This person develops and grows, and will gradually be able to let go of the negative decisions that sum up his dark side, his anti-self, or the shadow-side that prevents his ability to live out his mission in life and express his true self. Existential therapy, which makes use of this knowledge about self and anti-self, can therefore help people to integrate their dark, negative side, and express themselves fully (Vendeget et al, 2003).

As man develops his consciousness about himself, he moves from being chaotic to polarized, as he obtains the ability to discriminate between the good and the evil within himself. Now he sees that all the negative, black intentions are basically turned towards life,

while all the positive, white intentions are supporting life. Black and white are outbalancing each other, and the dark side has annulated the purpose of life. The theory further state that,

In other words, our black, or self-destructive side is appearing as our dark shadow, which precisely is covering our positive self (the ‘’life mission flower,’’ except the little place that is left back without denial and which gives rise to our ego. The shadow is accordingly, technically seen as the difference between our true self and our ego.

The shadow, hence, is a set of destructive intentions, which are organized in exactly the same way as our true self, where the set of good intentions are assembled in the life mission flower around the purpose of life. The centre of the shadow is the intention destroying the purpose of life most directly, called the anti-life-mission or anti-life-purpose. The shadow therefore appears as a negative copy of the personality, as its black parallel. The purpose of establishing the shadow is realized in early childhood and therefore became too painful.

Everybody has a dark side, a shadow that mirrors all the beautiful and lovely aspects of their soul. Knowing this and taking responsibility for both good and evil allows the person to take the learning position and little by little develop their consciousness and transcend their self-destructive decisions and attitudes, and so they become beautiful, good, and true. It becomes evident from this theory that good virtues and attitude are exalted. This exaltation is what is done when Christians canonize the saint. The same happens when the Africans venerate their ancestors. Enthroning goodness over evil, that good virtues may be emulated by the living, to rise to rank of ancestorization on departure from physical world. We realize from the theory of shadow man that mans essence which is his purpose for life comes into existence at conception and this purpose usually is good and supportive to life. But mans shadow is the anti-self and this anti-self is evil. This anti-self is an accumulation of



destructive instructions man receives as a result of life experiences. The theory supposes that man is good as he is evil. So to out- balance this evil inherent side of man, ethics becomes imperative. It is only by being ethical can man achieve personal growth. This is because goodness and evil in man are balancing each other. And most often, the ethical person ends up fighting his own shadow unconsciously and unwillingly. The theory sees evil as very difficult to get rid of. But it is easier to be good when you willingly choose to be ethical. The theory also states that decision to be evil makes one end up being stuck because one has to take responsibility of aspects of his existence. Conscious development of self the theory opines makes man move from being chaotic to polarize and helps man discriminate between the good and evil within himself. A polarized man sees the dark side as annullating the purpose of life. Since this theory opines that choice to be evil ends up in one being stuck because one has to take responsibility of aspects of his existence, it enthrones goodness over evil, and goodness and responsibility for actions are prime in consideration for the status of ancestor hood in Africa/Igbo world- view. We realize why we should suppress the ego to arrive at life mission for the attainment of purpose in life, existential duty, true nature and path in life.

#### **2.3.4 Empirical Studies**

Empirical studies try to establish notable written accounts of earlier written works on a specified area of this research or its related area. These empirical studies are expected to help the researcher in his new area or focus to establish logically his statement of the problem which as a matter of concern kick started the intellectual investigation as it were. Empirical studies of earlier works acts as a stepping stone to the new and present focus of the researcher. The result of the investigation or findings is expected to add to the already existing body of knowledge in that particular field. This process of methodical investigation as a matter of fact increases knowledge and understanding in that particular area of interest.

Following this backdrop, there are some noted scholarly works on the place of the ancestor in Igbo scheme of things. Such works include Udejah's (2010), Ezenweke's (2008), and Metuh (2008). In Udejah's work (2010) entitled, **Ancestral cult and Igbo Traditional religion and saint- hood in the Catholic Church**, he posits that sainthood in the catholic church can be compared to ancestral cult. Udejah identified the roles, functions of the African Saints (Ancestors) to their families and communities among other issue. The Igbo ancestor plays very important role in the land of the departed especially the work of intercession and protection for their own descendants. This is the hallmark of the Igbo ancestral cult. The Igbo must expect favours from the ancestors living with the Supreme Being from where good things come to man. It is the Igbo belief that "One whose person or relative is in heaven cannot go to hell." It may be interpreted to mean "that " Hence the ancestors are there in the land of spirits with God; their children whom they left behind will not suffer terribly on earth.

The same religious sentiment is also shared by Catholic Christians when they honour the saints in their faith. The saints are believed to partake in the power of God Almighty. So, they are believed to intercede for the militant church that is facing some difficulties in their earthly journey of life. To actualize this, the Catholic Church permits cult observations or prayers to honour and provoke their intercessory roles for the church. Udejah's comparison as a matter of fact highlights the roles of Igbo ancestors which is central to the overall well being of their descendants. To Udejah, the ancestors are no more than the Christian saints. The saints to the Catholic Church are people who lived very good lives, recognized as being holy because of the way they lived their lives. This particular attribute that qualify them for saint hood is believed to make them partake in the power of God. And it is because they left the world as good Christians that earned them transition to higher status. But they are not like the Supreme Being. But being closer to the Supreme Being, they are believed to intercede for

members who are still facing challenges of the world. And to provoke these intercessory roles, cults or prayers are being made in their honour. The Christian saints are akin to Igbo ancestors. The ancestors are those who achieved to a remarkable degree the values and aspirations of their communities. It means more than just being dead. The qualification to ancestor hood changes the ontological status, brings them closer to the Supreme Being and makes them share imperishability with ultimate reality and at the same time they are closely connected with individuals on the level of human kind with whom they were in flesh. The Igbo believe that some of their departed ones occupy this exalted position and can intercede on their behalf from the Supreme Being from the ancestral world provoke such demands for protection and intercession in ancestral cult.

In Ezenweke's (2008) work entitled, **Cult of ancestors; a focal point for prayers in African community**. She made in her discussion on the cult of Ancestors in African traditional Religion, in the area where she located the possible moral reasons why the African honours his or her ancestor or ancestress. She averred that:

The ancestors or the living dead are believed to be disembodied spirit of people who lived upright lives here on earth, died good and natural death, that is, at ripe old age, and received the acknowledged funeral rites. They could be men or women. But more often than not, male ancestors are predominant since patriarchal lineage is the dominant system of family and social integration in most traditional societies. For matrilineal groups like the Ashanti of Ghana, and the Ndembu of Zambia, both male and female ancestors are duly acknowledged (p. 51).

Ezenweke, underscored the outstanding moral life of the African or Igbo ancestor as that which can be emulated. The moral rectitude of the living- dead exerts joy and

followership among the descendants. Descendants are expected to be the moral ambassadors of their forebears. Living members of the deceased families make it a point of duty and honour to propagate the good virtues and works of their forefather's and ancestress. It is always a good humour among the Igbo to hear that their ancestor did one significant thing or the other which helped the village in terms of need. Ancestors and ancestress are therefore moral reference points where lessons on moral strength, physical strength and overall behavioural patterns could be emulated.

In Metuh's (1999), work entitled, **God and man in African religion**, his argument corresponds with minds that were divided against the proper clarification of African attitude towards their ancestors. It has been observed that there exists parallel attention given to both deities and ancestors during cultural, ritual and social occasions. In all these, the Africans show a greater affection on the ancestors may not be unconnected from filial relations between Africans and their departed parents and dear relatives. Metuh argues that if religion can be understood as one's expression, submission and dependence on a supernatural being, there is no difference to the rule or intention seen in Africans paying homage to the ancestors or to the deities. Metuh further observes;

There is apparently very little difference between the cults given to the ancestors. Both are given offerings of food and fresh blood, the form of prayers is similar, and the attitude of the worshippers shows very little difference. In some prayers and sacrifices, ancestors are invoked along with the Supreme Being and deities (p. 120).

The closeness in respect and appeal shown between African ancestor and the deity come around because of familiarity and responses to favours. In most cases ancestors are believed to be closer to humans than the Supreme Being and the deities.

This close relationship as a matter of consequence can explain the heavy or regular appeal for intercession to Africans themselves. In continuation of his argument in favour of homage paid to African forefathers, Metuh explained the observed close relation between the Igbo and their departed ones as that which exudes confidence and regard. He says; Offerings made to the ancestor are called by the Igbo "*Inye fa nni*, (feeding them). Ancestors may be persuaded to grant a request by promises of a more generous offering or by a threat of starving them should they fail. Sometimes the relationship with the ancestors is believed to be governed by the principle of reciprocity (p. 123).

We can glean from Metuh's insight that what engenders ancestral cult among the Igbo is the issue of mutual understanding of reciprocity of charity between the ancestors and their descendants. For the humans, theirs is to remember them in family activities as when they were alive. Such actions as libation, dropping of food on the floor, sacrifice of animals to them and beckoning on them to intervene in times of crisis in the family and kindred are endearment actions which aid in the ancestor intervention in the family matters. To make it more realistic, these actions, as a matter of fact, must be sustained. Still in the manner of reciprocity, the ancestors are expected to fulfil part of their obligations to their families. These obligations include protection from evil spirits, evil people and dangerous plagues that may ravage their communities any time. This comes to show the Igbo belief in ancestral veneration as potent in ensuring the cardinal value of any Igbo community which places man at the centre of everything as captured by Madu (1996), thus:

Man is at the centre of everything. But he is not alone. He exists for the community and the community exists for him. He relies on patronage of the gods and his neighbours. This brings out the community consciousness among the Igbos. Thus, he has to be his brother's keeper. This underscores why neighbours help to build a house, cultivate yams and harvest crops (p.7).

But to be noted in ancestral veneration as differentiated from the worship of Supreme Being is that, the ancestors are addressed in plural “*inye fa nni*” (feed them). And there is a threat of starving them should they fail to meet the expectations of man as observed by Metuh (1997). It becomes germane at this point to note that ancestors are not worshipped but venerated as they are observed to be under God in Igbo ontological hierarchy who alone, the Igbo worship. The ancestors are believed to be closer to the Supreme Being than man. The Supreme Being to the Igbo is awesome and there appears so much distance that reaching him seems mostly through intermediaries, unlike the ancestors which the Igbo believe is always here and now as observed through different ritual observances like libations and breaking of kola nut. It becomes worthy of note that based on Igbo value system and attitudinal orientations, the Igbo are not alone. They are in communion with gods, fellow men and inanimate matter. (Madu 1997) summed them up as being in relations.

#### **2.4 Summary of Review of Related Literature**

The researcher appreciates the fact that there is available literature on the roles of Igbo African ancestors. These works to a great extent helped in the articulation of the main topic of this dissertation –“Ancestral cult as a demonstration of community consciousness in Igbo traditional religion” Scholars like Ajayi (1981) Madu (1997) Metuh (1997), Uzoma (2002) and Ezenweke (2008) were unanimous in establishing the rationale for the observed practice of ancestral cult among Africans in general and Igbo people in particular. The scholars in their separate opinions explained the religious, cultural and social backgrounds upon which ancestral reverence prevalent in African societies stand, the religious purview tries to see it as a product of *omenala* which the forebears have established. It binds them with the supernatural which the average Igbo is slow to neglect. The cultural dimension sees ancestral

cult as an aspect of Igbo religious practice. This practice as observed by Uzoma (2002) is accepted among the Igbo because of the value attached in which everyone co-operates with. The last but not the least is the social background. There is a vibrant social connectivity among people of the same descent. It becomes a string that binds the kindred or community together with celebrations like new yam festivals, cultural days and the likes, are celebrated in Igbo villages and towns. Ancestor veneration is indeed a demonstration of Igbo communal spirit among the Igbo people. Nevertheless, the researcher was unable to find books written specifically on how ancestral veneration promote community conscious and solidary which informed his academic investigation. It is for this purpose that this work is set to achieve.

In this literature review therefore, the writer presents the Igbo people as an identical cultural group who have strong belief in an ultimate reality called Supreme Being and to whom they owe their existence (Oguefi Ofor, 1996) and in its other intermediaries including, ancestors through whom he is worshipped or honoured.

Thus human being with his or her *Chi* now relate with the Supreme Being who is the architect of his or her wellbeing. And for an average Igbo man or woman living in a Traditional Igbo community, participating in their beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community gives them sense of belonging. The Igbo believe in a kind of symbiotic relationship with the ancestors through many observances of their laid down rules including cultural festivals, rituals, ceremonies and beliefs. These observances give the person or celebrants the sense of belonging, safety, encouragement and the feeling of living in harmony with the ancestors whom he believes has great influence upon his wellbeing. In the general sense therefore, the Igbo cosmology presents the Igbo as a people who believe that their life hinges on their relationship with ancestors who enhance and promote life in particular and community at large. In the next chapter in this investigation, the researcher is going to focus on Igbo world – view.





## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 Igbo World – View

World-views are peculiar to their holders, influencing their thought patterns and moral behaviours and can vary from society to society. But common to worldview is that it forms the holder's entire concept of life and establishes a link with ultimate realities. It becomes obvious that people act or behave the way they do because of their worldview. So the traditional beliefs of Igbo people and controversies about their values, cultures, and customs have their answers already established in their worldview. And for scholars like Umeh (1999), these inherent traits among the Igbo are enshrined in the:

Igbo language, songs, proverbs, tales, *ogwu*, sports, religion, festivals, socialization processes, and practices associated with marriages, pregnancy, birth of new babies, coming of age, title taking and practices, death and funerals, *dibia* works, black smiting, bronze smiting, silver and gold smiting, farming, hunting, crying, laughing, eating. (p.1).

It therefore goes without saying that any attempt to fully understand the Igbo groups and their practice without first appreciating the above cultural traits, beliefs, and practices is shabby and grossly incompetent to unveil the true nature of the Igbo people. Based on the above backdrop, the Igbo believe that there is unity existing between the seen and unseen realities which in the words of Madu (1997) everything is linked. We observed interrelatedness and interconnectedness existing in Igbo worldview. So to be able to discern and do a thorough evaluation of life within a particular context both temporal and non temporal, the whole life has to be considered. Corroborating this view, Ejizu (1986) sees life as an integrated organic whole. We notice the sacred shedding into the daily events of the life and natural occurrences and in the same way as the gods participate in the affairs of men and

share in determining their fortunes. Madu (1996) corroborated the uniqueness of the world views when he stated thus:

In a way, world view is usually unique to a person or a group of people. Thus a people can use their world view to explain their attitudinal orientations towards certain issues peculiar to them alone (p.1).

He summarized that a world view is used to explain reality for a people experiencing that reality. Madu (1996) quoted Onuoha as he articulated peculiar features of world view thus:

All world views are mutually hostile and intolerant. There is no love lost between them. This can explain why we have various types of religious conflicts in Nigeria. This is because the various religious traditions are built on their own basic cosmologies.

All world views are based on faith. They are based on assumption that cannot be proved scientifically. On these assumptions, they dogmatize. The creed calls for blind faith and emotional response. One can understand the power of emotions in the lives of man. When strong emotions are aroused, man finds it hard to listen to the voice of reason. Thus he can go to any length to defend his religion even physically in a war with another person who does not share in his own views.

All worldview breed a strong sense of self assurance. This is evident among new converts to a particular faith. It is common to hear a newly converted born again saying that he has now seen the light. All along, he has been in darkness. He is so sure of his new found vocation.

All world view are missionary if not imperialist in spirit. They proselytize. This is very evident in the way traditions are handed over from generation to generation. All world view thrive on propaganda, tracks and stickers, brainwashing, schools, colonialism, than mere biological procreation.

All world views provide the devotee with techniques with which they can manipulate human society, the spiritual world and the physical world. This they do by determining certain ends” that must be attained, prescribing the ‘means’ by which such ends are to be reached within the context of the particular worldview, for instance, the Christian worldview can provide such techniques as sacraments, rites and ceremonies, while in the Igbo worldview, sacrifices can be prescribed by priests and diviners to placate angry spiritual beings.

All world views have their members on a routine basis constructing and reconstructing the world after their own image. Thus man is constantly being manipulated to fit into newly adapted views (p.2-3).

Based on the above backdrop, it is no surprise that worldviews are exclusive to holders and to a large extent religious based. It though belongs to abstract realm, but can be dramatized in several ways including rituals, ceremonies, myths, customs, and etcetera. With this general background we can look further to what constitute Igbo worldview.

The Igbo conceive the world as an unfathomable mystery hence the acronym “*Uwa di egwu*” (the world is an unfathomable mystery). Elucidating on Igbo worldview, Ekwunife (1990) citing Uchendu, classified the Igbo world into three aspects, namely: the spiritual aspect, the material and socio-cultural. He argues that these three worlds exist inter-alia with one another in a world of reciprocity where the spiritual and material entities are mutually engaged. Others generally classified the Igbo world into two: via- the visible and invisible

world or the material and spiritual worlds. Men and other perceptible objects occupy the visible or material while the invisible or spiritual world is occupied by different ranks of spirits and subtle entities. Madu (1997), further extended the world into three spheres. In his words:

These two broad divisions can be extended into three. In fact it is the invisible world that can be sub-divided into two: the world of God and the gods situated somewhere above the firmament and the underworld somewhere beneath the earth surface, it is said to be the home of the ancestors. (p.3).

These worlds are named following their influences on Igbo world, which Achebe (1986) noted, that can be ascertained through their myths, proverbs metaphors, customs and taboo's. She remarks;

Different cultures have different ways of ordering their world. Each mode is a lens through which man in a given culture views his world. Each culture's lens enables it to see only a certain part of the world but albeit one which gives meaning to its existence. If one has a different lens, he would see a different world (P.4).

Madu (1997) noted that most Igbo scholars have used the three tier structural nomenclature of *Elu-igwe*, *Ala mmadu* and *Ala Mmuo*, while others have settled for the two-tier structural arrangement of *Uwa ana Ahu anya*, (visible world) and *uwa anayi ahu anya* (invisible world). The worlds, the visible and invisible are not exclusive, but overlap. *Elu-igwe* is the abode of the Supreme Being and major divinities like *Amadi-Oha* and *Anya-nwu*, the earth, the home of earth goddess, minor deities, nature deities and man, while the ancestors and myriad of spirit forces (good and evil) inhabit the underworld. The fact that the Igbo worldview see these invisible beings with bi-location ability allays the confusions of

which being inhabit which sphere, since the worldview endorses mutual interaction. Ekwealor (1990) captured this when he stated thus:

It is important to note that the Igbo universe is divided into three broad structures; there is possibility of certain element to move from one structure to another to commune with other elements. (p.30).

So these elements have migrational ability where and when necessary. For instance the ancestors which constitute our major concern in this work, who inhabit the underworld are believed to visit their families in the world of men.

Ejizu (1986) notes that *Elu-igwe* is the abode of the supreme being and major divinities like *Amadioha* and *Anyanwu*, the earth, the home of the earth goddess, minor deities, nature deities and man while the ancestors and myriad of spirit forces (good and evil) inhabit the underworld. The fact that Igbo world view sees these invisible beings with bi-locational ability allays the confusion of which being inhabit which sphere, since the world view endorses mutual interaction. Ekwealor (1990) captured this when he stated thus:

It is important to note that although the Igbo universe is divided into these three broad structures, there is the possibility of certain element to move from one structure to another to commune with other elements (p.30).

### **3.1 Essential Characteristics of the Igbo People Based on the Cosmology.**

#### **3.1.1 The Religious Life of the Igbo**

The Igbo in their cultic life believe in the Supreme Being as the source of all that exists. In the ontological hierarchy, *Chi-ukwu*, God is the head that sustains other forces. The diviner invokes this Supreme Being while praying through the lesser spirits. The Igbo believe in deities, ancestors and other spirits. Opoku (1978), observed that religion brings man to

unseen powers and helps him form right relationship with them; religion therefore, cements the primitive communities and rounds up the totality of Igbo culture (p.11). In the actual fact, religion influences the attitudinal orientation of man towards his fellow man as well as other existing beings around him. The Igbo People are believed to be so inclined to religion and in that respect, religion permeates all aspects of Igbo life; whether in human relation, farming, hunting, eating, fishing, travelling and even in social activities, religion gives meaning to their lives. At the centre of the Igbo religious life lays, love, good neighbourliness, hospitality, this implies friendliness and generous reception of guests (strangers) in one's home. They believe that there is a unity of existence between all beings both living and non-living beings. And that whatever good done to a fellowman is believed to have its good reward and vice versa. However, the deities do appear in the disguise of human beings and if he is turned down, then, the blessing that would have accompanied the reception would be lost. That explains why the Igbo people are generally hospitable and carefree in entertainment of guests.

### **3.1.2 Political and Emotional Aspect of the Igbo**

The Igbo in this regard are sociable, soft hearted and has no centralized form of government as found in the present Nigeria system. Ekwunife (1990), citing Arinze (1990), said that, the Igbo are by character strong, tolerant, competitive and ultra democratic, highly individualistic with an excessive penchant for achievement and egalitarianism. (p.3) Thus, political leadership among the Igbo is by Gerontocracy and Egalitarianism, whereby the elders are recognized as rulers at the same time (in some areas) as religious leaders. Leadership in the primitive Igbo set up is more of service and availability rather than power tussle, dominion and autocracy. The community appointed counsellors to avoid excesses in wielding of power, fraud and injustice. Igbo's are friendly and generous in reception, acceptance and entertainment of guest in one's home. The use of the word guest connotes

that, there could be no affinity in blood or in town between the said guest(s) and his host. Seemingly, a stranger is made welcome, followed by water (in some areas), Kola, before ever the guest begins to narrate his /her mission. This also explains why plenty of food is made available in every average Igbo man's home. In the words of Chidili (1993);

One of the reasons why Africans prepare plenty of food all the time is to provide for visitors both seen and unseen, that whenever one lands in any traditional African man's home, one is sure of his or her meal. A friend therefore does not need to write before visiting a friend or a family. The door is ways wide open to welcome visitors including strangers. (p.30).

From the above, one observes that the Igbo do not discriminate either in colour, race or religion for he/she knows the other as a brother or sister. If the Igbo welcome strangers whom they do not know so well, what more their brothers with whom they share affinity?

### **3.1.3 The Structure of the Universe in Igbo Traditional Thought**

Some societies use models drawn from the visible physical world, e.g. the order of planetary bodies, or the sky earth dichotomy, others draw models from the ecology like the sea, desert, mountains, valleys or the fauna. While others still find their own models in the pattern of social and political institutions. The Igbo are convinced that the universe is well structured and the beings in it hieriachized. As such, the Igbo related to the beings in the order they perceive them. *Chukwu* or *Chineke* who is conceived to occupy the apex of creations in the world delegated some powers to what Madu (1997), referred to as ambassadors or deans. Madu (1997), traced the structure of the universe of the Igbo from the *Nri* myth of creation of the Igbo. According to this myth, the creative activity was attributed to *Chukwu* or *Chineke*.e., (God that creates) both the visible and invisible things. Madu, therefore posits that

From this perspective, an insight is gained as to the structure of the universe. And that the universe is broadly divided into two realms the visible and the invisible world. This broad divisions can be extended into three , in fact, it is the invisible world that can be sub-divided into two- the world of Gods and the gods situated somewhere above the firmament and the underworld, somewhere beneath the earth surface. It is said to be the home of the ancestors. By way of nomenclature, this area can be named in accordance with human insight and conception of worldly structure. Most Igbo scholars have used the three –tier structural nomenclature of *Elu-igwe*, *Ala Mmadu* and *Alammuo* while others have settled for two-tier structural arrangement of *Uwa anaahu anya* (visible world) and *Uwa anaghi ahu anya* (invisible world) (p.5).

From this assertion, two inferences can be drawn. That the structure of the universe consists of *Elu- Igwe* (sky, heaven) and *Elu Uwa* (the earth) or *Ala mmuo* the ( realm of spiritual/ immortal beings) and *Ala mmadu* (the realm of moral sensible beings) or the visible and the invisible world. The visible world is inhabited by man and all material surroundings while the invisible world consists of the heavenly realm said to be the home place of the creator and Deities (Madu 1995). The three tier structural arrangements consist of *Elu-Igwe* (sky, heaven) *Ala mmadu* (the realm of mortal sensible beings) and *Ala mmuo* (the realm of spiritual immortal beings). The Igbo believes that a profound web of relationship exists between these two or three spheres of existence. Both the spiritual beings and man, they believe are in continuous interaction. This accounts for why happenings on earth are attributed to the influence of the spiritual forces. Thus, death, earth quake, epidemics, misfortunes are seen as actions of the gods upon the earth. You see spiritual interpretations to earthly occurrence. There are various views on the habitations of beings. Madu (1995) opines that *Elu-Igwe* (the sky) is the celestial zone, while many scholars agree that it is the abode of



the supreme deity (Chukwu) and other deities (Nwala, 1985). Onuoha is of the view that only *Chukwu* (the supreme Deity) inhabits *Elu-Igwe*. Onuoha (cited by Ofokansi, 2004) opine that:

(Igbo) God is one, and rapt in divine isolation. His house in heaven has no chamber where angels and saints sit around, look at him face to face. He lives alone in his *Eluigwe* and no creature, however perfect, can get there. He has no company and does not need any on his exclusive divine abode. But he has prepared a special place, *Ala*, for other created intelligences, *mmuo na mmadu*, who on account of their creature-hood would wither and die instantly if admitted into his divine presence even for one second. (p.48).

Both Madu and Nwala agree that *Eluigwe* inhabits such celestial bodies like the stars(*kpakpando*), moon (*onwa*); the sun (*anyanwu*). The sky is believed to be the home of certain deities such as *Kamalu /Amadioha* (the thunder god) *Anyanwu* (the sun god) and myriads of other spirits. The supreme deity (Chukwu /Chineke) is also believed to live there. At times the supreme deity is identified as *Anyanwu* (sun) or Agbala or Chi, or (the creator). Prayers in Igbo traditional worship is a pointer to the hierarchical recognition, the Igbo give to gods or deities. Just as Onuka (1987) pointed out that only the supreme deity inhabits the sky (Elu-igwe), an Igbo man with cola-nut praying raises his hand up and decrees: “*Chukwu bi n’ enuigwe bia taa oji*” (God in heaven come and eat kola). In addressing others, the elders never raise their hands up, rather they wave their hands either left or right directions with the conviction that the gods are there with them. The Igbo never say *Anyanwu bi n’ igwe* or *kpakpando bi n’ igwe* Only *Chukwu bi n’ elu*. However, prayers can be made to *Chukwu* through *Anyanwu* and other deities.

#### **3.1.4 Uwa or Enu-nwa(The visible world)**

The visible world consists of the sky above and the earth below. It is a world of daily experience. Most of the life circle of human being is in the visible world. Man's birth, his life in society consisting of formal and informal training, choice of career, family life, blessing and misfortunes, death and possibly his reincarnation, all take place in *uwa/enu uwa* (the visible world). This may account for why Metuh (1999) states that life in African traditional religion is life affirming rather than life denying. Long life and prosperity, many children, wives and a large number of relatives and friends are signs of blessedness and consequently the constant theme of prayers and petitions to God and deities. It becomes apt, cogent and reasonable for man to live with high moral standard, observe other religious rituals in this world to reincarnate and qualify for ancestor hood.

### **3.1.5 *Ala Mmuo*(The invisible world)**

The Igbo believe that *Ala mmuo* is the abode of the spirit. Spirits to the Igbo are invisible, ubiquitous and quite unpredictable. Mbiti (1969) states thus: men paradoxically fear spirits and yet they can drive the same spirits away or use them for human advantage, although, spirits are ubiquitous, men designate different regions as their places of abode. Mbiti (1969) and Metuh (1999) write that only a tiny fraction of Igbo man's life circle, i.e. his brief and temporal sojourn in the ancestral world, takes place in the invisible world. Among the Igbo, the spirits dwell in the other world. This idea of under-world is seen against the backdrop that bodies of the dead are buried and the ground points to or symbolizes the new home land of the departed. Madu (1995) noted that because the spiritual realm is an extension of the physical to the Igbo, the Igbo cosmological thought does not admit the existence of heaven or hell. The spiritual is located under the earth where the spirit of the dead ancestors and deities dwell. Life for the Igbo is therefore cyclic (Madu, 1997).

### **3.1.6 *Ala Mmadu*(the Earth)**

This is the physical realm, where man, the animals, plants, vegetables and inanimate matters inhabit. Madu (1997) writes that the earth is the home of the earth goddess (*ala*), minor deities, nature deities and man (p.5). Tylor (1871) underscored this belief in his theory of animism. Tylor maintained that belief in spiritual beings or souls was the roots of all religious faiths. Animism could be taken as a minimum definition of religion (Parrinder, 1974). Man can never make use of other materials inhabiting *ala mmadu* like the vegetables and animals. This is because some animals and plants can be used as totemic objects. *Eke* (boa) for instance is a totemic animal in Idemmili region (central sub-cultural zone) the same can be said of *Umuaka* (southern sub-cultural zone) while *ewi* (rabbit) is totem in *Nnewi* in (north western sub-cultural zone) (Madu, 1995).

### **3.2 Hierarchical Vital Ranking in Igbo World View**

The Igbo world is full of spirits, the visible and the invisible world over lap. The visible world made up of *eluwigwe* and *Alamuo* as well as *Alammadu* are inhabited by beings. Ejizu (1986) notes that *Eluwigwe* (Sky above) is the abode of the Supreme Being (*Chukwu Or Chineke*) and such major divinities like the *Amodioho* (GOD of thunder) and *Anyanwu* (God of light) The earth is the home of the earth goddess (*Ala*), minor deities, nature deities, and man, while the ancestors and myriads of spirit forces (good and evil inhabit the underworld. The confusion of which being inhabit which sphere can be allayed when we realize the fluidity of reality in Igbo world view which endorse the fact that there is mutual interaction of being therein (Madu,1997).It is worthy of note that being in Igbo worldviews are not all of the same kind, nor are they of equal importance. They are differentiated according, to their kind and importance. They can, accordingly, be arrayed in hierarchy, depending on their power and the role they play in the ontological order in nature (Metuh, 1999). In the hierarchy of beings in the Igbo world-view, scholars like Metuh 1981, Nwala 1985; Madu

1997; Ezekiel 2007, identified five ontological hierarchical ranks of being in the Igbo consideration.

Metuh (1981); presented the hierarchy of being in Igbo world thus:

- (a) *Chukwu* (Creator)
- (b) *Mmuo* (Deities)
- (c) *Arusi* (Spirit Forces)
- (d) *Ndi Muo* (Disembodied Spirits) and
- (e) *Uwa* (the visible world)(vital force)

In the arrangement of Nwala, the hierarchies of beings in the Igbo world view which he referred to as the objects of Igbo religious belief are:

- (a) Belief in a supreme Being-*Chukwu, Chineke, Osebuluwa, Ezechitoke*
- (b) Numerous local deities with specific but over lapping function-*Agbara, arusi*
- (c) The divinity of the ancestors-*Ndichie*
- (d) Oracles and systems of Divination
- (e) Numerous abstract forces which are personified and relinquished, manipulated through sacrifices, prayers and medicine and charms in order to achieve certain objectives.

In the opinion of Nwala, these constitute the supernatural transcendent beings on which the traditional Igbo feel dependent for his being, life, survival and prosperity. They give the Igbo man life, children, wealth and health, they protect and prosper him. The Igbo man consequently pays sacrifices and worship them. He tries to live his life in accordance with what he believes these supernatural power demands of him. Just as a father punishes erring child, he believes the gods may punish him if he errs (Nwala 1985).

Madu (1997) presented his own view thus:

- (a) The Supreme Being (*Chukwu, Chineke*) He is the creator.
- (b) The Deities (*Mmuo*) referred to as god, Ambassadors or deans, they include;
  - (i) *Anyanwu*, the lord of life and light

- (ii) *Ala*, the earth goddess, mother of life and queen of morality.
- (iii) *Muo-Mmiri*-the divinely appointed temptress
- (iv) *Ahiajoku*-the lord of agriculture
- (v) *Agwu-Nsi*-the lord of divination and healing

Ekei (2007) elaborated on Nwalas version as he presented it thus:

a. Supreme Being

- *Chukwu*
- *Chineke*
- *Osebuluwa*
- *Obasi*
- *Ezechioke*

b. Non Human Spirits

- *Udo*
- *Agwazi*
- *Ofia*
- *Ala*
- *Igwe*
- *Nwogalanya*
- *Ibim Okpabi* (of Arochukwu of famous long juju)

c. Oracle and Systems of divination

- The *Agbala* of Awka
- The *Igwe-ka-ala* (of Umuneoha)

d. Numerous abstract forces which are personified in order to achieve certain objectives.

e. The Ancestors –*Ndi Ichie*

So from the above presentation of various scholars, the Igbo believe in the Supreme Being, ***Chukwu* or *Chineke*** and that this being is at the apex of the belief. All the scholars unanimously agree that next to the supreme beings are the deities (*mmuo*) who Madu (1997), called ambassadors. Madu included the spirit responsible for divination as one of the

ambassadors while Nwala and Ekei presented it as a being below the deities. Also Madu specified *Ogwu* as a force in the Igbo hierarchy of being but Metuh and Nwala mentioned it in the passing. Peculiar to Metuh is '*Uwa*' as part of the vital force in Igbo world-view which is absent among other scholars. However, within the Igbo religio-social dimensions, the spiritual beings together with man and other elements are in a continuous and intimate relationship. Only when these beings are in a harmonious relationship will cosmic harmony be realized (Madu, 1997). The world of human experience for the Igbo is seen as a fluid coherent unit in which spirits, men, animals, and plants engage in continuous interaction. (Ifesieh, 1989 Metuh, 1991)

### **3.2.1 Chukwu or Chineke (the Supreme Being)**

The Igbo as a people owe their existence to *chineke*, the creator, whose central significance and comprehensive importance with individuals and the universe as a whole are known through myths, native folktales, proverbs and idioms, the Igbo demonstrate that *chineke* created all things and that he is really the great God-*chukwu* (Ifesieh, 1989) *chukwu* is believed to be the pivot of all spiritual realities in the Igbo cosmological and religious beliefs. He manifests himself as author of light and knowledge (*Anyanwu*); author of fertility (*Agbala*) and author of procreative force to ensure the perpetuity and continuity of lineages (Madu, 1995). The concept of Supreme Being is universal among the Igbo tribe in particular and Africa, in general. One only needs to come to age of reasoning to realize this. This is to say that the belief in the Supreme Being in Igbo religion as well as African religion is axiomatic Metuh (1997), Ugwu and Ugwueye (2004) writes that *chukwu* the creator of everything, transcends the world, and at the same time is emanate through the deities who are his messengers and representatives in nature and especially through the Chi-the spirit-guardian regarded as manifestations of himself which reside in every creature. Chukwu influences one's life through his college of mediators. This college of mediators range from

the chi of each individual person to the ancestor of each extended family, the guardian angels of specific plants and things and finally the seven cosmic lords or deans of Igbo Spirituality (Madu, 1995).

### 3.2.2 Deities (*Mmuo*)

Next in the rank to the Supreme Being (*chukwu*) are the Deities. The Deities in Igbo world-view from the great circle on non-human spirits, who come next to God in the ontological hierarchy and are, believe to be his agents, helping him to shepherd different section of his creation. The deities are Chukwu's superintendents, deployed to man different departments. Some have their abode in the sky and are believed to be very near to *chukwu*, others live below and come under *Ala* the earth – mother or goddess. The Deities are however, conceived with reference to services they render to man, *Chukwu* created and assigned them specific functions (Metuh, 1999). Madu (1997) citing Onuoha(1986), refers to Deities as gods, ambassadors or Deans (p.6) Polytheism if it means belief in several deities/gods) writes Nwala, (1985) is practised among the traditional Igbo. In every town or village there is a major deity with whom the destiny of the village or town is associated. Such a deity is the most influential and occupies a central position in the life and activities of the town (p. 117). Also to benoted about the local deities is the order of precedence which exists among them. A brief discussion on these deities may be relevant here. *Anyanwu* (sun) is the male principal-the lord of life and light (Madu, 1999). The cult of *anyanwu* is wide spread in Igbo land. *Anyanwu* is regarded in a special way as a deity that brings wealth and good fortune. Its altar consists of *ora* or *ogilisi* (new boulgie) tree, at the foot of which a small mould of red clay is fashioned, with which a round pottery dish is sunken bottom downward. This dish, usually contain some sacrificial water called *oku awele* (vessel of fortune). Before a traditional Igbo man embarks on any trip for instance, he may pour a little palm wine into the bowel of *Anyanwu*, dip his fingers in the bowel, touch his tongue with his finger and say,

I am embarking on so or so trip, grant me journey mercies, may the purpose of this trip be actualized.

**Ala/Ani/Ana** (mother earth/the earth goodness) are the mother of life and queen of morality (Madu, 1999). The earth is taken as the controller of morality in Igbo world view. She is regarded as the greatest of the spirits in the spirit world. She has the noblest position and dearest name – *Nne* (mother). To run out favour with her invariably means that someone must have desecrated the land and must of necessity have to appease the mother through expiatory sacrifice (Ifesieh, 1989). Ala is not only the source but as well the custodian of *omenana* – customs and traditions and public morality. Crimes such as adultery, incest, homicide and so forth are all offences against Ala, the earth deity. They are therefore called *Nso – Ala* (taboos) of the earth deity. Sanctions for such crimes include propitiatory sacrifice to Ala (Metuh, 1999).

**Amadioha/kamalu/ Igwe:** This is the supreme beings orderly and agent of instant justice. He abides in the sky, and is symbolized by thunder and lightning Madu (1995; 1997). Just as husband fertilizes his wife, so *Igwe*, in form of rain, fertilizes the *Ala* – the earth deity. The cult of *Igwe* is popular only in certain parts of Igbo land, particularly in the south like Umeneoha in Imo state. *Igwe* or *Amadioha* is regarded as the agent of *chineke* against undetected criminals. He expresses his power and anger in thunder bolts and lightning. (Metuh 1999).

**Mmuo Mmiri(water goddess):**She is a divinely appointed temptress and is known for her cosmic beauty and feminine charm (Madu, 1997). The humans that associate or worship the water goddess are called *Ndiotu* or *Ndi mmiri/mili*. The earth goddess is known to trouble children which can be observed in some kind of behaviour such children portray. Parents often complain of *Ndi mili n' enye nsogbo* – the water spirit members are troubling this child. According to Ndiokwere (1994), the reality of mammy water is beyond any argument be it



theological or philosophical. It is an evil that must be confronted and destroyed on account of innumerable ferocities it perpetrates in society.

**Ahiajoku:** The lord of agriculture. In many parts of Igbo land, *Ilo – Mmuo* is a popular term for honouring the lord of farming who has helped their crops to grow well, thus assured abundant and bountiful harvest.

**Agwu:** This is the deity of medicine and also responsible for spirit possession prophecy and divination. According to Madu (1997), *Agwu* is the lord of divination and healing, the patron spirit of divination and diviners. It is called *mmuo* pass – spirit of confusion. *Agwu* affects its victim with psychological disturbance which sometimes takes the form of restlessness, wastefulness or even madness (*Ara Agwu*) (Arinze; 1970; Metuh, 1999).

### 3.2.3 The Spirit Forces(*Arusi/Alusi*).

Some people use the term spirit to translate *Arusi/alusi*, they are not fully personal and may be better described as spirit force. Their actions are sometimes irrational and this distinguishes them from the deities (Metuh, 1999). An *Arusi* could be an elemental spirit created by thought forms, generated by human beings and established firmly on the spiritual planes and fed constantly through rituals and sacrifices. The *Arusi / Alusi* are numbered in hundreds. Besides its deities each village has its pantheon of *Arusi*. An *Arusi* can be the property of a clan, a family, or even an individual. An object becomes an *Arusi* when a spirit begins to manifest itself through it. Divination confirms that such an object has become the permanent abode of a spirit force. In Obinagu Udi in Enugu State there is a permanent place of abode for the *alusi* called *ojezulu* in a village called Ugwuegu in the northern part of the town and in the southern part there is the *Anieze*. Both places are being fed by officiating priests through rituals and sacrifices and some people troop in on designated days with items for sacrifices either for petition, appreciation or redemption of pledges as agreed with or

requested of them from the officiating ministers. The same type of permanent abode is witnessed at Iwollo Oghe in Eziagu local government area of Enugu state called Owellioti and popularly known as *eziokwu-bu-ndu*(truth is life).It is located centrally beside the community secondary school Oghe. This alushi belongs to the community and have an appointed secretary different from the priest. It has a very big hall where indigenes and visitors sit and table their matters before everybody present with the officiating priest. Hanging round the whole walls of the hall are pictures of people of different ages and sex. A personal communication with the secretary revealed that just as the alusi is known as *eziokwu-bu-ndu* (truth is life), that those pictures are people killed by the alusi. These are people who have told lies or refused invitation by the alusi through the secretary to come for dialogue on matter reported officially to the alusi. The picture of victims includes those who made false reports and wrong claims. *Arusi* is dreaded by the Igbo. Although they are invisible, some people hold that they are sometimes seen in human form. People who work at night say the sight of an *arusi* sends shivers all over the person's body and sometimes the head is swollen with fear. Some described them as being ugly, possessing as many heads in one body, some with double faces, and some with flaming fire in their tongues. According to Madu (1995), all these ideas are inbuilt in Igbo belief system and have their roots in Igbo culture. It is truism that a people's belief system determine their value system and attitudes in life (Madu 1995). This explains why the chief priests of the *Arusi* would label or attach names to the victims of the *arusi* to instil fear in the minds of their victims, weaken and make them very vulnerable to their tricks and extortion (Obi nd). This falls under the scope of mental poisoning.

### **3.2.4 Ancestors and Ancestress'(Disembodied spirits)**

*Ndi Muo, Ndi ichie*. This is the army of disembodied spirits of the dead; the spirits of good men who have reached *Ala Muo*, the spirit land are *Ndichie* (Ancestor). The spirit of

evil men, and all who have not reached *Ani mmuo na mmadu* (an intermediate state between the spirit land and the visible world of man and all who have not reached *Ani mmuo*, roam around restlessly in *Ama Ndi mmuo na mmadu* (an intermediate state between the spirit land and the visible world of man). These evil spirits include *Akalogeli*, *ogbanye* and so forth. Associated with evil spirits are *Amuoso*, witches and *ogwu* medicine man (Metuh 1999). Metuh (1991) quoting meek observes that the ancestors under the presidency of *Ala* are the guardians of morality and the owners of the soil. The power and authority of ancestors derive ultimately from *chukwu*. This is not only because the first ancestors, semi – divine beings were sent down by *chukwu* but because they co-operate with *chukwu* in bringing each individual into existence. Conception takes place in Igbo belief system when the *onyinyo* (ancestral shade), with the permission of the founder ancestors, goes before *chukwu* and receives his *chi*. At death, the *nkpulobi* (soul) goes back to *chukwu*. What subsist is the *onyinyo* (shades). This becomes *Ndichie* (ancestor) when the burial funeral has been completed. The living makes sacrifice to *Ndichie* (ancestors) at the *okpensi* (ancestral shrine) because they are now believed to be very near to *Chineke* and act as intermediaries between him and the living. The ancestors act as intermediaries between their children and the deities. They help to protect their living descendants, intervene on their behalf to ensure that no harm is done to them. In times of difficulties or sickness, you hear an Igbo man calling on their dead father and saying, *nna anyi ekwele'* – our father do not allow this to happen. Apart from this role of intercession and protection, the ancestors are capable, on their own, of inflicting harm and punishment on those who misbehave and on bestowing blessings such as giving children wealth etcetera (Nwala, 1985). On the basis of the Igbo belief that the ancestors are at the headquarters in the spirit land, the Igbo solicit for their aid by offering prayers and sacrifice to them (Madu, 1997). The Igbo believe strongly that no father will leave his children to suffer, when they are in the happy land of spirits (Arinze, 1970; Madu, 1997).

### 3.2.5 Charms and Medicines (*Ogwu*)

The Igbo have a strong belief in the potency of medicine. Making medicine is called *Igwo Ogwu*. The same term translates the making of every kind of medicine, whether curative or offensive. However *Iko-nsi*, sorcery or making bad medicine is used to distinguish the evil use of medicine from its good uses. The specialist in the making of medicine is called *Dibia ogwu* (medicine man) (Metuh, 1999). A traditional Igbo man understands the conception of ‘Ogwu’ which can be interpreted as force or vital energy or even as mystical power, usually linked up with the usual medical, magical and even by the Igbo to certain power, breath of life and may be the abode of a spiritual being, a minor god or an impersonal force. In a personal communication with the priest of Owelioti shrine in Eziagu local government area of Enugu State, (5<sup>th</sup> may 2017), he explained that there are different kinds of trees and shrubs in Igbo land. Some of these trees, he said are highly medicinal and can cure many ailments and can be detrimental to human life. He explained however that not everybody has the skill of knowing which of these trees, roots and shrubs that is medicinal. According to him, it is the herbalist (*dibia mgborogwu*) that knows the powers of local herbs and who uses rituals to gain the aid of the spirits to heal the sick. He emphasized that several diseases such as fever, headache, epilepsy, menstrual disorder and more are traditionally cured by the herbalist through a wide array of minerals, animal and vegetable substances. He explained that every diviner is an herbalist but not every herbalist is a diviner. The herbalist according to him uses the power of the spirits to wrestle with the invading spirit to exorcise it from the afflicted person. According to this traditional priest, all plants are medicinal. Most animals are both medicinal and spiritual. He explained that when a dog barks in the night without anybody in sight, that it most probably sees a spirit. Some materials, or objects like *Anunuebe* tree or leaves, *Oduula* bone are believed to have power in themselves which may be latent and only be aroused through the action of a medicine man. He gave further explanations, like that,

native cola leaves mixed with paw-paw leaves, mango leaves and lemon grass boiled with water and sieved, cures malaria. Molina leaves cure infections, when boiled and mixed with *dogonyaro* leaves. Palm-kernel oil mixed with grinded bitter-cola and honey cures cough. According to the priest, if after four days and the cough does not clear, that the patient should consult a diviner to know if the ancestors are angry with him or her. He gave other traditional formula's to arrest shortage of blood, dysentery, scabbies and anti poisonous leaves and fruits. He explained further that an ogilishi (new boulgietree) when planted at the entrance or beside a corner in a traditional Igbo compound serves a lot of purposes. In the first place, it is believed that anybody with anything poisonous cannot cross the compound without the poison being diluted.



**Ogilishi Leaves found in Umuaba compound Owa Obinagu Udi Local Government of  
Enugu State**

And in most traditional Igbo families' ogilishi trees are planted in a corner and you notice pots or plates made of clay materials, and sometimes carved wooden objects. This spot

becomes the family shrine, with the eldest male child as the priest. Every morning, as he makes his prayers or petitions, he breaks cola-nut and throws part of it there, and pours libation. This place becomes a sacred place through which the eldest male (*okpala*) communicates with the ancestors.

He described the *dibia* as an indispensable figure in preparation of *Ogwu* for the Igbo. Various kinds of uncleanness, the Igbo believe spoil the power of medicine. The chief necessity for ensuring the working of good medicine is said to be upright character, and good medicine cannot be used for killing people. Metuh (1999), observed that unfortunately people choose to transform the power of herbs, which God has put at the disposal of men to wicked, evil purpose. Hence, the Igbo saying: “*ajo mmadu bu ajo mmuo*”. (An evil person is an evil spirit). These spiritual beings rank before the mortal man who must live a life of balance with these spiritual beings, in order to survive. Since man is at the lowest level of the ontological rank, man is subordinate to the higher beings that are spiritual. They provide security and fortunes to man and man dare not annoy them without appropriate punishment from the gods. Both the gods and *Ogwu* can give them confidence, protection and security in life crises periods. Man is in Communion with the gods, with fellow-men and the in – animate matter – charm. Diviners, mystics’ medicine men (charms, amulets and talisman are highly patronized (Madu, 1997).

### **3.2.6 Mmadu (Man)**

The inclusion of man in the hierarchy of beings cannot be over emphasized, because of the role he plays in the universe. As an actor, he operates and manipulates the universe to his advantage. African religion is, anthropocentric. Man is at the very centre of existence and African people see everything else in its relation to this central position of man. It is as if

gods exist for the sake of man. African religions are centred more in man than in God. It is this worldly (not other –worldly and life affirming (Mbiti, 1969, Metuh, 1991).

In Igbo thought, man can be viewed in different perspectives. Viewed from the standpoint of his origin and destiny, man is best understood in relationship to *Chukwu* (God) – his creator. Man comes from God. He has a definite mission to fulfil in God's plan and will eventually go back to God. Viewed ontologically; man is a force in the universe full of forces. Socially the Igbo doctrine of man strikes a balance between his personal identity as a unique individual person and his collective identity as a member of his society (Metuh, 1991). Consequently the Igbo equivalent for man is *mmadu*. Many scholars believe that the meaning of *mmadu* is contained in the concept itself. The etymological meaning of the word is *mma* (goodness), *du* (exists). Edeh (cited by Ekei, 2007) gave an analysis of the concept as *mmadu*(*mma – du*) meaning “good that is”. This position further informs that, man is “good that is “does not imply that man is good per se since only God has such a claim. Rather it means that man shares in the beings of his maker, the highest good (Ekei, 2007). Man, (*mmadu*) is at the centre of Igbo world view and is thought of cosmologically as *olu – Chukwu* (God's work) or *Okike Chukwu/Chineke* – God's creative work. He lives in the world (*na uwa*). . Man has the unique principle of the one and the many, which consist of his relationship with his *Chineke* (the creator), his responsibility as a person which he has to be aware of through self-transcendence, in self- consciousness as guide based on hope for salvation. Man is made of many components, namely, the body (*ahu*) the material aspect of man. He has *Obi* which is an immaterial aspect of human personality which is the soul or life-giving principle or vital essence. To the Igbo, reference is being made to *mkpulu – obi mmadu* – man's heart with reference to whether one has a good one, or when we say – *onwelu ezigbo obi* – he has a good heart, as oppose to *onwelu ajo obi* he has a wicked heart. It is a popular believes among the Igbo that if one have a good heart in this life; one will

continue to have it in the next life and vice versa (Ifesieh, 1989). One cannot but conclude that man in Igbo world view is a multi- dimensional symbol so far as he is morally, ethically, religiously and theologically quite conscious of this being. He is a symbol of reincarnation, of good morals that qualify ancestor- hood. A symbol of wisdom, intelligence, good and evil when he neglects the dictates of the meta-physical force in him directs him to good. A symbol of peace, of harmony, of love, of charity, of hospitality, of patience and of industry. of endurance, of perseverance, of knowledge, of power, of economy, of culture, of tradition, of time, of space, of psychic symbol, of historical symbol, of philosophical symbol, of ecological symbol, of ontological symbol, of biological symbol, of scientific symbol, mathematical, archaeological, sociological, analogous and functional symbol. This informs why man can be described as a messenger of beings in contemporary philosophy. Symbol of family and by analogy, the image of the universe, trying through religious worship to realize and put meaning to his existence. Finally, a symbol, not only of life, but also of death (Ifesieh, 1989).

### **3.3 Rationale for Interrelation between the Physical and Spiritual beings.**

Reasons for the beliefs and practice of any religious system should be sought within the content of the religion universe of its votaries.

The ideal and conceptions, beliefs and assumption which people have about reality crystallize into an attitude or a habit of thought and form their world- view. The people's world view naturally provides the principles for understanding their life and actions. It is what one may call a vision, a concept of the universe by a people. Such vision help give the people a bearing, a guide and principle on which the people hinge their whole life activity. The society will be disorderly and confused without such guide. Kalu (1978), call it an intellectual or rational explanation of the order which undergirds human lives and



environments. It involves attitudes, values, opinions, concept which affects one in a society. Thus, one's thinking, decision definitions of events around him are to be understood in accordance with his world view. Chinwe (1986), call it lens. Ezekwu (1989) defines it as the motivating factors that lie behind the way people think, the way they believe and the way they act (p.14) Achebe (1986) sums it thus:

A world view gives a unified picture of the cosmos explained by a system of concepts which order the natural or social rhythm and the place of individual and communities in them (p.10).

African/Igbo world view has attracted the attending of numerous scholars like Forde (1954), Taylor (1963), Uchendu (1965), Isichie (1971), Ilogu (1974), Kalu (1978), Metuh (1981; 1987), Nwoga (1984), Achebe (1986), Ifesieh (1989), Opata (1998), Madu (2004) to mention but a few. Ekwunife's (1999) summary of certain features that punctuate their findings will be relevant in this sub-section. He stated thus:

- (i) That reality as the Africans perceive it, comprises of two intricate co- penetrating worlds-visible and invisible with interacting beings in their various hierarchies;
- (ii) That the existence of these two worlds as they impinge on each other in a continuous interaction for the Africans is not a figment of imagination which modern scientific and technological education will sniff away completely. Rather it is a datum of faith through which the Africans organize their interpretations of perception, experiences, and formulations of values, attitude and other acceptable human relationships.
- (iii) That because of the intricate interaction of beings in the African traditional universe, interpretations of realities of their world is not to be sought in terms of dichotomy, but rather in terms of complimentary totality.

(iv) That there is Dynamism in African/Igbo world view. Hence it is not a static world view.

Based on the above backdrop, we see the rationale for the interacting between the physical and spiritual as part and parcel of the traditional world- view which does not see any contradiction between the dead in the spiritual ancestral world impacting their spiritual powers on the living physical bodies, thereby influencing them for good. This influence for the Africans is mystical, which they understand not just to be reasonable but also desirable. The spirit may take possession of matter and act through it. Material elements will therefore generally embody some spirits, trees hills, rivers and other cosmic realities including man are veritable abode for spirits or they have spirits. Ezechi (2011), stated thus:

Man in particular has a special spiritual soul which continues to live even after the somatic death of the individual. The dead of the community, the ancestors through spirits is actively connected with their living progeny. They do so because they travel freely between their abode and earth, since they are homologous. (p.162).

Among scholars who explored interventions of spirits in human life were Achebe (1986), and Ekwunife (2004). Ekwunife stated that he does not see any contradiction between the dead in the spiritual ancestral world impacting their spiritual powers on the living physical bodies, thereby influencing them for good (p.36). This world view he opines as not only reasonable but also desirable. He explained that it is spiritualized being in Africans spiritual world, mystically impacting his traits on a physical body without diminishing his spiritual status in the spiritual world. Offong (1991), in his contribution said that man in turn can influence the spirits. Man is dependent on the cardinal spiritual powers of the supreme God, the deities and the ancestors and interprets his life based on faith in them. Similar interdependence is also often recorded between man and other elements of the material

orders. But while the ancestors and deities can intervene in man's life and also bring blessing, or calamities, man in turn is believed to influence these spirits through sacrifice, prayer and spell. And can even ignore them for personal reasons. Ekwunife (1990), argued thus:

The Igbo world is principally a world of two interacting realities; the spiritual and the material, each impinging on each other. It is the world of the spiritual being and the world of man with other animate beings. Though homocentric (man centred) in practice, yet finds its ultimate meaning in transcendence. (p.18).

This informs that Igbo world is under a unitary control with interrelated component units. There is an ontological link of the various spheres of the cosmic order to the extent that what affects one sphere invariably affects the other (Madu, 2004). Beings in the world are linked by network of relationship. Thus Africans believe that various occurrence in the physical world spring from the spiritual and the invisible world, and beyond human comprehension. This accounts for why changes in man's life must be ritually appreciated to maintain cordial relationship with these beings. Metuh (1987), stated that:

The goal of interactions of beings in African world view is the maintenance of the integration and balance of the beings in it. Harmonious interaction of beings leads to the mutual strengthening of the beings involved and enhances the growth of life. A pernicious influence from one being weakens the other beings and threatens the harmony and integration of the whole. Thus one of the bases on which the African mode of life rests in the participation or profound communion with the universe. The main objective of African is to life a life of harmony with humanity and with nature. Man strives to be in harmony with God, deities and his fellow men both living and dead, for him the first evil is disintegration for it would spell disaster both for himself and his immediate world. Man must constantly consult oracles and divinations to assure himself that he is in right

relationship with all the forces in the world. He must frequently engage in rituals to reinforce his communion with the forces to repair any interruption that may have occurred (p.22).

The above quotation by Metuh, underscores the rationale for the interrelation between the physical and the spiritual in Igbo world-view.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 Igbo Ancestors and Their Roles

There are two categories of spirits in Igbo world view. Those created as such and those who were once human beings (Okafor, 1992), those who were human beings and have departed from the physical world, but whose memories are still linked within their families are referred to as the ancestor. They are said to be in personal immortality. They are only physically dead but otherwise, they are still alive. Mbiti, (1969) prefers to call them the “living dead” in qualifying this category of spirits. He argues that ancestral spirits of ancestors are misleading in terms, since they imply only those spirits who were once ancestors of the living. The ancestors ensure a smooth flow of transcendental traffic between the physical and metaphysical worlds. The Igbo have a strong belief that those ancestors are partly living and partly dead. They still remain part and parcel of their families and people have memories of them. Among the other spirits, they are the closest to the Igbo human families and share meals with them symbolically. The belief that ancestors hover from time to time is demonstrated by a typical Igbo man in so many ways. In morning prayers, he breaks kola-nut and throws a part of it to the ground to the believed hovering ancestors. Before the meal, the family head throws a part outside. The ancestors are believed to have special interest in their respective families. They inquire about the family affairs and may even warn of any impending danger. They are the best group of intermediaries between man and God because they are in mid-way between the spirits world and human world. It is this belief in the personal immortality in the spiritual presence of the ancestors that gave rise to the cult of ancestors. As spirits, they have power to protect their beloved ones in the human world against evil spirits and evil men. The Igbo cherish the spiritual presence of the ancestors. It is a traditional Igbo belief that an ancestor can simultaneously retain his place as an ancestor by the incarnation of the ancestor in one or more living persons, and hope to be

re-incarnated in one person yet unborn. This means that the ancestors potentially occupy three worlds, the world of the dead, of the living and of the unborn and influences all of them by '*iluo uwa*'. This position is unique and makes an ancestor very important in the social political and religious life of the Igbo, and the position envious. Every traditional Igbo man looks forward to being one. An offence against the ancestors is a crime against '*Ala*' the constitutional deity. No Igbo man wants to become a wandering spirit at death through having lost favour with the ancestors as they will be the ones to receive you at '*Ala mmou*', the spirit world. It therefore becomes imperative for an Igbo man to live in harmony with his family '*umunna*', as proper and befitting burial is a per-requisite to admission to ancestor-hood. This same consideration induces an Igbo man to active participation in political and social affair of his polity because he must maintain a worthy record on earth if he is to attain honourable acceptance in *Ala mmuo*. As noted by Okafor (1992), the more a person accomplishes on earth, the higher his status in *Ala-mmo* from where he hopes to be reincarnated as an outstanding man or woman (p.24). This cult of ancestors engenders social harmony and moral rectitude and fosters communal spirit. It urges the Igbo to great achievement and to strive for higher status in the society. Most importantly, the ancestral cult, mellows the natural fear arising from mans uncertainty of his fate after earthly sojourn and enhances inter-communication and interaction between the physical and metaphysical worlds. On the roles of the ancestors, Ezenweke (2008), noted that; people usually take care and cherish their ancestors in order to be protected and be forgiven of wrong doings. They usually take care of their tombs or give gift and offerings, such as honey, fruits, rum and tools, and place them near the ancestors' tomb (p.181).

The Igbo believe that the ancestors are though dead, yet living, retaining their roles in the affairs of men, especially their kin group and friends. They are appropriated with sacrifices. They are seen as dispensing both favours and misfortunes, they are often accused of being

capricious and of failing in their responsibilities but at the same time, their actions are related to possible lapses on the part of the living and are seen as legitimately punitive acts. Ezenweke, (2008) identified the ancestral roles as follows:

- a. **Unifying Roles:** ancestors perform unifying roles to ensure the unity of the members of the family both living and the dead. This is so because members of one's family and even one's extended families are united by the mere fact that they have common ancestors. It is believed that the link that ties each person with his "brothers" must be maintained so as not to incur the anger of the ancestors. This is on the basis of the philosophy that the word of brotherly relationship must not be broken or distorted. No one dares stand on his own since one exists because others are, and if others are not, one is not. In Igbo land this is typified by names such as *Igweka* (group is might), *Nwannekampka* (brother or sister is more important), *Igwebuiké* (group might). The ancestors unify by means of keeping members of their families on the alert of their watchful eyes. This induces them to care, empower, bless, reward and inspire each other for the greater unity which in turn, enhances progress and development (Ezenweke, 2008).
- b. **Protective Roles:** Igbo people believe that because the ancestors once lived in the physical world, they are quite aware of the pains and misery of their living members. And as spirits, fore-see and protect their living members of impending dangers, since the welfare of the living members constitute their major concern. But for the living members to secure this care and concern, a cordial relationship must have been maintained.
- c. **Intermediary Roles:** The ancestors are believed to mediate between gods the and living. This is akin to Christian saints been asked in intercessory prayers by the Christians. They are believed to be closer to God in the ontological hierarchy and therefore in better position to intercede for their living members.

**d. The Enforcement of Discipline.** It is believed that the ancestors allow calamities to discipline defaulting members of their living families (Ezenweke, 2008). This Ezenweke explains is so, because each time there is a calamity, there is usually an inquiry to find out the cause which in many times ends up with a sacrifice to appease the ancestors and attempt to correct the violated social norms. In the Afro-Christian societies, many ill-health's, business and project failures including the global economic melt-down are often attributed to the angry ancestors as punishment due to moral decay in the physical world (Ezenweke,2008).The Igbo belief in ancestral presence as it helps to enforce discipline is manifested in actions like libations, breaking and throwing part of cola-nut on the ground and symbolic representations like *ofò* stick which signifies ancestral presence and used for enforcement of discipline and settlement of disputes.

#### **4.1 The Position of the Ancestors in the Community**

Man is understood to be a complex of body and soul. In the Igbo world, reality is perceived as unified. The dead are not considered as far removed from the living, that are in turn very conscious of their journey to join those who have gone before them to the land of the dead. Ezenweke (2012) captured this well when she stated that:

Invariably, when the destructible element of man, that is the physical body is dead the spiritual aspect continue to live though in another form. Thus death is not the end of life, but a gate way to another life known by many names: life after death, great beyond, and everlasting life, life in the spirit world or life with gods or with spiritual beings (p.174).

Ancestors mean more than just being dead. They are those who have achieved to a remarkable degree the aspirations and values of their communities including not doing evil as an achievement.



Abanuka (2004) distinguishes three classes of ancestors as he states:

Since old age is regarded as a blessing given to those who keep the laws and traditions of the community, anyone who died in grand old age is ranked among the ancestors. All those who died young but had carried out an extra ordinary assignment, for example, a stunning victory in war, a great exploit that increased the community's self esteem will also rank among the ancestors. And there is a third class of anonymous ancestor (p.44).

This third class forms the great mass of ancestors. They neither made any distinguishing mark nor caused any harm on the community. Those whose accomplishments affect the entire community receive reverence from the whole community. If the accomplishment is limited to a part or section of the community, for example to a kindred or family the respect is limited accordingly Oribator (2008) corroborates this view as he says:

An ancestor is a blood relative of a living community, this relationship could be of common parentage or shared ancestry. It is worth noting that not all ancestors have blood connection with those who venerate them among many of the African Cultures. There are primordial ancestors, transnational ancestors, national, community and family ancestors (p.107).

The world of ancestors endures temporally or indefinitely. Individuals at this level have reached the limit of what is possible for them. Particular things on this level are no longer threatened by time and change as their being and power share in the imperishability of the ultimate reality. Abanuka (2004) noted that;

In the Igbo world, the contrary of reality on the level of ancestry is *Ekwensu*. In this regard, *Ekwensu* is the name given to the chief of all evil or wicked spirits

and all the other evil spirits in so far as their wickedness has ruined their inner most reality and reduced it to unfulfilment (P.45).

This implies that in case of evil spirit, wickedness has actually nullified the ontological significance of finite particular things. This concept may account for why in Igbo world view, there are conditions for admittance into ancestral cult which Madu (2007) quoted Metuh to have summarized thus: old age, offspring, good moral life on earth, good health and funeral rites (p.65).Elaborating on good and natural death, Ezenweke (2012),states thus:

Due to the philosophy that nothing happens by chance, and calamities, sicknesses, failures, disasters and unfavourable situations are from malignant spirits or from ancestors as punishment for mal-practices, good death signifies that one has a clean hand because the spirits see what human eyes cannot see. By natural death, it entails that one should not die as a result of unexplainable and so abominable sickness such as swollen abdomen, diarrhoea, chicken or small box in some areas or by suicide (p.179).

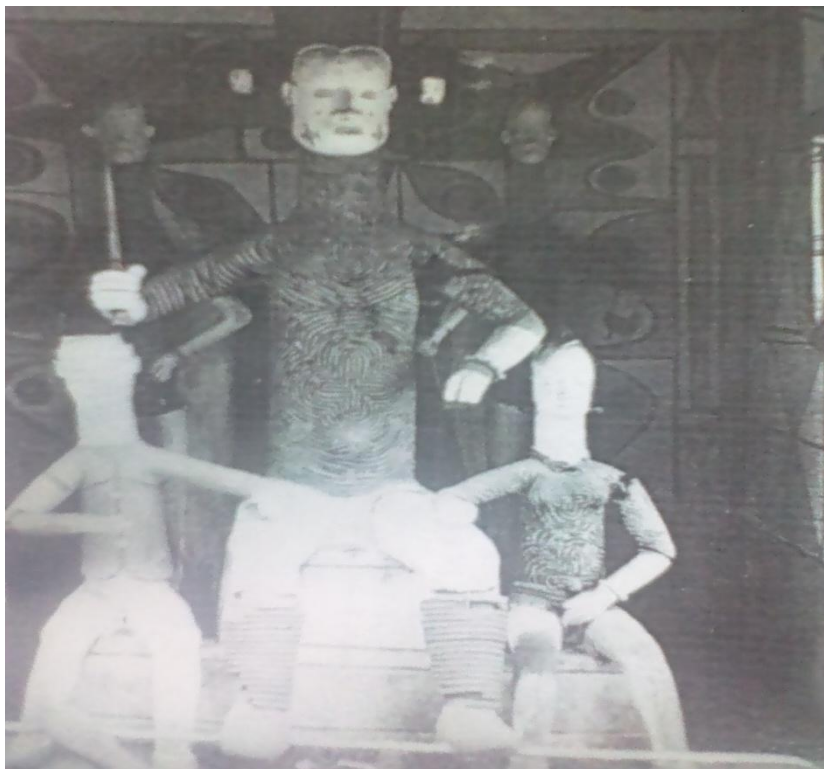
Ancestors share imperishability with the ultimate reality, but with individuals in the level of human kind, they share another distinguishing mark, they were once in the flesh. To really grasp the position of the ancestors, it is expedient at this point to examine the community of which the individual is a member and in which, in inter-relationship with others, the individuals seek self-fulfilment. In considering ancestors and their import in the community experiences, a survey into the Igbo spatio-temporal foundation is imperative. In Igbo community, time is as real as events by which time is measured. Past time is fixed by reference to an event which took place at the period in question. The year is measured in cyclic manner with major agricultural festivals or regular natural occurrences like seasonal

changes. The present is measured by what is happening. Future time is measured by one or the other regular agricultural festivals or natural occurrences.

By one or the other of the other regular agricultural festivals of natural occurrences, the past, the present and the future are basic time divisions in accordance with ordinary human experience. The Igbo community in experience of the world although does not consider the individual as insignificant, never the less pays greater attention to the maintenance of its laws, customs and traditions. The overriding justification for these laws, customs and traditions is that they came down from a great line of ancestors and have been handed over from one generation to next ( immemorial time). It is against this backdrop that these customs and laws are invested with a certain sacredness and authority that their violation attracts the disfavour of the ancestors and proper maintenance does not only show acceptance of ancestral authority but in addition brings blessing of the divinity. Hence, disregard to those laws and customs brings anger and subsequent punishment. Abanuka (2004), captures this summary thus:

In brief the community is generally interested in preserving itself in making sure that it is in favour both with the divine beings and ancestors. In order to maintain itself, the community insists that its laws and traditions are observed. Consequently, in the experience of its world and in dealing with its members, the preoccupation of the community is to see that each person observes its customs and laws for this ensures not only the guidance and protection of the ancestors, but also the enduring pleasure of the divinity with the community. Then in the experience of its world, the community considers it high in its priority to seek ways and means of instilling reverence for ancestors in its members starting from a very early age (P.50)

An ancestor may have been the founder of a community, a renowned traditional doctor of medicine who restored many hopeless patients to health, or a traditional ruler who set enviable record in his administrative style. This calls for such deeds recalled with great admiration and worthy of emulation and receive due reverence. Such are people who should be imitated in the present or surpassed in the future owing to significant roles played in the life of the community. Legends develop around such ancestors and are handed down through the power of the word from generation to generation. It should be noted at this point that the Igbo people see the “word” as what can “make” or “mar”. This is akin to the biblical belief that the whole world was created by the power of the word as recorded in Gen.1. “The word” the Igbo believe has divine power, thus the word which is the vehicle of the great deed of the ancestors, recreates the past event and through this word the ‘once’ formerly and ‘before’ become ‘now’ to concretize events narrated in myths. The community erects symbols of (*Ala*) earth goddess which is closely connected with the symbol of ancestor.



**Symbol of Ala Deity at Igboukwu Archives**

These ancestors with great accomplishments are buried in the bosom of the earth. *Ala* is the great and merciful mother and guardians of morality. All superior decisions and supreme oaths irrevocably binding in all concerned with the community come under the authority of *Ala*. Custom or tradition of the land '*Omenala*' is exoterically bound with mother earth and her tenants the ancestor and so cannot be easily altered or replaced by living man. In dealing with the offenders who have committed an abomination or broken a taboo, death is not considered enough punishment. The offender is denied ground burial, the worst social humiliating for the Igbo. Abunuka (2004), averred that:

The earth is sacred and commands sentimental attachment not only because of enduring concern for the other and the community but also because the Igbo always remembered that the dead ancestors lay reverently buried in the earth. Moreover, it is there on the earth that kola nut and food are offered and libations poured to them (P.53).

The ancestors are guardians of customs and traditions, and are also in position to gather information from *Chukwu* for humanity, making his position that of an intermediary.

#### **4.2 Significance of the Ancestors for the Igbo**

Udejah (2010), reflected on the significance of ancestors to their descendants. Udejah based his thesis on Metuh (1987), who said "The relationship operates at various levels ontological, socio-juridical, spiritual, religious and moral. He therefore went on to explain these levels of relationship:

On the ontological level, ancestors are fathers, grandfathers, great grandfathers of the living, since African family is a single continuing family made up of the dead, the living and yet to be born. The ancestors are ever present and take part in

important meetings and decisions in the families represented visibly by the family heads. In Igbo land, the *ofo* is the symbol of ancestral authority handed over the family as a representative of the ancestors. On the spiritual level, the ancestors possess more powers than men, and as such can bless or punish their descendants. On the religious level, they have cults which they demand as a right and a mode of remembrance and respect which the living owes them. Finally, at the moral level, the ancestors are guardians of family affairs, traditions and morality (p.23).



### **Ancestral Staff Culled From Ikenga Metuhs work on Ofo Symbol**

As guardians of morality and traditions, we can see why they are feared and respected. It may be these reasons and more that Udeajh summarized that;

1. African ancestors lived exemplary lives and so are remembered and honoured by their respective families and communities.
2. African ancestors can be equated with Catholic Saints because of the intercessory role they play to the living.
3. There is effective relationship between ancestors and the living, this is seen in Kolanut breaking and pouring of libation both at meetings and other social gatherings.
4. Africans traditional religion places ancestors as guardians of their individual families and communities.

#### **4.3 The Ancestors in Relation to the Phenomenon of Re-Incarnation among the Igbo**

According to Parrinder (1954), it is impossible to grasp the meaning of the religious foundations of Africans without going through the thought area occupied by the ancestors (p.57). According to Ugwu and Ugwueye (2004), ancestors are the pristine men who originated the lineage, clan or ethnic group, and who provide people with identity (p.66). They consist of founders of the clan, including the dead and abiding members of a tribe. We cannot talk about the religion and culture of the traditional Africans /Igbo without giving a clear understanding of the office of ancestors and one cannot in the same view talk about the concept of positive reincarnation (*Ihouwa*) without giving the ancestors a proportionate space. According to Mbiti (1969), the ancestors “the living dead” are the closest links that men have with the spirits world (p.83). They are the integral part of their human families. Ugwu (2003), opines that the ancestors are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethnic and all customary activities. They are the best group of intermediaries between men, the deities and the Supreme Being (Chukwu). Ajayi (1981), opines that beliefs in the existence of ancestors are seen as a factor of cohesion in African community. He illustrated this fact with the sacred stool which is the ancestral symbol of the Ashanti of Ghana, especially the golden stool regarded as the soul and life of the ancestor. This stands to proof that the Africans believe in

the confirmation of life after death which is the belief in reincarnation. The status of ancestor hood among the Igbo is predicated on certain vital considerations sharpened by Igbo world view. It is not all who died that are considered as ancestors. To be considered an ancestor and qualify for reincarnation among the Igbo, one must have lived a very decent life here on earth. You must have refrained from activities that diminish life, life being of prime value to the Igbo. Ugwu and Ugwueye (2004), assert that in African world view, being is doing and doing is living (p.96). To have lived a decent life on earth, one must not be associated with those behaviours that diminish life such as stealing, adultery, poisoning, witchcraft, injustice and the abominations against the earth goddess (*Ala*). To get to the status of ancestor- hood, one must have married and have issues. Magesa (1998), stated thus: one is not considered a complete man in African traditional milieu if one did not get married (p.118). The institution of marriage to an Igbo man is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. This is because it is through the product of marriage (offspring) that a worthy ancestor could reincarnate. Celibacy has no place in African world-view. Anybody who for any reason fails to marry is not considered responsible and cannot attain the status of ancestor- hood, and cannot have anything to do with the reality of reincarnation. The deceased should enjoy befitting burial rites before qualifying as an ancestor. Madu (1997), puts it this way:

Although different Africans have different standards for measuring who qualifies as an ancestor, and who qualifies for reincarnation, it seems that the dominant factor rests on full burial rites given to the deceased by his living relatives. It is only when the dead is accorded a befitting burial rite that he could take his place in the committee of ancestors, and ready for eventual reincarnation. If no burial rites were performed for a deceased member of the family, the dead member cannot reach the ancestral land; instead it will keep on hovering around,



disturbing the peace of the family, the kindred, the clan and the community at large. The types of malevolent hovering spirit are called *akalaogoli* (p.65).

To qualify as an ancestor and eventual reincarnation, one must not have died a bad death. Death to an African is though death, but the way and manner one dies, differentiates death in African world- view. Hence we have good death, and bad death according to African belief. Okafor (2005), buttressed this view thus:

Violent and accidental death is considered bad death. Suicide and the death of widows and widower when they are still wearing their mourning dress are considered evil. Also included in this list of bad deaths is the death of people who made confessional statement of their heinous deeds. People who die while waiting for the expiration of the date of the oath they took (p.183).

These classes of people, though now dead, are not qualified to attain the status of ancestor and as such cannot be considered for reincarnation. Ugwu (2003), writing on people who cannot reincarnate stated thus;

Witches and wizards, armed robbers, burglars and breakers of the laws of the land (*Omenala*); condemned criminals, fugitives and vagabonds and those who are guilty of genocide, patricide, matricide, infanticide and all murderers in general are all disqualified and banned from attaining the status of ancestor hood and being able to reincarnate. It should also be pointed out that all those who died without a name cannot attain the status of ancestor- hood and reincarnation; such people are still born babies; infants and young man and woman who died unmarried (p.72).

This informs, why to the Igbo, in order to qualify to the status of an ancestor and to reach the level of reincarnation which is a much cherished value in Igbo world-view, one has to marry, have children, live a noble and stainless life of high moral standard, etcetera.

#### 4.4 Ancestral Cult and Patriarchy in Igbo Society

Our study is centred on ancestral cult as a demonstration of community consciousness in Igbo traditional societies. It will be germane here to also briefly treat ancestral cult and patriarchal system of inheritance. This was the work of Udeh (2009), “**Religio-cultural and ancestor cult in Igbo traditional religion**”. This work gave an insight on how the patriarchal system of inheritance relates to ancestral cult in North West sub-culture of Igbo-land.

In Udeh’s presentation, patriarchy had been a socio – cultural system in North West culture area of Igbo society inherited from the ancestors. He explained patriarchal system this way;

The patriarchal system is one of the cultural heritage of the North West Igbo and some other areas of the Igbo land. In patriarchal system, man determines what happens in the family and in the society. As a result, the laws they make which include the law concerning the inheritance of family properties favour the male folk.

Udeh’s observation is not different from what is obtainable in other parts of Igbo land like Obinagu in Udi or Iwollo in Eziagu local government, all in Enugu state. Paternity gives right to many privileges and legalities. It is as serious as that, an aged woman cannot break a cola nut in the presence of a young boy, not minding his age. Right to inheritance, be it

economic factor, religious priesthood or political power emanate from patrilineal descent. Mojekwu (1994), as quoted by Udeh said;

The governing principle in Igbo inheritance custom is modified primogeniture or inheritance by the sons with the eldest son having the major share of the responsibility of the entire father's property. In some areas, widows are regarded as part of the property to be inherited (p.103).

Mojekwu tried to explain the responsibility the first son is given as far as inheritance is concerned. He virtually inherited a great part of his father's property including his widow. The first son has a sort of automatic replacement of his father at his demise. Having given him such honour and power he is expected to give his departed father a befitting burial and continue to observe the *Omenani* of the ancestors.

Patriarchy in Igbo society ensures transition of power, dignity, social status and wealth from the departed to the first born son. This accounts for maybe why childless marriage is considered a tragic failure in Igbo belief system, and a man is encouraged to take more wives per adventure the first wife or other wives has no children especially male.

Some of the elements transferred at death to the first male born of the family include the father's gun for security of lives and property, *Ofo* – symbol of ancestral authority, *Obi* – seat of power and justice, regalia and other in sigma of office. In Udeh's submission, all these are done in the North West culture area of Igbo land. He stated that;

The major reason for giving such pre-eminence to the first son and for his possession of the original residential compound of his family is that he is considered to be the first and eldest male of child of the father. As a result; he enjoys the prerogative and right as the ancestral heir to the dead, the entire

compound and also the representatives of the living and the dead in the family (p.24).

The essence of patriarchy as set in place by the Igbo is to ensure continuity and transmission of traditional values and norms from generation to generation. The first born who as a matter of nature remains domicile as he cannot be married out is therefore made to carry these values and norms without fail. This accounts for why the Igbo eagerly awaited for the celebration of annual new yam festival like in Obinagu Udi, Aju festival and Mmanwu festival as part of their contributions to Omenani and in pursuance of community consciousness as it is a period when all gather to re-enact the norms and values which they consider apt, cogent as it ensures community harmonious co-existence.

#### **4.5 Igbo Consensus Spirit**

Consensus deals with general agreement on matters concerning a group or people; things or matters agreed upon must be general of interest, which naturally provoke reactions positive or negative on those concerned. For Hornby (2000), consensus is “an opinion that all members of a group will agree with” (p.242). This means that opinions or suggestions are intended to produce general good, bring serious changes on the living condition of people. General or community agreement can bring major or minor changes on the culture and tradition of a people.

We should understand agreement in the case of Igbo consensus as that drive or spirit that pushes, highlights, explains and enlightens the Igbo as a people, to always debate general issues before acceptance or adaption. Igbo consensus spirit explains the philosophy, purpose and objective of adopting creative conflict in arriving at solutions to observed problems negating general good.

One of the characteristic traits of the Igbo as a nation is consensus philosophy or spirit adopted at solving problems or taking decisions for common good. Nwabude (2001), identified community decisions as a political characteristic feature of the Igbo people. He arrived that:

Originally, the Igbo settled in pockets of small communities. These communities were autonomous and independent of their communities. Each community had its own community and organization, social titles and religious worship etc. distinct from those of the others. Each community as it were, decided their own destiny by themselves and without the help or participation of other communities around them.

Among the Igbo, decisions affecting the whole community are taken communally, starting from the macro families to Umunna and then to Igwe-in-council. The Igwe/Eze (chief) does not rule like monarch. He as a representative of the people does what the people wants him to do. He cannot dictate to the people what to do except after due and sometimes extensive consultation, (p.26).

The Igbo are republicans in their political outlook and behaviour. This means that issues of general concern undergo debates, discussion and consultations from Umunna to clan levels. In doing this, they show political independence or sovereignty. Nwabude noted that the Igwe, the political head of an Igbo locality, is the speaker of the community which he leads. He rules with elders in council. Matters are therefore discussed to benefit all in the community. Igbo communality therefore emphasizes communal spirit which allows for debates on serious issues that may affect the community. In a nation where everybody is equal, social wise, each person's view or review must be heard for peace to reign in the village. Omolewa (1986), corroborates Nwabude's view thus;

The smallest unit, the family or the house hold, sees itself as having one common ancestor. This principle is also present in the minimal lineage. Here house hold see themselves as belonging to one family and thus have a common father. This is extended to major and maximal families. Thus the whole family believes that decisions on issues are of common interest as brothers, (p.83).

Omolewa concurred with Nwabude that, decision affecting the community are, decided by all through dialectical process. The political independence of each community in Igbo land gave the authority and understanding of each village. It exerts power fostering their collective decision on its religion, social organization, structure and institutions. The community is strongly held together because of the knowledge that they descended from a common father. This belief extends also to the clan and most often cluster of villages and clans. The core belief in common descent either patrilineal or matrilineal is responsible for the protection of common beliefs, opinion, sustenance of political structure, and socialization of people of the same parents. To protect this therefore, communities have to agree to protect their interests as their culture. Even though everyone might know the reason for such procedure, personalities involved must attract certain levels of criticism, evaluations and final approval. This final approval brings on it community seal or authority. General agreement on pressing issues is a clear mark of recognition of the Igbo, Nwankwo (1999) reflected on the above this way:

Identity as a product of consciousness in the context of affirmation relates to the degree to which an ethnic formation realizes its inherent and manifest possibilities, and the extent to which this could be utilized for self perpetuation. Of course there is no doubt that a contradiction exists between a group self perspective agenda with its willingness to contribute meaningfully to the affirmation of those ideals which it shares with others (p.19).

Seeking of opinions before taking action in a republican society, relate to the degree or level to which a community realizes her inherent and means of show-casing such possibilities. Any community celebration is a product of consciousness to affirm its existence, philosophy within its members and possibly neighbours. We can see this clearly in Igbo family clan or general gatherings. This is a natural setting for the Igbo to agree or disagree over any burning issue at stake. In the understanding of Nwankwo, it is geared towards achieving self perpetuation which the Igbo try endlessly to achieve in her social activities.

For Ekwuru (1999), the consensus philosophy of the Igbo is a rigorous pathway to truth, which must be interspersed with an interjection like '*Igbo Kwenu*'. Ekwuru explained this process of agreement the Igbo thus:

*Ndi Igbo ezukoo Kwere tupu ihe di egwu adiri.* "The Igbo must gather and agree before a great thing happens" The first step toward the achievement of Igbo cultural renaissance is the call for a rational conviction and agreement. Before taking any decision, the Igbo have the tradition of gathering to discuss and weigh varied issues concerning the point of decision in order to arrive at a consensus philosophy and agreement. This is the basis of Igbo radical politics of consensus philosophy called the Igbo republicanism (p.134).

'*Igbo Kwenu*' is an interjection that calls for silence or for a rejoinder from one standing or from one who thinks he has something important to say to the community in which he is member. From a socio – cultural anthropological level of interpretation, Ekwuru interpreted vociferation of Igbo – *Kwenu* as that which:

Represents the constituting symbol of Igbo social gathering; It is in this sense, a conscious declaration of this recognition of a social body gathering together to perform declaration of this recognition of a social, body gather together to

perform its social function of effective mutual interaction. In this regard the bellowing of Igbo *Kwenu* creates in every Igbo person an in-depth awareness of the deeper dimension of the root of the social character that is embodied and reflected in every Igbo man. Igbo *Kwenu* is the formula recognition of the freedom and right of each individual within the village confines of a republican set up (p.135).

This social action deliberation is foundational to all Igbo social, political and cultural action. What prompts such deliberation must certainly be of community interest, this validates community consciousness as a demonstration of ancestral cult in Igbo traditional societies'.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 Ancestral Cult and Igbo Community Solidarity

The cult of ancestors are those ways of life, ideas, attitudes and convictions held and practiced by our progenitors, forebears, which they found axiomatic and consistent with human values and as such preserved in cultural events and ceremonies. Igbo traditional setting in its world-view has not only aimed to preserve life but also to enhance it. This accounts for why to a traditional Igbo man, to live is to live in a community. This is primarily aimed at assisting one other at various points of need. This informs why cults of ancestors are built on such foundations that endorse community consciousness. As a matter of fact, men took off from religion march along with religion and arrive at religion in their daily engagements. Arising from the foregoing, Igbo people demonstrate their religion with mark of honour or reverence for the super-sensible world. Thus, this demonstration serves as a schema of religious ceremony to the Supreme Being through divinities or ancestors. Igbo people demonstrate a rich religious heritage which they display in communion with the higher beings. This religious observance is pivotal to them and they are always with them. Thus, Igbo people are not bereft of religion. As a matter of fact, we have benefited immensely from various works of scholars such as E.B. Idowu, J.O. Awolalu, Ade P., Dopamu, and J. S. Mbiti among others. They have all done invaluable works on African religion with particular regards to ancestors.



**Owelle Otti Community Ancestral Shrine at Iwollo oghe Eziagu Local Government  
Area of Enugu State**

Awolalu supports what Idowu had previously posited that the ancestors are deceased spirits who stayed in close relation to the family as well have enhanced prestige. In their various works, it was discovered that African ancestors have become a common place. But none of these scholars has specifically touched on how their cults promote community consciousness. It is the intention of this work to look into specifically on how some cultural creations, beliefs and ceremonies preserved and handed down by our ancestors from generation to generation promotes community consciousness. In fact the communal ceremonies unify and consolidate the society, because it is generally believed that when people converge in public gatherings, they express their feelings and emotions, even sentiments through singing, dancing, clapping of hands and expression of joy. Undoubtedly, this fact of public gathering at which people or community meet to honour their ancestors is

called festivals. Festival promotes social solidarity, communal order and hopes of people are kept alive. Socially speaking, festivals virtually bring together the whole community and provide an occasion for the renewal of strained relationship among the community. Awolawu and Dopamu (1979) observed that:

The coming together of the people is re – enacted and many people for the first time in the year meet in festival occasions. Men and women are brought together in one crowd and there is usually a sort of social re – union (p.276).

Through festivals, the life of community is renewed. People are entertained and their tensions find an outlet. As a matter of fact, human life needs some important festivals to give both solemnity and laughter. The celebration of festivals in honour of the ancestors is wholly engulfed with grandeur of rituals and people come out in their best attires and feast together. This is equivalent to Christmas in modern societies. The chief priest and the head of the community would sit in state and receive homage from sub- chiefs and subjects. The people see festivals as the social safeguard of the basic needs of their existence and of the basic relations that makes up their social order, land, rain, bodily health, the family, the community. During this time, the people help to foster the sense of identity and belongingness as well as solidarity. These are the integrative and cohesive factors upon which the survival and continuity of the community depends. Religiously, the festivals welcome the ancestral spirits to human societies and renew their relationship. The religious values are repeated through communal festivals. To this end Mbiti (1992) summarized thus:

People seize such occasions to solicit blessings from God or the departed, and there is a general feeling that the visible and invisible worlds co – exist for the benefits of man who is at their centre. Rituals and festivals are religious ways of implementing the values and beliefs of society (p.143).

Sequel to the above, ancestral celebrations are important to re-affirm and consolidate these religious values which promotes community consciousness and which are inherent and deep-rooted among the people. To this end, celebration of the ancestors is a common place rehearsal in African religion. Thus, the celebration of the ancestors is a mark of honour and remembrance as well as the invocation of the African dead. Ancestral veneration aids adherent spiritually as regards healthy and cordial relationship among the community with the spirit world. Ancestral veneration is either performed annually, monthly, bi-monthly or anytime especially at the dictate or oracle divinity.



**The Priest of Owellotti Deity and His Secretary in Iwollo oghe Eziagu Local  
Government Area of Enugu State**

It becomes germane at this point to look briefly into some of these ceremonies, festivals or rituals that provide occasions, for ancestral cult and promote community consciousness. Among them are Igodo festival, Mmanwu festivals, new yam festivals, marriage festivals, Egwu, Owa, etcetera in some communities in Enugu state.

### **5.1 Traditional Marriage Ceremony in Eziagu Local Government Area of Enugu State**

Marriage is simply defined as the coming together of a man and a woman in a customary sanctioned manner to live forever as husband and wife. Traditional marriage in Eziagu like in most Igbo communities is a cultural issue. And when we talk of cultural issues, what readily comes into our mind is our *Omenani* “dictates of the land”. And once *Omenani* is mentioned, what readily come to our mind is our ancestors. The reason for this is simple and logical, because things that deal with culture are issues handed down by our ancestors from generation to generation. Socially, customary and biologically, marriage aims, principally at procreation in traditional Igbo societies. Every Igbo traditional marriage tends towards getting off springs, which would take care of their parents when they are old and subsequently stand on their position when they die. In Eziagu, the case is not different. It just like in every other locality has certain uniqueness. Eziagu people have accepted marriage not only as a union of a man and woman but also as a veritable institution of union and unity among family members of the couple and community at large. This brings out the sense of community consciousness which this work tries to portray. Under normal circumstances marriage in Ezeagu is called “*inu nwanyi*.” The traditional view of marriage prior to the advent of Christianity in Eziagu is polygamous. In a personal interview with Chief Vincent Anieke on why polygamy is endorsed in Eziagu, he gave the following reasons.



### **Traditional Marriage Ceremony in Obinagu Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State**

1. That a traditional Eziagu man is a farmer, and needs more hands in his farm.
2. He mentioned that socially he has more extended relations as marriage is not an issue of only the man and woman and;
3. That he, finally, has more security as marriage relationships are everlasting bonds.

A man is free to as many wives at a time as he pleases though for women it must be a marriage with one man at a time (personal communication 25thJuly, 2017).

Marriage in Eziagu creates bonds between two families, the family of the wife (*ogonkwu*). It creates a union between a wife and the family of her husband, they call her “*uyeanyi*” (our wife) or *uyem*. It is so serious an attachment that the death of a husband does not necessarily bring an end to his marriage to his wife. Likewise a widow does not cease to be a

member of her husband's family because her husband has died. Children born of a widow are legitimate members of the late husband's family whether or not such children were conceived or born in the life time of the husband. The death of a wife does not necessarily dissolve the bond between the maiden family and her husband's family. The husband continues to owe obligation as a husband to the deceased wife maiden family. A fully grown man in Eziagu "Muo shenne" is free to marry a woman outside the community. A woman, in case of death of husband, must get the consent of her parents who will refund the bride price to the deceased husband (*Ichineje oji* or *Iwechiashua nwanya*). Like in many other places, procedures of marriage in Eziagu pass through the following processes; (I) (*Igba – nju*) In the process of *igba nju*, the prospective suitor starts this process by taking kola nut (*Oji*) and a wine to the family to make his intention known with some of his relatives and parents. You notice here again the communal involvement even from the start. The parents of the girl does not either give out right endorsement as they request for time or chance to make inquiries from beings, living and dead to ascertain whether it will be possible. This is another way of telling the suitor that they want to carry out some investigations about him and his family. You here notice again that a suitor who maybe good maybe denied hands in marriage because of bad family antecedents. The man and his family, likewise the parents of the suitor at this stage the go – between "Onye ahuta" will act as mediator between the two families. When this stage is over and everything confirmed alright, another date will be fixed for another stage. The next stage will be "Iku aka nuzo" (knocking at the door), at this stage the suitor accompanied by his parents, family members and friends, goes with a pot of palm wine (*ite mmanya nkwu enu*) Kola nut (*Oji*) and *isii utaba* (roll of snuff) to the girls place. The eldest man in the family, who is the ancestral representative, will say some prayers over the couple. After the prayer, kola nut is broken and shared, and a cup of palm wine in cow horn (*mpu eshu*) will be given over to the girl as tradition demands, she is expected to sip the palm wine

and hand over to the will-be-husband. This signifies marriage approval. After drinking the palm wine handed over to the man, the real occasion of eating and drinking will kick start. During or after the eating the list for a three days feast (*ihe uchichi ito*) and the payment of the dowry, (*ikwu ego-isi*), the girl goes with the suitor to his house to know whether she will be able to live with him and the family.

This is called '*ineta uno*' or '*jee marube*'. The girl stays for "*uchichi ito*" three days and the fourth day she goes back with several gift items given to her and her parents like cloths shoes, snuff, etc. It becomes evident from the traditional marriage pattern that the Igbo have community consciousness and participation from start to finish. This is tradition handed over by the ancestors from generation to generation, aimed principally for procreation in order to have people to hand over to, and communal co-existence. Another interesting dimension of sense of community to be noted in marriage in Eziagu is that just as many people are invited when the marriage was contracted, so are many people involved, if any of the parties feels offended and seeks dissolution. Official dissolution of traditional marriage in Eziagu is not an easy task. In a personal communication with chief Obi Nzekwe, he explained that most misunderstandings between husbands and wives are often settled in dialogue, knowing that nobody is perfect. In trying to settle issues, (*onye-nfuta*) the go-between both parties is usually invited. When he/she tries but failed, the parents of the bride and groom may be invited. When this move fails, then Umunna will do everything possible to resolve the matter. Among the issues that are difficult to resolve are cases of threat to life and marital infidelity. According to Obi Nzekwe, if a man has finally made up his mind to quit the marriage, he may ask the wife to follow him to visit his father-in-law, and secretly put an egg inside the basket that contains the palm-wine with which they are taking as gift to the father-in-law. Once the man brings out the egg on getting to the house of the father-in-law, breaks the egg and declares that he is tired of the marriage, automatically the marriage is dissolved



and the woman customarily ceases to be a member of the man's family whether the man is living or dead.(personal communication 25 may 2017). We notice that marriage in Eziagu, like most Igbo communities in not a just one man one woman affair but involve other family members, and by extension, the whole community.

## **5.2 Egwu Onwa (Moon Light Dance)**

The necessity of delving into Egwu Onwa (moon light dance) is not unconnected with what we are discussing, showing how cult of ancestors promotes community consciousness. "Egwu Onwa" is one of the ways our ancestors brought many children of different households together and systematically imparted morals and acute sense of participation. To be to the Igbo is to belong, and to belong involves full participation. The Igbo elders are highly rated and seen as custodians of the land who are very close to the ancestors.They do not talk for talking sake; their words are preciously valued and retained. They speak in proverbs and wisdom and articulate their sayings with idiomatic expressions. The elders educate the young ones concerning the ethos and morality, the importance of keeping the traditions of the land, respect to elders, dignityof labour and the benefits accruing from good life and resultant effects of being a thorn in the flesh in the society. To teach the youths, they use a lot of folktales, proverbs and legends. Folktales are illustrated with animals and birds such as rabbits, fowl kite dog, lamb, vulture and above all tortoise among others.When you match the size, strength and agility of the tortoise with other animals in the forest, it is poor, yet its tenacity against all odds, his calculating cunning and his ability to survive under adverse conditions places him above any animal, even in most difficult circumstances. The Igbo use stories coined with animals and birds to instruct the young ones on the necessity of moral probity and respect for human life. The folk tales are told by parents usually after supper.The same stories are retold by the children to other children when they gather for moon-light games and other recreations. Those stories are told over and over by the children

though in different places, occasions and times. Hence, the stories continued to be transmitted from generation to generation. Egwu- Onwa is a socio- cultural event in the life of Igbo people marked by episodes of folksongs, riddles, stories, jokes and plays. In Obinagu Udi of Enugu state like in most Igbo communities, it is done in the night by children and some elders under the glare of the moon light and humour for children. It is enlivening, cultural and charged with excitement. In his work, things fall apart, Achebe speaks confidently that moon light night is usually different. The nappy voices of children playing in the open fields would be playing in pairs in less open places and old men and women would remember their youth. That validates that Igbo aphorism which says that ‘when the moon is shining, the cripple becomes hungry for a walk’. In an exclusive interview with Chief I.A Eze, a high chief and present ‘Okobo of Umuneboagu’ village in Obinagu, he said, it is not without sorrow that it is realized that this all important aspect of our culture is being completely eroded with the passage of time. This he said could account for some way, the level of social vacuum and cultural decadence experienced in our time. He identified some roles Egwu Onwa plays in life of Obinagu people to include:



**Egwu Onwa (Moon Light Dance) in Umuaba Compound Obiagu Udi Enugu State**

1. Talent development: It enables the people to bring out the latent knowledge in them and the opportunity to share in common with their fellow children. Some resort to building of mud houses, singing and cooking, thereby exposing themselves to the task ahead as youths and adults. People discover their ability to sing or acquire the skill of oratory, while some develop a big sense of humour especially needed in our society where high blood pressure are threatening every fabric of the society.
2. Fraternal existence and solidarity: in this series of activities children cultivate the important attitudes of friendliness, brotherhood and togetherness which our society desperately needs for integral human development and psycho-spiritual healing. Through these activities, the children learn to know and look for one another. This is because when one of them is absent probably because of illness or some other reasons, the rest look for him and identify with him in a kind of solidarity. And in so doing, if any requires assistance, it is equally offered.
3. It also serves as a recreation: after the fatigue of the day's work, children assemble in the village square, children use the period to express their cultures, which they will not be allowed to display in the formal ground, like masquerade "*Mmanwu*" in the dialect of Obinagu; this is usually made with dried leaves, with a rope tied at the end. Afterwards, it is put on a person who will in turn chase both male and female children with a stick and with a song from the audience. Other examples of "Egwu Onwa" include telling of stories, hidings, running etceteras. These enable children to imbibe and get integrated into their different cultural practices.
4. Mode of transmission of culture: in an elderly person's house after the fatigue of the day's work, children gather to listen to folk stories about their ancestral background, aetiologies' and their parent's lifetime experiences. Not only the joy, friendliness and the good morals gathered from these experiences, the children also deepen their awareness

of cultural and traditional values embedded in their stories, jokes, riddles and plays. The necessity of this culture awareness in an age swept by confusions and decadence flowing through the inroad of the city life into the villages with some accompanying destructive tendencies like theft, kidnapping, cultism, molestations and numerous social vice. The need for such cultural practices that enhances life and promotes community consciousness cannot be over emphasized. Culture makes a man, because culture plays a vital role in self identity and its observance enhances peoples self survival. *O tempora, O moris!* What a time and what a way of behaving! This statement is popularly credited to the famous Roman orator Marcus Tullinus Cicero 106 BC, when he bemoaned and in nostalgias longed for the old days of Rome, when things flourished well and people observed a respectable standard of behaviours. In the words of Chief I. A. Eze; I experience with dismay the continuing utter disappearance of one of the most significant socio- cultural phenomena in most traditional Igbo societies that brought many children of different households together and systematically imparted morals and sense of community and solidarity as handed down from generation to generation by our great ancestors(personal communication, 3<sup>rd</sup>July 2017).

### **5.3 Aju Festival in Obinagu Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State**

Obinagu Udi is located some 32 kilometres west of Enugu State of Nigeria. It is bounded on the north east by Eziagu local government area, on the north by Uzo - Uwani local government and by the west the Awka – north local government in Anambra state. Obinagu celebrates her new yam festival between the month of August and September. Each year, thousands of Obinagu sons and daughters troop out en- masse to celebrate the annual new yam festival. This age long festival, which is as old as the Igbo culture itself is referred to as “Aju festival” in Obinagu. It is a unifying factor within Obinagu community and other communities within Obinagu environs. In a personal communication with high chief I.A Eze,

the Okobo of Umuneboagu kingdom in Obinagu on why the festival is referred to as Aju festival, he explained that the word *Aju* is borrowed from the Igbo word '*Aju – ase*, meaning (asking after)asking to know, in-guest. So *Aju* festival which is a new yam celebration and an avenue to thank God for sustenance of life and provision of food is the most visible avenue which affords the Obinagu person to meet with friends and relations. It show-casesroot acute sense of community. The aim of the new yam festival is toofficially presentthe newly harvested yams to God and ancestors of the land. But in presenting that, as people, sons and daughters troop out en-masse for the celebration, it creates the enabling environment for inquisition as the name of the festival implies '*Aju*', '*Iju ase*'. Daughters married in different places come home with their children and husbands. Inquires are being made asto their well being and that of their children, including that of their husbands. People who have not seen each other for a long time meet, new friends are made, relationships enhanced, strained and broken ones amended. This is when community issues, problems and solutions are looked into. It becomes evident that cult of ancestors in Igbo traditional societies is rooted in its acute sense of community and is what the ancestors built for dramatization on events like new yam festival, moon – light dance, masquerading etcetera. The event begins with breaking of cola nuts with “thanks speech” addressed to God and ancestors for the privilege and sustaining the life of the farmers, the indigenes of the land and the farm product (yam) through a successful planting season by the traditional ruler of the community.



### **Cutting of New Yam by the Okobo of Obinagu**

And later, the yam is sliced and eaten with palm oil. The condiments usually used to cook the tubers of yam for a new yam festival are usually fresh palm oil, pepper, salt, utazi, onions, crayfish, among others. Two special delicacies usually prepared on the ceremonial day include: boiled white yam coupled with its red oily sauce, and yam porridge (*Ji – awayi*). This is followed by royal dance, Igba-Eze dance, cultural dance, musical renditions by various groups in the community. The new yam is indeed a colourful event in Obinagu and visitors from far and near have been thronging to partake in the celebration and also enjoy this rich cultural heritage. In August 2016 in Obinagu, his Royal Highness Igwe Emmanuel Eneugwu, the traditional ruler of the community submitted that the festival is a highly regarded traditional event in Igbo land, but more importantly were its spiritual connotations. According to him, the mystical nature of yam is that you sow the head in the ground, but God

will take that; it will die, and another will sprout and produce a yam in the size that only God determines' (personal communication 27 august, 2016).



### **Dancing Renditions during the New Yam Festival**

The date for this celebration in Obinagu is usually the last Saturday in August or the first Saturday in September. This is when the Igwe in the presence of all the visitors cut and declare the new yam celebration open. It usually takes place on the square known as 'Okpuike'. On inquiry on why the choice of Okpuike as the venue, Nze Alphonsus Eze revealed that Okpuike is the first known ancestral home of Obinagu (Personal communication 28 August,2017). On the eve of the new yam festival, the Igwe accompanied by the three Okobo's who are the high chiefs in the village and their cabinet members, will go to the house of whoever is the present oldest man in Obinagu with gifts and drinks, to ask for prayers and seek approval as they will be celebrating new yam festival the next day. This is done probably as it is believed that as the oldest man is the closet link to the ancestors. With

this approval and permission secured, all is now set for the celebration the next day. With the celebration proper on the next day (Saturday), officiated by the Igwe of community by breaking of cola nut and prayers, followed by cutting of new yam and renditions of different cultural dances, all retires to various families at dawn to welcome personal and special visitors. This includes son's in-laws and daughters married both within and outside Obinagu. These daughters, who use this opportunity to visit their root in festival mood, do not come empty handed. There are though no particular items the daughters must bring, but in most cases, parents, brothers, sisters and relatives are expecting first and foremost palm wine "*Mmanya nkwu ocha*" and African salad known in Obinagu as "*Jigbo, abacha*" or another class of Obinagu traditional food in the resemblance of abacha known as "*Ighu*" (bitter yam). This type of food has serious traditional connotations. It is a necessary item for sacrifice to the traditional worship. In proper traditional Igbo family setting, the eldest or the father of the family, in order to emphasize the moment (aid commune) with their ancestors and the gods will take some food to the family shrine. These drinks and foods brought by married daughters to their paternal home are not exclusively eaten by immediate parents and siblings. This validates the earlier claim in this work that the Igbo family concept is more expansive than that of the Europeans. Igbo family members include cousins, nephews, uncle etcetera. You here again see acute sense of community and solidarity beginning from internal household. All these extended family (to Europeans) but same family in traditional Igbo setting, come together to eat and drink what a daughter married outside has brought. A daughter married outside is '*Nwa-anyi*' (our daughter) not '*Nwam*' (my daughter). The Igbo has a 'we' mentality not an 'I.' Individualism has no room in Igbo mentality. A child the Igbo belief belongs to the community. Hence, the Igbo name "*nwaora*" (community child).

The next day begin the Sunday after the whole town's cutting of the new yam at the community square by the Igwe, the "Okobos" who are the high chiefs representing their own



villages will now gather at the square of oldest man in each village called (*obodo*) to cut his own new yam. The reason for this is not far; this is because the Igwe addresses issues as it affects the entire town, but the Okobo address issues as it affects particular villages. This is another forum to show blood fraternity intimacy and affinity. And secondly, it is not all issues that are for general public consumption. There are family, village issues which need internal deliberations and resolutions to be presented by an ancestral representative or delegate to the community. This accounts for orderliness, unity and progress in Igbo traditional setting. Also to be noted in this festival is what is called *ikpu-mbuba*. In traditional Obinagu language, *ikpu* means to drag, *mbuba* means something else. Since the main guests at Obinagu festivals that are taken home and lavishly entertained are blood relatives and in-laws, *ikpu-mbuba* is meant to accommodate those who do not fall into any of this aforementioned group. *Ikpu-mbuba* is a situation where a friend from another community is invited with possibly his entire family to come and pass a night or two in a friend's house during the festival. The reason for this is to make both families meet and create a sort of bond. This implies a sort of social security and affirmity, as both families are obliged to assist each other at points of need and interest. Their wives and children become friends and marriages, social, and economic connections can follow. And most importantly the community consciousness which the cult of ancestors tries to serve is achieved with even an extension to other communities. *Ikpu-mbuba* has far reaching implications as it is not only recreational, it unites communities through individual friends and communities at large, thereby providing general social security.

#### **5.4 Masquerades in Obinagu (*Mmanwu*)**

*Mmanwu* is a name for a traditional Igbo masquerade. It is meant to embody both the spirit and human world, and how they co-exist. This underscores that, in Igbo world view; both the physical and spiritual cohere in a web like manner; that one is only an extension of

the other. Igbo Masquerades (*Mmanwu*) is a traditional performance acted out by exclusive secret societies within a community. It is a cult of ancestor built on such foundation that endorses community consciousness. These exclusive societies consist of adult male members. Each member must be initiated into the society. Their identity is known only to the other members. Their functions include harvest celebration, entertainment, enforcing village curfews, protection and serving as security guards. The members, also known as masqueraders, wear masks to hide their identity from the rest of the village. The mask is also worn to resemble the spirit of a dead community member. By wearing the mask, a masquerade is thought to have spiritual powers that are conducted through the mask. The living-dead are what these masquerades /spirits embody. The Igbo believe that the dead never actually die, rather, they remain in a ‘personal immortal state’. They reside somewhere between the earthly and spiritual world. These living- dead are believed to be closely related to those of the village. Since men are masqueraders, they are buried within their homes so their spirits may be close to their families. The living-dead return to the earthly world from time to time to offer spiritual advice. It is the living-dead, who the masquerade portrays. There are two basic types of masquerades in Obinagu like in most traditional Igbo communities, (The visible and invisible). The visible masquerades are meant for the public. Masks used offer a visually appeal for their shapes and forms. The invisible masquerade plays at night. Sound is the main tool for them. The masquerade uses his voice to screen so it may be heard throughout the village. These invisible masquerade, call upon a silent village to strike fear in the hearts of those not initiated into their society. In Igbo culture, the masquerade embodies the spirit and human worlds. The mystique surrounding the masquerade is one key component of the Igbo culture that survived western influences. It is generally believed in Igbo land that the masquerade is a spirit which springs from the evil. Depending on your point of view, it may be true or only a myth. The masquerades are

classified into categories based on specialization. Each masquerade possesses particular attributes (warrior-like prowess, mystical powers, youthfulness and old age) and specializes in one or more skills like, dancing skills, acrobatics and other ritual manifestations. Masquerading may involve one person team or team made up of instrument players, vocalists, dancers, masquerade advisers and masquerade it's self. Most masquerades are covered from head to toe with some pieces of clothing or and bamboo rafters. Finally a wooden mask is worn over the face. The mask will vary depending on the type of masquerade and the place of origin. Some masks are designed to be beautiful, intimidating or downright sinister. Most masquerades claim to have some mystical powers and are constantly competing to see which one has the most mystical powers whenever they appear together especially at village squares or funerals. Some masquerades appear during traditional celebrations (funerals and new yam festivals).The level of apprehension and the noise that await the appearance of the masquerade will vary depending on the type of the masquerade, the make-up, the size and the audience. In Obinagu Udi local government area of Enugu state, different masquerades visible and invisible such as *Iga*, *Mmanwu mmaaka*, *aganegbuode*, *ovuvu*, *ogemma* and *odalije* are celebrated mostly among others.



### **Iga Masquerade in Obinagu with the researcher in Okpuike Obinagu Udi-Enugu State**

The *iga* is a youthful and aggressive character represented by a mask that insinuates vibrancy and vigour. Its major attribute is demonstration of youthfulness with specialty in intimidation. It is also known for the bells that ring around its waist signalling to an on-coming person of the presence of a vibrant masquerade that is ready to follow you to any length. It has a lighter dress than other masquerades and carries cane. At most times, it acts as a fore-runner to bigger masquerades as it clears ground for its arrival. It serves disciplinary functions by chasing the non-initiates and women far away from the celebration square. Right

in the square it maintains orderliness, making sure that the entire youths clap for the dancing masquerade and that people position themselves well to avail each other the opportunity to see the performing masquerade on stage. Just as in Igbo world view, carrying everybody along iga is used to collect fines from community members who have defaulted in any of the community agreed labour or levies without a welcomed permission or excuse. It should be note again at this point that most of the cult of Igbo ancestors are built on such foundation, whose primary aim is for all to live well in a community, protect and enhance life. Going to our individual families, any woman who is reported that does not sweep, the compound, iga will come and sweep it for her. And when a believed spirit comes to sweep for you, the penalty is non-negotiable. Iga also visits a woman who cooks food late for the family by coming to scatter, harass and throw away food being prepared late to act as deterrent measure to the immediate family and others against future occurrence. Its complimentary role as traditional law enforcement agent and function of spiritual, moral and social cohesion geared towards community stability and consciousness cannot be over-emphasised.

Closely related to the looks of iga in Obinagu is ovuvu. Similar to both of them like all other visible masquerades in Obinagu is that they have no wooden texture that characterizes the face and heads of other masquerades. But just as the name *ovuvu* implies so is it mimicked in the physical appearance of ovuvu masquerade in Obinagu. Ovuvu in Obinagu traditional language refers to the caterpillar ant. The body of the caterpillar ant is far from being smooth. It looks irritated and quite un-trimmed. The body looks like something that will hurt or tear the skin when touched. It is usually made of straws, rough fabrics without any serious attempt to make it smooth. Just like iga, it performs disciplinary and traditional police functions. Naturally it appears that iga may be faster because the fabric of ovuvu looks heavier.

Mmanwu-maka is a more adult-like type of masquerade in Obinagu. It is characterized by a wooden mask round the face and plenty of straw fabrics all over the whole body except the leg. It is more entertaining than iga, as it moves around with an entourage of people with different musical instruments.



### **Mmanwu – Maka in Obinagu Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State**

The instrument ranges from local drums (abia), flute (opu), gong (ogene) and many more. Most of the mmanwu-maka is not just great singers, they are also great dancers. The songs they sing are not mere entertainment songs. A rapt attention reveals that what they put in song manner are stories of the past. Just like they represent ancestral presence, they tell the new generation what happened in the past and reasons why certain things are the way

they are. They in the same opportunity narrate events on places visited on different occasions, what should be accepted and what should be avoided. They as a matter of fact combine the roles of human and spiritual package. Looking like Mmanwu-maka in Obinagu is another masquerade called *aganaegbu-ode*.



### **Aganegbu – Ode in Obinagu Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State**

Aganaegbu-ode has lesser straw fabrics and as such lighter in weight. This makes it faster in movement. Unlike Mmanwu-maka it can go about without an entourage made up of people with different musical instruments. And it is fit to run and chase people about

especially non-initiates. Aganaebgu-ode is the masquerade people are looking up to watch at square that has been scheduled for masquerades performance and display called (obodo-Mmanwu).Every village in Obinagu have a square designated for masquerade display and dance. Most aganegbu-ode is good dancers.



### **A Performing Aganegbu – Ode in Okpuike Square in Obinagu Udi Enugu State**

They thrill the audience with performances characterized by skill and strength. This accounts for why people are looking up aganaegbu-ode in obodo-mmanwu. Looking similar to mmanwu-maka and aganegbu-ode is agadi-mmanwu.





**Agadi – Mmanwu with the researcher Okpuike Square in Obinagu Udi Local  
Government Area of Enugu State**

Agadi in Igbo language means, 'old'. So as the name implies, agadi-mmanwu means old masquerade. Most Obinagu traditional families have their own agadi-mmanwu. This agadi-mmanwu is meant to represent the oldest family known ancestor. He serves as a link between the family living members and the dead. When it enters the family, both women and children are permitted to come out and watch the Mmanwu. Just like a very old man, it walks and talks very slowly. Most of its talks are advisory to the family. It goes as far as asking questions about new children and older ones who are absent. New children are introduced to the Mmanwu and reasons why some older ones are absent explained. Family members including women shower it with gift items and praises. Its presence reminds the family

members once again when this great ancestor lived. It goes further to remind them that this man that lived in the past in this family is still interested in the affairs of this family, and that though dead, he is still part and parcel of this family. This explains that the demarcation between the ancestors and living relatives is very slim. It becomes obvious that cults of ancestors in Igbo traditional communities are deeply rooted in its experiences on what fosters societal cohesion, stability, life enhancement and community consciousness. Experience precedes expression. Igbo masquerades serve a wide range of needs. They symbolize the presence of ancestral spirit-force and authority which lends weight to the basic beliefs of the society. They reinforce acceptable norms of conduct, and provide judicial services. Since Igbo society has no centralized government, the powers and authority of the ancestors symbolized by the masquerades become important factors for the maintenance of stability and harmony in the society.

## **5.5 Igodo Festival**

Our limitations as individuals are as numerous as the rest of mankind. In an effort to overcome limitations, survival adversities and improve on our individual abilities. Administrative frame works for cooperation and communal existence, survival and development. In like manner, communities, states, countries and continents come together to form bigger and better unions. These established unions continue unending work of evolving and improving the state of their union. Cultural festivals are usually very colourful and existing. They portray the spirit of unity and togetherness despite the diversities in social tendency. Amongst the major cultural festivals in Umuavulu Abor in Enugu state is Igodo, a harbinger of the return of Odo (also called Odomagana) from the land of the spirits (ancestral spirits). In this festival Odomagana is the uniting factor having been intricately interwoven with the lives of the people from time immemorial. Njeze (2018) posited that more than 200 years ago, our ancestors in an effort to improve on, and sustain their ability to remain united

in doing the work assigned to them by God, established Odomagana as an administrative frame work for the delivery of public services and regulation of private enterprise and social interaction. From my interaction with Mr. Ugwu Matthew, below are amongst the services rendered through Odomagana.

1. Protection of the community against external aggression.
2. Policing and the protection of lives and properties within the community.
3. Enhancing individual economic and social security.
4. Administration of justice.
5. Legislation and enactment of laws.
6. Administration of sports, magic and entertainment.
7. Regulating private enterprise, herbal medicine, clairvoyance, crafts and fabrication, trading etc.
8. Regulating religious practices.

Odomagana according to Njeze (2017) was in no way close to a perfect institution but evidence and history proved that it was much better than the system that preceded its adoption. Njeze (2017) concluded that it was easy for some unenlightened and poorly educated minds in our generation to get derailed into maligning and in many cases physically abusing and destroying some of the great works and invention of our ancestors. While this may have been the case, majority of us in Umuavulu Abor are profoundly grateful to our ancestors for their selfless sacrifices towards building a formidable foundation that gave us better days than those they had. During a personal interview with Mr. Tom Ukwuani of Umuoye kindred of Eguma, he revealed that Eguma and Amaogwu villages (also in Umuavulu) are siblings from the same parents with Amaogwu being the elder. Anidi (2016) posited that Eguma is also an abridged Igbo name, the full meaning being egu maa, meaning land of God or God's forest. Egu means forest or farmland, while maa is God, the divine

being. The translation of maa as God is based on the traditional Igbo religious conceptualization and values. There are conceptions and misconception that exist concerning Odomagana Ogbologu (1991) argues that it is very unfortunate that people or persons outside oha-Odo communities often regard Odo as a cult shrouded in devilish idols and manifestations and ought to be dreaded and feared in all its entirety by all and sundry. This is not so. There, have existed in the past, great sons and daughters of Eguma, who lived exemplary lives, people who had strong values when they were alive and who believed in God. These individuals touched the lives of the people of Eguma and Abor at large. It is believed that these dead ancestors incarnate in the form of the Odo masquerade who continue to take active interest in the dealings of their living descendants and relations. According to the Ozor, Ciarunji and Odari (2017) the dead ancestors in the form of Odo visit the earth every two years and live among the people for a period of six months, ostensibly to see their loved ones and even settle scores with their enemies. This ancestral masquerade (Odomagana) usually returns to inhabit a given sacred forest and shelter, an abode or home, known as "onu Odo". In Eguma village, the "onu Odo" is harboured within the ambit of a sacred forest and deity known as onu- ani-eguma. According to the current chief priest and custodian of onu-Odo-eguma and ani-Eguma deity and sacred shrine, Mr. Osmond Onunze, there existed in the past, different Amadi Odo, each being a physical representation or a reputable or respectable ancestor, that emanates from a given onu- Odo hamlet. He also reported that in Eguma, there were various Amadi Odo, the wise and noble ancestral spirit/Odo masquerade.



**Amadi – Odo in Igodo festival, 2018 at Umuavulu Abor in Udi Local Government Area  
of Enugu State**

The larger Umuchime family of Eguma-uwenu, a hamlet of eguma, also referred to as “oke ogu na-ewo” had ohakiyi as Amadi Odo. Eguma Uwani, the other half of Eguma had oya obuakana. Apart from these, there also existed other Amadi- Odo such as Obute–okenwa, ugwudioha, ebunyenwa ani, ugodo mbana, ozor onyia and zenwe, each being a noble masquerade (Amadi Odo) and a physical representation of great ancestors. According to him, currently only ebunyenwe ani also known as Obu n’onu ani appears in Eguma as an Amadi Odo. Oral history reveals that when Odo first arrived of Eguma village, a great feast was celebrated in the entire community. The whole village was treated to variety of delicacies such as cocoyam and pounded yam. The food items and drinks were shared between men and women and there was an agreement that whichever group finished eating their portion would be the host and custodian of Odo masquerading and rituals. Eventually the men won the

contest and that is the reason men are today the organizers of Odo masquerading activities. It is also on record that Onu Ani Eguma deity priests and the sacred sanctuary of the sacred Eguma land provided spiritual link and synergy with God.

Anidi (2014) reported that unlike in the present times, there were no anti- malarial drugs available in the olden times. The chief priest of Onu Ani Eguma provided the much needed medical, religious and meta- physical solutions to life challenges within the larger Abor community.

Again, when Odo first arrived Eguma, a special area of the community, within the ambiance of Onu- Ani- Eguma, was set aside for its activities and as an abode and home for the Odomagana.



**The researcher in the middle with Ebuna – Odo at Igodo festival Orié market square  
Umuavulu Abor Enugu state**

Some families in Eguma donated their lands to make this possible and they include Umuchime and Umu Oya Obu Akana. Some part of the land was donated by the adjoining Orobo village. The entire space or land area was divided into abodes (Ogba n'abo), one for Eguma Umuani (Nnakutanya). The entire land area as provided became the Onu Odo and the present onu Odo obu n'onu ani, including the scared shrine of onu ani eguma deity.

Onu ani is a sacred shrine and area, and an ancestral home and abode for Odomagana. On the return of the Odo in each season, the Odo must first of all step on and make physical contact with the ishi- ogba before visiting other villages.

Ozor (2017) reveal that it is also a symbolic place because it is where the actors transform to the spirit of ancestors, as true physical representatives. Farmlands within and around the area are used for farming, outside the season/years (Aghwa oghweke or year of the uninitiated). It transforms to a sacred land area or abode during Awhwa Odo (Odo season or year of the initiated).

Over the years, a temporary shelter was constructed as an abode for the Odo. In an interview with Sylvester Ibe (an elder from Eguma village), he reported that the first structure and shelter for Odo was made of Akpata – an elevated abode which made it possible for the melodious Odo music (ekwe – Odo) to be heard from far and wide. Eventually women of Eguma resolved that the ancestral spirits of their great grand fathers in – laws (nnadi) cannot continue to reside in a mud house and under a thatched roof. Hence they contributed amongst themselves and raised enough resources to build a befitting cement/Sand Crete blocks and Zinc roof where trees within the onu Odo obu n'onu ani. All the materials for the construction of onu Odo were made available and assembled at the house of the eldest man in the village. Assembling the materials at the home of the eldest man in the village was also symbolic as he serves as the closest link to the living – dead (Ancestors).

At the completion of the onu Odo building, a feast was organized, and this entailed that the entire food and drinks prepared were divided equally into three parts: one for Odo, one for the men and the other for the women. The feast was called Oriri – na – enu at that time before the return of the Amadi Odo, someone has to herald or invite the Odo to return. According to Mr. Cellistus Akasite (an assistant Odo priest), the person that heralds the Odo does not see the Odo.

When it first appears, he makes an esoteric cry (nkpukpo) and gives way for the arrival of the Odo. He also stays at a safe distance, calling or heralding, the Odo, and the Odo equally responds with an esoteric cry. When (Odo from Umuikwo, the most senior village in Umuavulu) stops playing the ekwe Odo, it is believed that the Amadi has taken off. As soon as ogba n’uchichi cries, the ekwe Odo stops and every one in transit takes cover to avoid a rude encounter or confrontation.



**The researcher with Odo Evaiki – Umuikwo in 2017 Igodo festival Umuavulu Abor in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State**



During an outing or processing, an Amadi Odo from Eguma has a particular route it plies within the onu Odo obu n'onu ani. It has obu nenu Eguma, orobu and unuozor uwani as its boundaries. Ogbologu (1991) reveals that this ceremony is equally performed in Nkwo days. In the light of the above, Nkwo days in Abor during Odo season are free movement days for the women, especially between the hours of nine and eleven in the morning and four to six in the evening, in the olden days. During an interview with Mr John Onuife (an assistant Odo priest) from Eguma, he revealed that once a person (male) is initiated, he becomes a free and true member of Igbo Odo community. And only members of this community are allowed to enter the sacred onu- Odo. The entrance of a typical onu- Odo is always fortified and decorated with palm- fronds during an Odo season to signify sacred and restricted area. It also serves as a caution to the un-initiated. The surrounding of onu Odo is protected with woven palm branches to serve as a barricade and to maintain secrecy within the onu Odo. In agreement to the researchers topic, ancestral cult is a demonstration of community consciousness in Udi local government traditional society, Dr.Onodugo who is the chairman of Umuavulu Abor culture committee has this to say:

As a child and later, a young man, I cannot forget how we would assemble at 'aba'umuoka (umuoka village square), to celebrate Odo (Ife Odo). Ochete, Onodugo, Nwulili, Ugwuogwu (the dancing and entertaining one) always featured. Nwulili would dance all the way from umuoka to Enu-Abor (the larger Abor community that lives on the hill, distinct from Umuavulu - Abor community) walking briskly, children and youth trailing excitedly behind. And all round were the sound of glee, the air rite with excitement and merriment. A number of other playful ebune- Odo would add to the fun as they chased and flogged young adult males, jokingly making gestures and dashing about to score women and children.

During the Ife Odo as he continued, ochete and onodugo representing the great fore fathers of the village would take turns to admonish their sons and daughters. They would chastise anyone including groups and hamlets that are found wanting in one way or the other. They would also praise those that are doing well. They would say high good behaviour and virtues expected of an Umuoka son or daughter and would encourage everyone to stay confident, feel protected by the almighty God and pursue whatever he/she was about. Those of us in school were usually encouraged to work harder to ensure that we excelled. Gifts from wonderful daughters of Umuoka would be presented to the great father figures before they would finally beckon on God almighty to bless our people.

It was usually marked with a lot of order. Hierarchy was maintained to the utmost as everyone knew where they fitted in. A child will naturally stand up for an adult to sit. The young and strong gave their seats for the old and weak. Memories of those good days will remain un-faded with me. He remarked that today, these roots have affected the Umuoka space seamlessly even without some people realizing it. Progress pervades the village. Umuoka answers osolu onaga (progressive people) that is what they are. This is our heritage. We must retain the principles and maintain the beautiful tenets our fore fathers left for us, he concluded.



## **Igodo Festival at its Fullness at Umuavulu Abor Udi Local Government Area Enugu State**

Odomagana masquerading is presently not without challenges. Change is an inevitable occurrence in life. And changes bring about tension and attendant challenges. All cultures change with time. This assertion is very true of Odo masquerading. Allyn and Bacon (1970) argue that African cultures are changing because new situations are requiring that people make new kinds of decisions. Every culture rationalizes and reconstructs choices that people have to make. Christianity, as an alien tradition in Udi L.G.A of Enugu state is one of the dynamics of modernity which has impacted so much on most Igbo traditional cultural activities. Macamo (2005) stressed that Christianity was to a large extent an essential element of colonization hence the British colonizers used Christianity as a weapon to destabilize the minds of the indigenes from their traditional belief system, things fell apart and now the centre cannot hold. Christianity became the yard stick that marked the difference between European-ness and others. As at today, corroborating with Ozor (2017), Christianity continues to place great tension between contemporary members of Igbo traditional societies and cultural activities. Many *onu Odo's* including *onu Odo obu n'onu ani eguma* has witnessed barbaric destruction and demolition by Christian fanatics including ancestral treasures carted away in the name of crusade. Furthermore, some of these sacred land areas that were carved out a long time ago by our ancestors for cultural activities seem endangered today by human encroachment and interferences with new unrelated structures constructed around and within these sacred spaces. Change we know is inevitable in community development. But it is important to always capture the essence of past solutions in solving contemporary challenges in any given time/space. Our fore fathers were not pagans. They were God fearing people who believed in Almighty God. It remains therefore imperative to

preserve and protect the positive values, relics and cults of ancestors that promote acute sense of community consciousness that enhances life.

In an interview with the igodo cultural reform committee chairman Dr. Obinna Onodugo, he said;

We were blackmailed from all angles by the big and small, affluent and not so-affluent, even within our families; many did not understand what we were doing. They held numerous meetings for us out of genuine love and concern. Though all these, we were understanding but unwavering because we knew where we are headed. We understood and still understand the misconceptions borne by a lot of people a result of which they are too scared to associate with anything odomagana. We also understand the caution the church displays arising from the long years of wrongly held beliefs. But for years now since the renaissance, we are still helping to mould society, playing our parts in the security of the community, healing the sick, developing, counselling, empowering our youths and generally contributing to numerous community development projects. All in keeping with the Odomagana tradition, as our fore fathers would have wanted. I think it is time we confront our fears. What are we afraid of? Do we really believe odomagana to be evil? The same odomagana that went about ensuring our territorial integrity, the odomagana that will warn a man from maltreating his wife and vice versa. That ensures the local pathway and parks are kept clean? Odomagana that plays with children and youths? Sending glee ripping through the community is evil. I think many of us have got it all wrong. Here we heard of the phrase give a dog bad name so we can kill him?

Odomagana has been given a bad name and whether we like it or not agreeing with this narrative means that we are descendant of people who brought evil spirit to their own land. WE must change the narrative because it is not true. There is nothing in the ideals of Christianity that forces a Christian to erase the culture of his fore- fathers-the very foundations on which he was raised. It is,in fact, Christ- like for him to build on those founding tenets-many of which are godly- using them to propel himself and those coming after to greater heights. This is the vision which we must accomplish, otherwise we would have failed our heritage, and our children will wonder who we are. The time for the truth has come. The age of information is here. Let us use this opportunity to rewrite the wrong history that has been thrust upon us. We are now educated, we have travelled far and wide, we have attained enlightenment, and as such cannot continue to swallow falsehood. We must redefine who discovered the Niger. We must appreciate the intelligence of our people and our forefathers and by doing so show our children their impeccable roots. Let us restore the good name of odomagana, announcing to the world that it is not a bad dog as some ignorant visitors have described it.

The Umuavulu people celebrate odo masquerade festival the intention of which, is to honour the dead who lived good lives as they return in masked from their parental community to manifest support, awaken security, bless the living and sanitize the community. It is a thing of joy to see your dead father return in a masked form, this implies that he lived a life worthy of emulation in Umuavulu.

Women are largely excluded from direct participation and do not return in masked form from the dead. This feature of odo demands that men rather than women are responsible for incarnating as ancestors of odo whether as individual or corporate classes in services to their community.

The patriarchal nature of most Igbo communities which includes Umuavulu Abor may account for women exclusion from direct participation and returning in masked forms from the dead. And above all, we notice root and identity recognition, acute sense of community consciousness and solidarity for preservation and enhancement of life behind this celebration.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Summary

Life of a traditional African is basically religious as a result of their cosmology base or world-view. The Igbo man is no exception to this assertion. This accounts for why Mbiti (1969), reiterated that Africans are notoriously religious, and each group has its own religious systems, beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all departments of life so fully that it is not possible to isolate it (p.1).

The Igbo traditional religion provides for the people a viable system by which they seek to explain, to predict and control all space and time events for the preservation of life. It becomes obvious that human life to the Igbo, is supreme and everything is done to keep it on.

Igbo man desires to preserve and pass on life. He acknowledges that he is not alone, for in seeking to preserve his life, he realizes that he exists in the midst of other things which are, and seek to preserve their beings too.

The Igbo belief in the existence of various forms of invisible powers and their influences as entrenched in the existence and influence of ancestors who Mbiti (1969), referred to as the living dead. By the nature, model of its socio-religious activities, the Igbo do not perceive the ancestral powers as man-made. Rather, ancestors are perceived as a force superior to them, and as true messengers, through the ontological hierarchy. One of the ultimate values which the traditional Igbo person cherishes is to live a worthy life here on earth, die and friendly join the ancestors who lived well. In order to maintain this ultimate goodness of life, they devised elaborate systems of moral codes known as *Omenala*

(tradition) to regulate the behaviour of the people including their social, economic, religious and political lives.

It is as a matter of fact believed that the ancestors and deities play a mediatory role in all aspects of their lives including their *Omenala* (tradition). Ancestral cult arose out of the quest to be in good relationship with fellow men and with the supernatural powers. Hence when any of the people feel that an ancestor is offended he makes necessary efforts to appease it through appropriate sacrifices.

Apart from appeasing it because of violation, the ancestors are also appeased as a sign of acknowledgement of their supremacy and as a sign of submission to authority. The relationship of the ancestors with the living is a symbiosis. Therefore, they may be persuaded to grant a request by promises of a more generous offering, or threat of starvation should they fail. Perhaps, because of the offerings, libations or sacrifice made to the ancestors, Africans were adjudged by earlier scholars to have arisen from erroneous assumption that all spiritual beings in Africa are no more than deified ancestors. The cult of ancestors is the quintessence of traditional Igbo doctrines on the “last things or eschatology”. It stands firmly on the assumption that the human soul is immortal, an assumption intensified by the people’s faith in reincarnation. The above constitutes the core of the Igbo world-view which to a very great extent determines and fashions their value systems and attitudes. In the Igbo perception of the universe, there are no clear demarcations between the sacred and the secular. Hence the Igbo religious life, family, political, economic, and social life are linked together just like a web, to ensure its balance. Any dis-link is believed to be un-healthy for the continuous harmonious survival. Life for an Igbo man is that in a community, individualism has no room in the mentality of traditional Igbo man.



The Igbo has great regard for the community. There is an acute sense of community consciousness. The community remains, even as individuals come and go. It is important to note that in the experience of its world, the community, although it does not consider the individual as insignificant, never-the-less it pays greater attention to the maintenance of its customs, laws and traditions, reasoning that these customs, laws and traditions came from great line of ancestors, and has been handed over from one generation to the next. Since the ancestors and living descendants, were of one skin, the ancestors are interested in the welfare of the community as a whole. In conjunction with *Ala'*, the ancestors are guardians of the customs and traditions of the land. Sanctions and breaches of morality are given in the name to the ancestors, a lesson of the reality of time in relation to the community and the individual is contained.

In Igbo world view, reality is perceived as unified. This accounts for why the living, is very conscious of their journey to join those who have gone before them to the land of the dead. Death is not the sole pre-requisite to ancestor-hood; you must have reasonably achieved the values and the aspirations of the community. The respect and reverence depends on the level of accomplishment Abunuka (2010) asserts that;

Those, whose accomplishment affects the entire community, receive reverence from the whole community. If the achievement is limited to part or section of the community, for example; to a kindred or family, the respect is limited accordingly (p.44).

But also to be noted is that not doing evil is also considered as an achievement. That ancestors share common characteristics, both with the living, and the ultimate reality is clear from the ontological consideration in Igbo world view. Ancestors share imperishability with

ultimate reality, but with individuals on the level of mankind, they share another distinguishing mark, they were once in the flesh.

To investigate the actual relationship which ancestors have with the living and the ultimate reality, it is expedient to examine the community of which the individual is a member, and in which, in inter-relationship with others, the individual seeks self-fulfilment. This brings to fore, community consciousness as a demonstration of ancestral cult which this work tries to portray. The community is generally interested in preserving its self, in making sure that it is in favour, both with the divinity and ancestors. In order to maintain itself, the community insists that its customs, laws and tradition are observed. As a matter of experience, members of the community tries to see that each person observes its customs and laws, as this ensures not only the guidance and protection of the ancestors but also the enduring pleasure of the divinity with the community. Thus in the experience of its world, the community considers it very high in its priority to seek ways and means of instilling reverence for ancestors in its members from very tender age. The teachings of ancestors are found in the community's legends and folkloric heritage. Here we find facts or events which have marked the life of the community and its ancestors. In legend and folklore, one is concerned with the events that have marked the experience or life of the community (of which the individual is a member) and the ancestor. These events are the measure of in definitude. In this connection, the ancestors who dwell in definitude are inseparable from the community, they are also revered to the extent they approached the height of the values and aspiration of the community.

In this respect, an ancestor may have been the founder of the community, a renowned traditional doctor of medicine or a leader who has set a record in his style of leadership or administration. The deeds of such ancestors are recalled with great admiration and they receive due reverence. For the community concerned, the achievements of such ancestors are

held up in the height. The line of what was once done by them is rare to see in the present. What they accomplished in the past can only be imitated in the present or surpassed in the future. The reverence given to ancestors function on the ontological ground, moral principles covering all the services rendered by man and woman that contribute to community building, including family life, religion, education, defence and other aspects of life of the community. Failure in observance of the moral function attracts various forms of danger and disequilibrium.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Ancestral cult is a demonstration of community consciousness in Igbo traditional societies. To the Igbo, the place of man is presumed by most of the articulation of hierarchies. He is pre-eminently the focus of the Igbo vision of the universe and the main pilot of the traditional religious network. Every existence, every meaning, from the gods to the inanimate, seems to revolve around man. This accounts for why Yawn as quoted by Ezechi (2011), made an extreme case when he insinuates that for the African, God or faith in him is a function of man's need for meaning. Man in sum, is the centre of Igbo universe. This corroborates with the ancient Hippocratic statement that 'man is the measure of all things'.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

Having undertaken this investigation on "Ancestral cult as a demonstration of community" consciousness in Igbo traditional societies, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. That the need by the Igbo and other communities in Africa to showcase their rich cultural norms and values to enhance their personality profile is imperative.

2. That further research in the topic under investigation is carried out as it will produce new insights and further explanations in recognition of the fact that the researcher is not all knowing on the topic under investigation.
3. That the federal government should sponsor celebrations like new yam festivals as a channel to show- case the richness in African culture and provide opportunity for people from the same ancestral lineage, together with friends to fraternize and socialize as it provokes unification.
4. That NGOS working in Nigeria, especially those interested in culture, orientation and information be more pro-active in propagating the cultural celebration as expressed in Igbo or African community.
5. There is need to incorporate cultural and Igbo religious studies into all levels of our educational system as a well informed knowledge of Igbo traditional culture could be corrective measure and modify into the existing status quo.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

The work made the following recommendations for further investigation. The area, interest and belief occupied by ancestors in Igbo-world-view have provoked a lot of attack by both science and Euro-Christian ideology and world-view. As a result of these attacks, there is still need to scrutinize many facets of the concept in order to promote the concept and make it more understandable to all. As a result of this, the researcher suggest that:

- i. Researchers should carry out research to know whether the industrious cum hard working nature of Igbo, was a result of their age long belief in the concept of ancestors and reincarnation.
- ii. Future researchers should embark on a critical analysis of the relationship between ancestor-hood and reincarnation. This will embrace solving the problem if women can become ancestors in patrilineal societies in Africa/Igbo communities.

- iii. There should be a conceptual study of Igbo ancestral cult in relation to Christendom.

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### INTERVIEW CHART

Note that Many people interviewed by the researcher chose to remain anonymous due to influence of westernization, modernization and Christian religion.

Name	Estimated age	Place	Status	Date	Interviewer
Chief Vincent Anieke	65	Eziagu	Civil servant	20/6/2017	Ene Ferdinand
Chief Obi Nzekwe	57	Eziagu	Civil servant	20/6/2017	Ene Ferdinand
Chief I.A Eze	72	Obinagu	Okoba of Umuneboagu	20/8/2018	Ene Ferdinand
Nze Alphonsus Eze	68	Obinagu	The Nze of Owa village	20/8/2018	Ene Ferdinand
Calistus Njeze	77	Umuavulu Abor	Igwe of Umuneboagu	3/9/2018	Ene Ferdinand
Sylvester Ibe	52	Umuavulu Abor	The Priest of Odo	3/9/2019	Ene Ferdinand
Cellestus Akabike	62	Umuabi	Civil Servant	10/1/2019	Ene Ferdinand
Dr. Obinna Onodugo	60	Umuavulu Abor	Medical consultant	3/9/2019	Ene Ferdinand
Mr. John Onuife	58	Umuavulu Abor	Traditional Practitioner	3/9/2019	Ene Ferdinand
Emmanuel Enugwu	80	Obinagu	The Igwe of Obinagu	20/8/2018	Ene Ferdinand