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IGBO CULTURAL LIFE AND EDUCATION

BY

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Abstract

The paper discusses the Igbo cultural life and education. The cultural activities in Igbo land, which include the meaning of culture, the philosophy of teaching Igbo language, the Igbo political institution, the Asu Cult System, the Kolanut, Igbo marriage, reincarnation, taboos and totems. The paper concluded that the Igbo people should be proud of their culture because it contains the ingredients of life that will attract the entire world to imitate them. The Igbo Cultural worth has desirable legacy of activities which other tribes emulate. Finally, the paper recommended every parents and guardian to teach Igbo children and the admirer of the language, the culture and encourage Igbo to establish cultural schools and festival within the Igbo nation.

Keywords: Cultural, Life and Education

Introduction

Nigeria is made up of 450- 500 ethnic groups and each one of the ethnic group speaks one language (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1981). Igbo languages is one of the three (3) major languages in Nigeria (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) culture is communication, it impacts how we send and interpret messages. We cannot talk about culture without the language and the geographical location of the language.

Historically, Igbo land has taken up a large part of southern Nigeria, mostly on the Eastern side of the Niger River; it extends westwards the Niger to the Aniocha, Ndokwa, Ukwani and Ika in the present day Delta State and also minute parts of Edo State in Nigeria. Its eastern side terminated by the Cross River, although micro-communities exists over on the side of the river; most area in the North enters the savannah climate around Nsukka, and its Southern most point hit the Atlantic ocean with micro- communities on end in the coastal town of which are both Igbo speaking territories Kalu (1993).

In Nigeria today, Igbo land is roughly made up of the following states Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo and major parts of Delta and River States, small parts of Akwaibom, Cross River and Kogi State make up the rest of Igbo land. More than 40 million people inhabit Igbo land and with a population density ranging from 100 people per square mile in high density areas and 350 per square mile in low density areas.

Altogether, Igbo land has an area of 15,800 to 16,000 square miles. After examining the geographical, historical and biodiversity of Igbo land now lets the team of our paper in turns.

The word culture means "Omenaala" in Igbo language and it can be defined as peoples' ways of life which include their birth (Omumu ha), their Education (Ozuzu ha), their religion their work instruments (Ngworu ha), their food (Nri ha), their language (Asusu ha), their (Mkpemchi ha) their dressing (Ejiji ha), their occupation (Akaoru ha), their title (Echichi), death and their burial (Onwu na olili ha) (Ukazu, 2011). Everything that concerns the group of people is their culture.

Linton (1945) says that the culture of society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation. Culture, in this sense, incorporates virtually the whole of the subject matter sociology. Babatunde (1993) describes culture as all which it is symbolic: "the learned aspects of the human society". In this sense culture is closely related to the idea of civilization. Some societies are more cultured or more civilized than others.

Culture is a source of identity, Jary (1991) defines identity as a sense of self that develops as the child differentiates from parents and family and takes a place in society: it refers to the sense that someone has of who they are of what is most important about them. The important sources of identity are nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and class. Culture is associated with language and customs of a particular group. Culture in this sense, consists of the shared products of society, while society consists of people and their interaction within a Community. A society therefore cannot exist without culture. Hence culture needs to be

Culture is like mental software and has accordingly been defined as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from other" Anna (2013).

The Philosophy of learning Igbo language and culture in Nigeria

National Policy in Education (1981) revised states that every Nigerian child must learn his or her mother tongue and in addition to any one of the three major Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba). However, this policy and implementation at times creates controversy among other minority ethnic groups and linguists in Nigeria.

In reality, modern man can hardly comprehend communal life without the instrument of language, a man is called Hausa or Yoruba man because he speaks Hausa or Yoruba and also a man is called Igbo man because he speaks and behaves like an Igbo man. Performance in language especially spoken language defines personality. For a teacher, his credibility is almost entirely anchored in his competence in communicating ideas, his cultural life and stimulating learning through his use of language. Articulate and well spoken teachers, politician, clergy and statesman almost invariably win the heart and the respect of their audience.

In relation to language learning, it is assumed that the mother-tongue of a child is closely related to the child's total growth and development, culturally, psychologically, and mentally etc. Learning in the mother-tongue helps in the quicker acquisition, retention, dissemination and use of knowledge in other fields as well as the culture of that language being used.

Culture is a frame work of behaviours, patterns, values, assumptions and experiences shared by social group. Studying a language without its culture is known to be a serious disservice.

Igbo Cultural activities and Philosophy

(A).Greetings: Greetings in Igbo as cultural performance are influenced by such social variables of the age, sex, and states of the person. Igbo greetings also depend on the time place and manner.

In Igbo language, one of the popular greetings is Kedu which means hello! or how are you? The normal reply would be o di mma means fine, thank you.

Another popular Igbo greeting is Ndeewo, meaning good day, welcome, good afternoon or good evening. The normal reply is oga diri gi mma.

Other popular greetings are "nno" and daalu which means welcome or my greetings. Both greeting (nno and daalu are normally used when a person lost for a word to greet a person mostly a stranger. In some cases, some people use daalu to say thank you. Although imeela" is the appropriate word for thank you.

Also Kedu ka "i mere" is another greeting meaning how are you doing? The usual reply is A di mu mma meaning am okay or am alright.

"ka chi fo" means good night in Igbo language.

"Ndo" means sorry in Igbo language

"Mba" means no in Igbo language

cultural activity and its heritage. The harvest and the breaking of the yam is followed by thanksgiving, an offering is put forward and the people pray for renewed life as they eat the new yam with family friends, guests and well-wishers. The yam festival is organised within August-October every year.

© . **Kola-nut:** Kola-nut (Symbol of hospitality). In every village function, in the house, the titled man or most elderly is presented with kola-nut which symbolises hospitality. Whenever kola-nut appears in a gathering, the matter to be discussed at that particular time is regarded to be very vital in Igbo culture. The offering of drinks food and meat are not regarded important in Igbo culture as the offering of kola-nut. When an important guest visits the community, kola-nuts are brought out and handed to the elder person or the priest. This symbol of Igbo hospitality has four steps and everyone who fails to follow these steps is penalized. Village elders.

The vital activities in the breaking of kola-nut in Igbo land

Kola-nut

1. The first step is the presentation of the kola-nut.
2. The second activity is prayer for the kola-nut.
3. The third activity is breaking of the kola-nut.
4. The fourth activity is distribution of the kola-nut.

In Igbo cultural life, presentation of kola-nut is a privilege reserved exclusively for the men. This privilege is denied to women for cultural reasons. When the kola-nut is presented to a guest, the kola-nut travels around until finally it comes back to the host. The elder who is present at the ceremony holds the kola-nuts up and says a prayer to the ancestors before it is broken and shared to everyone around.

(D) Igbo Political Institutions: Ndi Igbo like other tribes all over the world has their own political system. In Igbo there are thousands of autonomous communities or towns (Village group) known as Obodo, or Mba each ruled by a paramount leader known as Eze or Izwe as the case may be. It should be noted that the idea of paramount chief that cuts across all Igbo societies today is a legacy of European contact, as there was nothing like paramount chiefs in pre-colonial period. Cases of monarchical system could only be found in few places like Onitsha, Ozuta, Asaba, Arochuku and Agbor (Kalu 1993) the Village group is the highest political unit of the Igbo traditional society.

Igbo cultural institutions include; council of elders or kinsmen, (Umunna) title holders. Age grade (Otu ogbo) and umuada – daughter who married outside the village (umu nwanyi a Juruvalu) women folk married within the village (Chinyere, 2010)

Kinsmen or paternal-lineage (Umunna) is the central and the most influential and indigenus society It comprises of the descendants on the male line of founder ancestors by whose' name the paternal-lineage is sometimes called. Umuna is a corporate group which holds allegiance to an ancestor father, one shrine and common Obi (a place where the part- lineage members meet to discuss issues). There is no inter- marriage among members of the same umunna (Chinyere 2010).

Umuada (Daughters) in paternal-lineage in Igbo society, women institution of Umuada (institution for daughters both married, unmarried. Divorced and widows) constitutes a veritable body for women to access both social and political powers and their decisions are final in conflict situation as they function as the watch dog of public morality. Indeed the women have different assemblies of their own which corresponds with different units that make up Igbo socio political structure. Another name for the registered member of Umuada is called Umuckpu.

Age grades: Age grades (Otogbo, otuebiri) and title association, Nze na ozo title society are not kingship based. The Nze na Ozo title society is a village based group whose membership is by choice and the ability to meet the criteria for membership. It is important to note that among the matrilineal "Ohiafia" in Abia State. Igbo regulation of political relation in the village is the responsibility of age based. At times their ages are not equal; the differences of 3-5 years. The age grades have their duties in their various villages like security, cleaning the market, water road, and some little judiciary work within the group. They have other names as registered members as Ndi uke, Ugbeke ichin, etc.

(E). Marriages in Igbo cultural life: Marriage in Igbo cultural society, is cultural and customary (Odibendi) in nature. Ukazu (2009) stated that marriage in Igbo land is an arrangement which enables individuals (Man/woman) to live together and cooperate in an orderly social life. A marriage in Igbo land or any African country goes beyond sexual union. The Igbo philosophy named husband as de- "Patience", which woman as Nwanyi-"Heavy load" that has weight (Nwaanyi). The type of family organization is the extended family where "one is his brother's keeper". This consists of the nuclear family.

The Western type of family organization (man, wife and children) plus the couple's parents, brothers and sisters, their grandparents and great grand parents; the extended family takes form of three or four generations of nuclear families of lineal descendants.

(F). Osu Cast System: Anna .K (2010) Osu concept, a domestic slavery oh/oru is accorded a lower status, the Osu system finds rationalization in Igbo religious beliefs and dogma. It is traditionally believed that Osu could contaminate non-Osu by close association just like in HIV/AIDs syndrome. Many scholars have defined the Osu as a cult slave, a living sacrifice, untouchable, an owner's cult, a slave of the deity a sacred and holy being. All these definitions are accepted as they seem to explain the existing values and norms of Igbo Community.

An Osu is a person who is sacrificed or consecrated alive together with his/her descendants to the service of a pagan god. There are two types of Osu

1. The public and (2). The domestic one

The public Osu ministers to the public god and **the domestic Osu** ministers to a domestic patron god.

There had been rigid distinction of status between the Diala, Osu and Ohu. The **Osu** and **Ume** have a similar status connotation to the untouchables in India. In the Diala status, an individual was used for sacrifice to the gods and goddesses and was thereby transformed to **Osu** or **Ume** status.

In different areas of Igbo land, the Osu system is called by different names. The Osu or Ume are not allowed to marry a free-born or Diala. In Onitsha for example, Osu is called adu- Ebo, this is a mixture of Igbo and Igala language. In Nsukka Oruma (Juju's slaves), in Awgwu is called Nwani or Ohualusi. Both churches and regional government tried their best to stop it, but it was not possible.

(H). **Re-incarnation (Ilouwa)**. According to Igbo cultural life belief; death does not bring life to an end completely. In Igbo society, death is like market, one who dies has gone to the market, in the nearest future he will come back through reincarnation. He reincarnates back in the family or lineage he/she left. Reincarnation is not for those who committed evil when they were alive, it is for those who lives godly life, died and was well buried. Evil doers reincarnate in trees, stones, evil animals and birds.

Conclusion:

Culture is fusion of a people's norms and traditions. A tribe without culture is like a house without a child which cannot stand the taste of time and will be forgotten in the nearest future, it can lead to extinction of the ethnic race. The culture of a man is his own tool of sustaining the image of his heritage through descendant. These descendants will be unable to enter advanced inherited tradition if the indigenous culture is uncelebrated and as of the major media of celebrating our culture is to sell values to other tribes and the entire world. The eulogistic remembrance of individual kingdoms myth and the cosmology of Igbo culture will attract the entire globe. Thus the desirables of such legendary activities will be developed and that is how a village becomes a city.

Recommendation

1. The Igbo nation should teach our children and admirers of the language the culture and encourage the cultural schools and festival within the region.

2. Federal and State governments mostly, Igbo speaking states should give scholarship to students of Igbo language in all secondary and tertiary institution in Nigeria.
3. The Igbo people should encourage the promotion of Igbo language and culture in Nigeria and Diaspora.
4. The Igbo people should encourage our parents and guardians to allow their children/wards to speak Igbo language.

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