

THE ENDURING POWER OF IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGION

BY

ERNEST U. ORAMASIONWU

A THESIS

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the inherent factors of the survival capacity and the persistence of the Traditional Religion of the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria. It further investigates what is constitutive of that religion and explores its infrastructural base for the grafting of Christianity. The holistic and the symbolic interactionist methodologies in an interdisciplinary context are used in the study. Interviews as well as on site observations were conducted.

The investigation begins with the social and political organisation of the Igbo people and then moves on to the Igbo worldview which reveals a belief in the unity of the totality of Nature and operationalizes Nature as the divine objective manifestation which is inseparable from the Prime Mover, God, Chineke. For analysis of this conception, the investigator divides Nature into four mutually interactive components: Earth -Ani, Water, Space and Heaven. Ani, the Goddess is seen to loom large in the consciousness of the people being the witness of the initial act of divine creation and the embodiment of primordial wisdom and morality. Harbours the ancestors, nourishing and sustaining the living and through a demonstrated regenerative power, the Earth Goddess demands order, purity

and balance as all else in Nature. The cosmology postulates the sanctity and the sacramentality of all things and endows Nature with differentiated levels of consciousness.

Igbo response to the concept of the spiritual ubiquity and sacramentality is the corner-stone of their Traditional Religion. Rooted in Aní, the ongoing fulfilling of their custom, Omenani, dating from the foundation of the Earth and mediated by the ancestors who use the Elders and the Initiates as transmission points, the entire Igbo society is inescapably pervaded by the force of Omenani, the Igbo Traditional Religion.

The pillars of the religion are deeply grounded and are revitalized through interactions and cycles of reincarnations. Through rituals, music, myth, dance visual art and especially the Igbo language, the people symbolically and progressively transform themselves and their constructed world of reality. Essentially, their cosmology and the practice of it do not contradict Christianity but provide it with a firm pedestal.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREFACE:

At the recent Amerindian Christian Leadership Conference held in Thunder Bay, Ontario, the question of the "inculturation"[sic] of the Christian faith was addressed. It becomes increasingly clear that, in spite of Christianization, "natives' belief and customs, [were] never wholly extinguished [but] continued under cover". As a result of this observation, the Roman Catholic Church is seriously considering the integration of the Christian faith and the cultures of the Canadian native people.

The issue of accommodating Christianity and traditional religions has received, meanwhile, much attention in many parts of the world, including Nigeria, my own homeland. For a long time it was the missionary policy among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria to keep Christianity apart from the traditional religions and not to permit Christians to participate in traditional rites. The most recent developments show a willingness to accommodate.

The year, 1984, was declared the "Year of Igbo Religion". This declaration is a crisis indicator. Christianity as professed and practised, has not met the moral and spiritual needs of the people. On the other hand,

the traditional religion in Igboland is at the crossroads. To deal with the problem, the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture (SPIILC) is aware that "Religion holds the key to any meaningful behaviour and attitude" but realizes that for "the Igbo people the entire life activities are deeply rooted in religion which external influences have greatly threatened with extinction". The Society hoped, through ideas generated at that time, to work at a fusion of Christianity and "Those good aspects in the traditional religion"¹

At the back of the mind of the SPIILC members is the unconscious recognition of the survival and persistence of the Igbo religion in its unplanned and "accidental" encounter with Christianity. On close analysis, the SPIILC would not appear to appreciate the fact that their assessment of Christianity has been achieved through the filtration process of the Igbo Traditional Religion and the Igbo World View. The dissatisfaction expressed with Christianity such as its marginalization, its overt materialism, lack of spirituality, and the inability of its practitioners to live up to the tenets of the Christian institutions is a further reflection of the mirroring of Christianity in the light of the Igbo Traditional Religion. Behind their posture is an intuitive perception of the strength of the Igbo religion.

Moreover, in a contact situation when two cultures collide the scenario is that the apparently stronger culture eliminates and absorbs the weaker. Were the two to coexist and survive the variables contributing to their survival require analysis before determining which culture is stronger or weaker or even before passing the judgement of equal strength. In the Christianity-Igbo Traditional Religion encounter, no such analysis has been undertaken. Until such a detailed study it will be inappropriate to ascribe to either of two religious modes superior or inferior status. Any contemplated fusion of the two religions without reasoned study will savour of the impact of the proverbial "new wine" in "old wineskin".²

One thing remains clear and that is that the Igbo Traditional Religion survived the encounter. But it will be of interest to assess the intensity of the encounter. Such an assessment will offer many possibilities. Of special interest is whether the Igbo Traditional Religion survived because of the British government's policy of Indirect Rule by which they used the existing traditional social and political structure in their colonial administration. Ancillary to this policy is the paucity of European missionaries who carried out the work of missionization, meaning that the work of Christianization was prosecuted mainly by Igbo people who had been primarily socialized in Igbo world view.

The use of local indigenous people who had been primarily "initiated" into the Igbo world view, in some measure, shows a recognition of the inherent good in the Igbo social and cultural infrastructure and its potential for adaptation.³ Based on this promise, such novels as Thing Fall Apart⁴ were written in the heat, fog and emotion of contact period. A close examination will disclose that what fell apart were the dross, and the loose materials while the solid core of the Igbo culture survived.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

In recognition of the need for a fusion of Christianity and Igbo Traditional Religion, the present research will examine the enduring power of the Igbo traditional religion. It will analyze the inherent factors that enable it to survive contact with Christianity and the relative worth of those variables. Admittedly, the Igbo people have no word for religion but outside investigators and former colonial administrators are convinced that the Igbo people have a religion of their own.⁵ It is, therefore, necessary to determine what is constitutive of the Igbo religion from Igbo people's expression of it.

It is a basic premise of this study that since the Igbo world has been described in the last century as primitive, that that world indeed, is essentially pristine in its apprehension of divinity. Any misrepresentations or

distortions of that world as it is in reality by outside investigators stem from lack of understanding of the depth of the Igbo world, the people's cognitive processes and what they take into account in the construction of their world of objects.

This lack of understanding has equally frustrated the application of the Western Social Science methodological theories in the accurate analysis of the Igbo world. Non-African scholars who have attempted some work in the field of African/Igbo religion generally tend to work from an already established scheme. The result invariably is that the scholar finds what he sets out to seek. Sometimes the product is forced to match the pre-established paradigm. This problem of methodology is highlighted by Henderson, who after his research in Igboland came up with the conclusion that "a theory suited to this purpose is not readily available in social anthropology".⁶

A decade before Henderson's observation, the behavioral patterns of the non-literate people which perplexed Western Observers a century ago continued to linger. The "African Systems of Thought" studies presented and discussed at the Third International African Seminar in Salisbury, December 1960, even though it represented serious efforts by non-African Scholars to focus on "the quintessence of the traditional African way of life" - The African Religion

Belief and Ritual, ran into methodological problems.

Professor M. Fortes and Madame G. Dieterlen observes that:

"Problems of theory and method, of definitions, and concepts, were referred to in most of the sessions. We were frequently made aware of the crucial importance of linguistic precision in dealing with any problem of African religion."⁷

In their summary comment, Fortes and Dieterlen noted that "two broadly contrasted approaches to the description and analysis of African religious systems were discernible in the papers". One approach which was identified as the "distinctive contribution of French scholarship to the ethnography of Africa" gave premium

"to the total body of knowledge, belief and doctrine - the 'connaissance', to use the more expressive and exact French term - expressed in a people's mythology and in the symbolism of their conceptions of man and of the universe, and embodied in their categories of thought, their forms of social organization and their technology, and constituting a coherent, logical system".⁸

The other approach noted by Fortes and Dieterlen represented the British treatment of their studies at the seminar. This methodology, broadly speaking, starts from

"the opposite end of the continuum which links the body of knowledge and beliefs of a people with the actualities of their social organization and daily life. It starts from the social and political relations in the context of which ritual, myth, and belief are found to be operative".⁹

The French and British methodologies as identified in the seminar in question "are to be thought of as complementary aspects of the complex totality". The implication is that a synthesis of the two approaches is required for an understanding of the Igbo world and the Igbo people. Through such an inclusive methodology a window could be opened into the Igbo world, where the Igbo man relates the world of meaning to the physical, empirical world and sees them in his mind "as constituting one world with two aspects". Any meaningful methodology should therefore, take into account "the supernatural epistemology and phenomenology" of the Igbo man.¹⁰

Dr. E. N. Njaka, an Igbo man, comes very close to the appropriate methodology for discussing his (African/Igbo) culture. As a "participant-observer", he prefers an approach by which he can consider "concrete experiences rather than by making explicit or vague formulations of the principles expressed in the intellectualization of these experiences". "My method", he goes on to note, "may be described by Western scholars as an anecdotal approach". In his words:

Much of the previous work by outsiders has been astonishingly misleading. Consequently many Western scholars fail to understand, and in some cases refused to learn, the differences between Western and African thought patterns and belief systems. For example, the Western emphasis is on order, analysis, and so-called scientific clarity when describing human behaviour in a cultural complex, focusing mainly on the materialistic aspect of the world. The

African (Igbo) emphasis is on a complex whole characterized by individualism buttressed in a communal umunna, reinforced by the unity and interrelations of things, and focused on feelings regarding a three-dimensional world of ancestors, the living and the unborn, on the other hand, and a world of Chukwu, chi, and spirits, on the other, in responses to human behaviour and its contradictions.¹¹

Increasingly, the shortcomings of the fragments of theoretical concepts masquerading as the whole is being replaced by a "holistic" approach and a symbolic interactionist methodology. The holistic approach which recognizes that the world of the primal societies such as the Igbo world is whole and not compartmentalized into the secular and the sacred is still in its infancy. The approach entails drawing and synthesizing information from all available sources on the target community or group. The sources include material culture, the visual arts, folklore, oral tradition, and early ethnographic observations and accounts.

Another form of transcendent holism, as will be indicated and used in this study, has been devised by Ken Wilber.¹² Holism and symbolic interactionism are useful tools of analysis with regard to this investigation. Symbolic interactionism of which Herbert Blumer¹³ is one of the leading exponents stresses seeing any object or form as a symbol with specific meaning for those who interact with that object or form. From the externalized symbol it is

possible to research inwards to the world of meaning and ideas that gave birth to the form. The recognition of the reality of the inseparability of the symbol from its world of meaning is the veritable holism.

The use of a synthesis of holistic approach and the symbolic interactionist mode in this study required on site experience of the Igbo people. Four interspersed visits were made to the Igboland to see and hear the people. Questions were asked and interviews granted by significant informers. The researcher, being an Igbo man, was born and raised in Igbo culture in Nigeria and as a speaker of the language, had no communication barriers and no pertinent secrets were withheld from him.

Interpretation in some cases was facilitated by a comparative approach. In cultures and traditions where similar practices as do obtain in Igboland are documented, the meanings inferred threw some light on the Igbo situation.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

The focus of this study is the examination of the origin of the people as a fundamental factor in the longevity of the Igbo religion. An analysis of the outsider, eye-witness assessments of the religion and the insider evaluation of the religion will be undertaken as a way of drawing attention to the underlying distinctive

features that have caused foreign misrepresentations and misunderstanding.

The religion is shown to be the Igbo man's imitation of the ways of Nature, the evolutionary structure of the religion and the Igbo man's striving after perfection. At its core is the wisdom that has been since the foundation of the earth. It is not only a philosophy but a "scientific" way of life. The continual rehearsing of the lessons they learned from Nature and the fruit of their experiences is mediated through the Igbo language and rituals. The mode of reappropriating the essence of these symbolic representations (the language and rituals) for subjective revitalization and recreation and eventual externalization by the significant others in the Igbo world for the education of the youth is also examined. This dialectical process is to be seen as the Igbo way of bringing their world of meaning with their empirical, sensible world of objects, thereby making them one world which they see as spiritual.

The ultimate source of information is what the people say and what they do. Through both, they act out their belief. The names they bear are symbolic and are studied to reveal their psyche and the subjective motive force that activates them.

The area covered in the study is the entire Igboland that is located east of the river Niger. The North-Central

portion of this area includes towns like Awka, Udi, Enugu, Enugu-Ukwu, Nsukka, Aro Ndizuogu, Onitsha, Agukwu Nri, Nnewi, Igbo Ukwu and Ihiala. The Southern portion has important towns such as Aba, Umuahia Ibeku, Owerri, Ahoada, Okigwe, and Orlu. The Eastern and North Eastern area has prominent towns that include Abam, Ohafia, Afikpo, Arochukwu, Ezza, Uburu, Okposi and Abakiliki.¹⁴

The fraction of the Igbo located on the west bank of the Niger and which has the towns of Asaba, Agbor, Kwale, Illah and Aboh, is not included in the study.¹⁵

1. Quoted from posters and flyers distributed by the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture in Spring of 1984.

2. Matthew 9:17.

3. J. F. Ade Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite, (Essex: Longman Group Ltd., 1981), pp 176-177, 224-225. In a statement of policy formulated in 1860 by an indigenous Bishop, Ajayi Crowther, of Yoruba extraction, who founded the first Christian mission in Igboland - Onitsha - in 1857, it was made clear that "Amusements" such as fables, story-telling, proverbs and songs "which may be regarded as stores of their national education in which they exercise their power of thinking: such will be improved upon and enriched from foreign stocks as civilization advances." The native's religious terms and ceremonies were to be observed, purified and adopted as means of expressing Scriptural terms. p 224. Dr. Ajayi details reasons why this policy was no longer in force at the close of the nineteenth century.

4. Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, (London : Heinemann, 1958).

5. Many traditional societies like the Igbo people lack a word for religion. Studies in anthropology have shown that such societies do have a religion. Religion in such circumstances is usually integrated within the whole fabric of the society rather than being institutionally separate.

6. R. N. Henderson, The King in Every Man: Evolutionary Trends in Onitsha Ibo Society and Culture, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 10-11.

7. M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, African Systems of Thought, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 3.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., pp 3-4.

10. The Igbo man in this study is used in a generic sense to represent the Igbo people. If distinction of sex or gender is warranted, that will be indicated.

11. Elechukwu N. Njaka, Igbo Political Culture, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 9-10.

12. Ken Wilber, Eye to Eye, The Quest for the New Paradigm, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1983).

13. Herbert Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism, Perspective and Method, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969).

14. This geographical grouping of Igboland is a slight adaptation of Forde and Jones subcultural division of Igboland. See D. Forde and G.I. Jones, The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria, (London: Oxford University Press for International African Institute, 1950), pp.9-10. The grouping does not, however, mean that local variations in beliefs and practices are highlighted in the study. Attention is on the common thread.

15. There is no doubt that the Western Igbo share a tradition of origin and some measure of cultural identity with the Igbo core area, east of the Niger river. Their exclusion in this study does not, in any way, imply any marginalization of the segment. Rather, deep consideration is given to the sensitive, historical and political forces that have operated in the area. To overtly link and identify them with the rest of the Igbo people east of the Niger river, especially after the collapse of "Biafra" in 1972, will be much to the chagrin of the generality of the Western Igbo people. For an articulation of the ebb and flow nature of Western Igbo attempts at establishing identity with the rest of Igbo people east of the Niger, see A.E. Afigbo, The Igbo and their Neighbours: Inter-Group Relations in Southeastern Nigeria to 1953, (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1987), pp. 12-17.

CHAPTER 2

IGBO ENVIRONMENT

2.1 ORIGIN OF THE IGBO PEOPLE

For a better understanding of the Igbo people and their way of life, it is appropriate to revisit the existing views on the origin of the Igbo people. This will indicate what others think about the wealth of Igbo cultural heritage and at the same time give an idea of the longevity of the culture.

One of the earlier, popular theories of the origin of the Igbo people is the Semitic theory. Proponents¹ of this theory base their propositions on the Biblical idea of the lost tribes of Israel. Surprised by the existence of a culture in a region where, according to their thinking, there was no history, it was proper to match the Igbo culture - the lost tribe with the parent, root culture of Israel. Their position was strengthened by parallel cultural traits they observed between the Igbo and the ancient Hebrew culture. In particular the rites of circumcision, traditional marriage ceremonies, birth rites, "blood sacrifices, inhibitions and taboos with respect to food and drinks imposed on individuals, the respect for old age, the observance of new moon and harvest festivals, the mourning of the dead", and rites of purification are similar.²

Basden, a missionary-ethnologist who worked among the Igbo people from 1900 to 1917 does not appear to be an overt subscriber to this Semitic origin of the Igbo people, however, his suggestion that Igbo musical skills derived from "Jubal-Cain", (The Father of Music) is suggestive of this connection. Moreover, he sees the Igbo laws and customs as a replication of the Levitic laws.³

To further strengthen the Hebrew origin stance of some Igbo people, Njaka pointed out that most of these people claim that the word "Hebrew" in all probability was transmuted through the course of history into "Uburu" or "Ibru", and finally to "Igbo". It is also incidentally shown that all these transitional words are valid names of towns in Igboland. The plausibility of this position is now popularized by the fact that in some circles the Igbo people are referred to as "the Jews of Africa".⁴

While Njaka thinks that the evidence so far adduced warrants further research in the direction of the Semitic theory, Achebe rejects the theory on the ground that "cultural similarities" do not indicate common origin. To Achebe,

It seems that the Igbo are people of their own with centuries of cultural development. Ethnologically, they can be as old as any other race in the world. Their cultural and ritual characteristics are their

share of the universal cake of creation.⁵

A second theory holds that the Igbo people are of Hamitic origin.⁶ Talbot claims that the Igbo people originated from Egypt. Their movement away from Egypt was one of the major migrations that resulted from the Nubian wars of Amenemhat I and the eventual conquest of Egypt by the Hyksos. Again similarity in customs existing between the Igbo and the ancient Egypt is cited as a strong factor in favour of this theory. Such practices as "mummification, circumcision, incision, tattooing, the use of the boomerang, serpent and sun worship" are put forward as evidence. As Dr. Ilogu points out, the points of similarity were so strong that a Nigerian soon after a visit to the British Museum stated that:

Any observant Ibo or student of Ibo culture after a close examination of the Egyptian apartment of the Museum will at once begin to ponder in himself what was the original home of the Ibo. This calls for an intensive study. Paintings, wood carving and mode of burial point to a common origin.⁷

Ilogu's view on the Hamitic theory of origin is that so long as no intensive study has been conducted, the theory "will still remain a conjecture". His conclusion is that "what is certain is that the Ibo, even if some of them came

from Egypt originally, do contain people from other migration movements".

A much more glorified theory of Egyptian origin is indicated by Njaka. The holders of this theory assert that the Igbo people were the founders of ancient Egypt. The votaries of this view claim that when the Igbo were defeated and were driven out of Egypt, they relocated in the present day Igboland. In Igboland, they were unable to revive the entire heritage they left in Egypt because some of the elders died off while the herbs required to recapture and revive the ancient art of mummification were not available. This theory seeks to explain the similarities of culture found among the Jews and the Igbo people. The implication is that the Igbo people evolved the rich Egyptian culture while the Jews, according to the Biblical account were schooled in Egypt. This theory further seeks to account for a past "Golden Age" which exists in the consciousness of the Igbo people.⁸

Whatever merits the Semitic and the Hamitic theories of Igbo people's origin may have in the eyes of some scholars both within and outside the Igbo world, the fact of cultural similarities although plausible is not sufficient to validate the theories. As Achebe has noted, cultures throughout Africa, in some measure are similar, and that by

itself complicates the question of the origin of the Igbo. This means that on the basis of cultural similarity, it is possible to look to East, West, North or even South Africa as the locus from which the Igbo moved to their present habitat.

Although the proponents of the Semitic and Hamitic theories of the origin of the Igbo stand on shaky grounds, their theory serves the indirect purpose of hinting at the antiquity of the Igbo world. Were their theories to be validated, the dating of the emergence of the Igbo people would be posited as earlier than 2,000 B.C.⁹ The significance of this time period lies in the fact that the characteristics manifested by the Igbo compare to those of the Jews and Egyptians that lived over four millennia ago.¹⁰

The nature of the Igbo world extends the dimensions where to look for their origin. Talbot after a close observation of the Igbo people remarked that their beliefs and practices had hardly changed "since the childhood of the world". Even though Talbot was one of the proponents of the Hamitic theory of Igbo origin, his insight and observation based on deep knowledge of ancient cultures would push the search for the Igbo origin beyond the Semitic and Hamitic parameters. Two inferences are therefore possible. Either the Igbo society has developed in and around their present

abode, or it developed elsewhere and subsequently the people moved into the area.

The antiquity of the Igbo world which is closely tied with their origin is now confirmed by linguistics. Ifemesia, indicates that the Igbo language belongs to the kwa sub-family of the Niger-Congo family of languages. It is claimed that "the language ancestral to the Niger-Congo family cannot have been spoken more recently than 10,000 years ago, and that it probably lies much deeper in the past than that".¹¹ Ifemesia reaches this significant conclusion:

The speaking of Igbo, as of these and other West African languages, has thus a great time-depth. Igbo must have been spoken, doubtless in evolving and changing forms, in or near its present homeland, for thousands of years. For the language is not spoken as mother tongue anywhere else in Africa (or in any other part of the world, for that matter), from where the Igbo may be supposed to have migrated to their present location within human memory.¹²

The use of linguistic and ethnographic data in the search of the origin of the Igbo has been reinforced by the nascent archaeological discoveries in the area occupied by the Igbo people. stone tools and pottery sherds dated to about 2935 B.C. were excavated in Ezi-ukwu Ukpa Rock Shelter, close to Afikpo Town.¹³ Similar artifacts of the period were discovered near the University of Nigeria Nsukka. These as well as other discoveries which include

the now famous Igboukwu finds by Thurstan Shaw,¹⁴ are clear evidence of human activities which are typically Igbo for several thousand years.¹⁵ Ifemesia observes that the date assigned to the finds "has confirmed the linguistic inferences about the antiquity of the Igbo, their language and culture in the present abode". These objects further corroborate according to Ifemesia, "the subtlety and complexity of their social and political organizations and their outlook on life generally".¹⁶

Archaeology by itself as a discipline does not yield most of the information required to establish the origin of the Igbo. The vital clues it offers, as has been pointed out, focus on the longevity of Igbo presence in their current vicinity. The implication of this long standing presence is that the main tap-root of Igbo culture has withstood the test of time and that the culture may antedate the purported culture of Egypt or Israel that existed about five thousand years ago. This means that while the theory is inconclusive, further exploration is required and it is outside the scope of the present investigation to engage in the study.

2.2 GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Part of the world that confronts the Igbo people and with which they interact and as a result contribute to their world view is the physical setting. This physical setting,

in geographical terms. is made up of features such as the land forms, rivers and lakes, factors of weather, vegetative cover and the animal content. A brief overview of this setting is relevant to this study.

2.2.1 LAND FORMS AND RIVERS

The Igbo mainland, as one goes eastwards from the lower Niger, rises very gradually and for a distance of 70 miles, it attains an elevation of about 200 feet above sea level.¹⁷ Further east, the Igbo territory becomes undulating and then turns into hills which in the Ohaffia area vary from 700 feet to 2,000 feet above sea - level.¹⁸ North of Onitsha through Enugu to the Northern Border, hills and valleys alternate in most part.

The Ohaffia ridge in the eastern part of Igbo land forms a water shed for the numerous rivers that intersect the region. The rivers in the eastern division flow into the Gulf of Guinea via Calabar. On the western side, many streams from this ridge flow north of Onitsha to form the Anambara river which is the tributary of the River Niger. From Onitsha to the coast in the south, a distance of about 120 miles, the following rivers dissect the area: Idemiri Obosi, Ulasi Okija, Njaba, Otamiri and Imo. With the exception of Imo River that flows into the Gulf of Guinea, the others flow into the Niger. The River Niger is the dominant feature that bounds the Igbo area in the west.

The River Niger is usually low during the dry season when numerous sand banks and islands appear. In the rainy season, sometimes it rises from 40 feet to 60 feet in different localities thereby causing serious flooding. The usually high inundation occurs every seventh year causing havoc and dislocation in the adjoining villages.¹⁹

The entire Igbo territory has two seasons "udu mmiri"(rainy season) and "okochi" (dry season). Basden observed that the weather conditions "possess the merit, at least, of being regular".²⁰ The dry season starts early in November. Towards the end of December a slight drizzle is experienced and this marks the onset of "uguru" (harmattan).

The harmattan is a cool dry wind that blows from the Sahara desert at this period. It causes excessive desiccation. A dull haze produced by dust, shuts out the sun. The dry heat causes irritation of the skin and nostrils in some cases, the lips crack. At night it is too cold when the temperature drops. The harmattan lasts about four to five weeks. The expression "ino n'oku uguru ewere puta", (being on the fireside before the onset of harmattan) means a worsening situation.²¹

The harmattan is followed by the very hot season which ends about March. The period is known as "ugani" (a time of scarcity) because farmers are getting their crops ready for planting. Vegetables are not easily available. The rainy season which follows is ushered in by frightening and

destructive tornadoes. In the months of May and June, the intensity of the rain decreases, occurring only at intervals. From July to October the rain is heavy again. In July, it falls in torrents to the extent "that one lives in perpetual dampness".²² In August, a relief of a week or two occurs in which there is no rain. This lull is now known as August break. It is a period when most celebrations and annual rituals are organised. One such ritual is the "Iloo Muo" festival, (Festival of interaction with the ancestors) which will be described later in this study. October marks the end of the rainy season. Again, the season ends as it began with tornadoes.

2.2.2 FLORA AND FAUNA

From the Atlantic Coast to about 10 miles south of Onitsha, the vegetation cover is typical Equatorial type of rain forest. The area is dense with tall trees. From Onitsha to the northern border, the savannah type of grassland occurs with scattered trees. In some places, the cover is chiefly of "Scrub and jungle grass with big patches of moorland here and there". The grass ranges from the giant elephant grass to the shorter jungle-grass called "Ata" or spear grass.²³ Occasionally, groves of big trees are seen in the predominantly grassland area denoting human settlement, burial sites or shrines.

Some trees are seen throughout the Igbo territory. Palms especially are common. The oil-palm (*Elaeis Guineensis*) is ubiquitous and is of great value to the Igbo. The raffia palm (*Raphia vinifera*) and other varieties provide the people with abundant supplies of palm-wine. The coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) is also a common feature. The palm tress together with their products are put into such use that not a single part is without function in the Igbo world.

Most trees provide valuable timber while some others, in addition, furnish eatable fruits. The mahogany, Iroko (*Chlorophora excelsa*), the silk-cotton tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), camwood (*Baphia niticla*), African Bread fruit (*Treculia africana*), Cola (*Cola officinarum*) deserve mention.²⁴

Wildlife, "anuohia", is an integral part of the Igbo environment. It includes elephant, tortoise, leopard, bush-fowl, antelope, deer, monkey, python and bats. There are many other animals that abound in the Igbo territory. To name all is outside the scope of the present work. Common animals that fly include eagle, hawk, raven and all sorts of tropical birds. Hippopotamus and crocodile are among the aquatic animals.

Each of the physical features, plants and animals that occupy space in the Igbo world has a special significance and potency that go with it. In the same vein, the insects

that thrive in the area are appreciated for their manifested qualities and attributes. They are not seen as mere plants and animals but go beyond their physical appearance and structure in the Igbo mentality. These plants and animals are regarded as co-participants in various forms in the Igbo world. In some situations, they are anthropomorphized and credited with speech in the social intercourse and human dialogue that go on daily.

2.3 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

There is no overall political structure which unites all the Igbo people. Rather, there are political divisions in Igbo society that have their respective kings. Onitsha, Nri, Oguta, Ossamari have their own kings. These places just cited are either towns or villages/village groups and in their kingship institution do not represent the traditional pattern that holds in the rest of the pre-colonial Igbo society.

A popular Igbo proverb states that "Igbo ama eze". This has been variously translated as "Igbo people have no kings" or that "Igbo people do not recognise kings". While the debate among the Igbo scholars on the precise meaning of this proverb is still going on, ²⁵ the proverb sets the appropriate climate for an understanding of the Igbo socio-political organisation. In the first place, the statement

banishes the idea of the search for an autocratic leader or king in Igbo land. If linked to another Igbo idiom, "Esi be gi eje be onye?" (To whose house does your house lead?", the Igbo sense of individualism and independence or self sufficiency is brought to the fore. "Esi be gi eje be onye" is a cynical question one asks the other in a conflict situation to point out that the addressee is just himself and no other. His importance is limited to his own household.

Another aspect of Igbo ama eze raises the question as to the functions of a king where it does exist, and in the remote past when the Eze Nri (the King of Nri) exerted influence over much of the Igbo territory. The indication is that the power exercised was more ritual than political, even though, political and religious functions are intertwined in Igbo land. It is the sacerdotal functions that earned him respect. Although this respect is limited to his own village or town, another proverb, "Nwa eze ada efu/ato na mba", (The king's son is never lost/held in another town/village) points to the extension of this respect to other towns. But it should be pointed out that this respect has its limits as borne out by the Igbo proverb: Asokata eze anya ekpuru nkata we gwa ya okwu, (You accord a king the respect due him, but it does get to a stage where one has to veil himself with a shield or basket and really talk to him). It is assumed that this symbolised

and subdued individualism throws off its restraint when there is a breach of public and ancestral expectations by the king. The king must be counselled as the Igbo man knows the shame the king would bring on him if he does not seek counsel and listen to advice.

The dialectic between the expectations of a king where the institution exists and the people's expectation of themselves is regulated by custom. Omenani, the custom of the land has primacy over the individual actors of any description. Igbo ama eze (The Igbo people do not have/recognise kings) while fostering individualism, does not in any way mean licence. Individualism as practised and expressed operates under the common denominator of Igbo culture and tradition. The custom, Omenani, sets the parameters of relationship among the living and between the living and the dead and those yet to be born. The end of these relationships is the maintenance of order and balance. In the Igbo world, as in other cultures, it is the social institutions that define behaviour in social relationships. These institutions not only define how people ought to behave within the context of Omenani but also legitimate the sanctions applied to behaviour.

2.3.1 FAMILY

The basic social institution is the family. The family

is also the smallest unit of political organisation and authority.²⁶ The Igbo nuclear family is a very important institution. It is the "root" without which the society as a plant would lack sustenance and nourishment and in fact, would be non-existent. In the family, the basic world construction, is initiated. It is to all intents and purposes the society writ large.

A standard family is made up of a father, "nna", his wife or wives, his unmarried sons, and married sons with their wives and children where applicable and his unmarried daughters. Sometimes servants were included to make the household. The family is called "ezi na ulo". Ogbalu translates "ezi na ulo" literally as "the outside relations and those in the house".²⁷ He goes on to indicate that it is the context that dictates whom to include and whom to exclude. His translation considers the fact that in a broad sense other relations such as in-laws, uncles, cousins, nephews, distant or near are usually regarded as members of the "extended family".²⁸ In a narrower sense, however, "ezi na ulo" should be taken as the "yard and the house" or "compound". It refers strictly to a nuclear family occupying a habitable space enclosed by a rectangular wall. Within this space are sited two to seven or more houses with one main gate/entrance and another side door for

private use. In the outer court stands the nuclear family's "obi" or ancestor temple.

The father "nna", in the context of the family is the moral, spiritual, political and the economic head. It is his duty to assign habitable family land to any of his sons who would want to move out of the enclosed "yard" or "compound" in order to have ample space for his own wives and children.²⁹ This legitimate relocation does not imply the break-up of the family. Should the father die, his eldest son, Diokpala/okpara automatically assumes the family leadership and inherits the "obi", the ancestor temple.³⁰

The "obi" symbolizes "the family unity, as well as the authority of the paterfamilias".³¹ It is also a symbol of family continuity. It links the past and the present. In the institution of the "obi", we have a window that gives us insight into the Igbo conception of reality.

From the perspective of the family, the obi is the "official" meeting place of the family ancestors and the living head of the household. The obi contains the sacred and ritual elements of the ancestors as well as those of the incumbent head. It is common knowledge that these ancestors are integral members of the household, even though they inhabit the supersensible world. As the family head increases in age, his bond with the ancestors grows closer and stronger, forging a bridge between the visible world of

everyday life and the invisible world of the spirits which together constitute Igbo social reality.

The place of the ancestors has been institutionalized and they have acquired coercive powers. The ramifications of that institutionalization have affected every phase of the family life and life cycle, and, in effect, an ordering of life in conformity with ancestral demands has been imposed. As will be discussed later on, the ancestors constitute the vehicle for the transmission of the moral code that makes up the custom of the Igbo people. The ancestors by virtue of their position expect the living family members to be of good conduct, to uphold the tradition they had fashioned and to operate within the parameters of socially acceptable norms. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the father who is the head of the household and respected significant other, to socialize his entire family. This is an obligation he owes to the ancestors on the one hand and his immediate community members on the other.

2.3.2 UMUNNA, MINIMAL LINEAGE, EXTENDED FAMILY.

"Umunna" literally means "children of one father". It is next to the nuclear family, the smallest unit of political authority. It is made up of compounds or households that trace patrilineal descent from a common

father. The size of an umunna varies, but territorially the members live together within the radius of half-a-mile. The unit is strictly and without exception exogamous and any sexual relations between members is considered an abomination. The lineage is headed by the eldest son of the senior household that has a direct patrilineal descent from the founding father. This eldest direct descendant is the Okpala (diokpala, opara), the first-born or eldest son, the patriarch.

Every umunna has an "obi", or palce (ancestor temple), The obi of umunna has precedence and primacy over any nuclear family's obi. The Okpala has charge of the obi of umunna as well as the sacred symbols preserved in it. The okpala's social, religious and political authority is strengthened by the fact that he is the custodian of the lineage "Ofo". The Ofo is a short , thick, portable wand or stick carved from the branch of the Ofo tree (*detarium elastica*). The tree is believed to have been specially consecrated by God as a "symbol and guarantee of truth and justice".³² As the inheritor and guardian of the ancestral ofo, the Okpala is a powerful link between the ancestors and the living descendants.

The okpala enjoys greater authority over any member of his unit than any other head of an Igbo political unit. He is treated with respect and due regard. Any offence against

him is usually avoided as that would provoke retaliation from the spiritual/ancestral members of the lineage. On the other hand, the Okpala has to be careful not to abuse the powers that go with his position. He is equally under the watchful eyes of the ancestors, to whom he is also under obligation to pour libation and offer sacrifice.

The okpala represents his lineage in any gathering or matters involving other units. He manages complaints from outside that affect any unit member. Serious matters requiring the exercise of legal or political power are dealt with by the council of the umunna. The composition of the Council is not fixed. The occasion or circumstance dictates the number of members to attend. Generally, all the titled men, heads of households and elders make up the council. Although, the Okpala presides over the Council, decisions are taken through democratic means.³³ If the okpala is a minor, an elder or titled man who is the closest in the line of descent acts as a viceregent. All undertakings and commitments are done in the okpara's name. The minor would usually be present in meetings and the participating members would ensure that he is accorded the respect that goes to the okpara institution.³⁴ The okpala's position cannot be usurped especially when the most remarkable feature of the lineage is the principle of collective accountability and responsibility for the conduct of its members. Moreover, any would-be usurper will

inevitably have to confront the ancestors and their stringent penalty for any infraction of set etiquette and procedures.

2.3.3 EBO, MAJOR LINEAGE

The major lineage is the next higher body to the umunna, the minimal lineage. It is made up of a number of minimal lineages that trace descent to a common ancestor. When it is difficult in some cases to work out the genealogical details, remnants of house/dwellings occupied by one's fore-fathers provide clues to legitimacy. The major lineage is exogamous. Within this body, the head of the senior lineage that is the descendant of the founding father assumes the same politico-religious responsibilities as the Okpala in a minimal lineage setting. As the priest of the shrine of the traditional founder of the lineage, his authority is boosted especially during the annual sacrifice over which he presides.

The major lineage has its own Council which is composed of the heads of the minimal lineages and elders who have distinguished themselves as leaders of thought and therefore are regarded as an embodiment of wisdom. The head of the major lineage presides over the Council which usually meets in the Obi. The Council settles disputes referred to it by

a minimal lineage or looks into disputes between minimal lineages. The Council has the right to banish a criminal.

2.3.4 OGBE. MAXIMAL LINEAGE

Superior in authority to the Major lineage is another body, the Ogbe, the Maximal lineage. The Maximal lineage handles matters that affect two or more Major lineages. The Council of the Maximal lineage is usually presided over by the head of the Senior Major lineage. In some Ogbe, the population is so large that the genealogy is sometimes difficult to trace with precision. Relationships are so distant that intermarriage is permissible. What holds them together are the ties of geography and a dim memory of the founder who first settled in the area in the very remote past. The annual Festival of New Yam (Iwa-ji) celebrated at the local shrine is also a binding factor.

2.3.5. MBA, OBODO, VILLAGE/VILLAGE GROUP

The largest socio-political unit in Igbo land is the Village or the Village-group.³⁵ Each village is autonomous. The traditional Igbo land is a conglomeration of these independent and autonomous villages. The head of the village is the eldest son of the direct descendant of the founder of the village. As the foundation of the settlement took place

thousands of years ago, the circumstances of the foundation and the real identity of the founder have transcended into the mythic or legendary. What is significant is that in most cases the village or the village group is named after the founder. The village bears the name of the original founder. A shrine is also erected in commemoration of the propitious activities that led to the settlement and always, one deity is associated with the event. This deity serves as the Patron Saint of the village or village group. A priest is designated to oversee all the rituals pertaining to the deity on behalf of the village-group head and the citizens. The village head is the custodian of the village "Ofo" which is kept securely in the village Obi. He is a ceremonial head and his Council is made up of heads of the various Ogbе/Maximal lineages who are also ofo holders. Some elders and titled men may attend. Priests, depending on their specific expertise, and the matter brought up for consideration and resolution may also attend. Sometimes, village-group meetings which would draw a crowd of adult members are held in the market square which serves as a religious, social and commercial centre.

At all levels of Igbo social and political structure, there is the ever-present reality of the supernatural. The element of the supernatural takes many forms. It ranges from the ancestral spirits to the Earth goddess, (Ala or Ani). For this reason, all meetings, gatherings and

deliberations take into account that ever-present reality and begin with a ritual process that reaffirms the bond between the participants and the ancestors. The voiced invocation highlights the commitment to the maintenance of order, balance and corporate solidarity.

2.4. PRESSURE POINTS

Lack of understanding of the features of the traditional Igbo communities has led some Western writers and a few Africans to describe the system as "non-centralized, fragmented, segmentary, stateless, amorphous and unorganized".³⁶ A close examination will reveal that the characteristic Igbo social and political institutions are very powerful and have carried the Igbo citizens to the present. Apart from the social and political structure described in the foregoing, there are other pressure points of socio-political power and authority. These pressure points also serve to give Igbo society a sense of cohesion and solidarity.

Igbo women, in spite of the fact that Igbo society is male-centric and that male superiority and authority are never in doubt, wield social and political influence. Senior married women within various lineages enforce their own laws and settle their disputes. They impose fines on any defaulting member. They keep the market and the springs (from which water is fetched) clean. It is their task to

sweep and maintain the "mbara ezi"/"ama", the outer court yard of the lineage Diokpara. Perhaps the most powerful of the organized women's group is the "Umuada" or "Umuokpu", (the daughters of the kindred married outside it)

Various Umuada form a network among themselves in the various villages and village-groups into which they are married. The network is formed on the basis of their consanguinity. They hold rotational, monthly meetings as a means of maintaining their link and discussing issues that affect their kindred. Their role is that of a powerful "land lady" and a watch dog. When the traditional husband-wife relationship is strained and the problem persists after mediation by immediate members of the Umunna/minimal lineage, the Umuada step in to settle the problem. Their activity is more intense when it is established that the wife in question, who is more or less an outsider, is violating custom and tradition. Although, the penalties they impose could be stiff, they rather prefer to work toward restoration of harmony within the affected family. They accomplish their task by prescribing some rituals to be performed by the offending wife.

The Umuada are well-known and respected for their customary role at the death of a member of the kindred. Upon death, they perform the ritual washing of the body and prepare it for viewing. They keep vigil at the home of the deceased for four nights (Igbo week) and participate

actively in the funerary rites and ceremonies. Any living member would do anything possible to avoid their alienation because, their absence at a funeral would send negative signals to the world of the ancestors.³⁷

The Umuada network cuts across religious affiliations and denominations. Detachment from it is unthinkable and is analogous to the severance of the umbilical cord, or worse still, suspension in mid air.

Another important group is the age-grades/sets. Each age set is made up of people whose ages are within a five year span. There are many of these age-grades in Igbo society. Each group is drawn from all lineages in the context of a village or village-group. Duties performed depend on the age, seniority and sex. Adult male grades of the Okorobia type (approximately between 30 years and 45 years of age) form the defence corps in the event of inter-village feuds. They also take charge of the construction and maintenance of the premises of shrines. Each grade has a strict code of conduct. Graduation through the hierarchically structured age-grades produces the fully-equipped Igbo person in terms of growth in consciousness.

In close association with the age-grades is the Mmawu/Muo, (the masquerading group) groups. Each male age-grade could have its own masquerade provided that the prescribed initiation is undergone. Muo is the materialisation of the "dead among the living". Masquerades

are a common and ancient institution in Igbo land. Every village has its own troupes of masquerades. The muo (spirit mask) performs a triple function: religious, governmental and social. The troupes provide entertainment in the form of dancing and acrobatic displays especially during community celebrations and festivals.

Mmanwu of the adult category assisted with the maintenance of discipline in the precolonial period and helped to enforce the decisions of the village council. Symbolically, mmanwu is supposed to be the reappearance of ancestral Spirits from the spirit land. It was and is still claimed to be endowed with supernatural powers and as such was accorded respect by all and held in awe by women and children. ³⁸

Other influential groups in the Igbo social organization include titled men or associations of title holders such as ozo or Ekpe; fraternities or associations of medicine men and priests as well as secret societies. All these, in their own ways, contribute to the richness of Igbo social institutions and above all constitute cogs in the wheel that turns to make Igbo society. The titled men who have been cited in the foregoing as sitting in the various councils, in some situations provide gerontocratic leadership characterised by wisdom, resourcefulness and stability. Acquisition of a title, which is a mark of individual achievement brings the title-holder to the apex

of Igbo society. As Olisa observed, "A title... symbolizes a high level of wisdom, sanctity of person and responsibility in words and deeds".³⁹ In women's circles, women title holders are held in a similar standing as the titled men.

1.The proponents include G.T. Basden, P.A. Talbot and J.J. Williams. There were some Igbo people who were initially subscribers to this view. See G. T Basden, Niger Ibos, (London: Seeley Service, 1938; London: Frank Cass and Co. ed. 1966), p,411; P. A. Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. I, (London: 1926; Frank Cass and Co., Ltd.ed., London 1969), pp. 1 - 32.

2.P.O. Achebe, "The Socio-religious Significance of Igbo Rites", Ph.D. Thesis. University of Innsbruch, 1972.

3.G.T. Basden, Among the Ibos of Nigeria. (London: 1921; Lagos: University Publishing Co., ed., 1983), pp. 11 and 185.

4.Elechukwu Njaka, Igbo Political Culture. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p.17.

5.P. O. Achebe, p. 2.

6.Njaka, p. 17.

7.Edmund Ilogu, Christianity and Igbo Culture. (Enugu: Nok Publishers, Ltd., 1974), p. 1.

8.Njaka, p. 18.

9.The dating is based on the generally accepted date of the early history of Israel.

10.The use of dating of the history of Israel provides a valuable frame to place societies that existed and interacted with Israel at that distant period. Such societies, in essence, show common traits.

11.Chika Ifemesia, Traditional Humane Living Among the Igbo, An Historical Perspective. (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd. 1979), p. 17.

12.Ibid.

13.Ibid.

14.Thurstan Shaw, Igbo Ukwu, An Account of Archaeological Discoveries in Eastern Nigeria: (London: Faber and Faber, 1970). See F. N. Anozie, "Early Iron Technology in Igboland, (Lejja an UMundu) in Perspectives on West Africa's Journal of Archaeology, Vol 9 p. 119 - 134.

15.Ifemesia, p. 18.

16.Ibid.

17.A. G. Leonard, The Lower Niger and its Tribes. (London: 1906; Frank Cass ed., 1968), p. 15.

18.Philip o. Nsugbe, Ohaffia, A Matrilineal Ibo People, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 2.

19.A. G. Leonard, Ibid., p. 15.
This noted seven-year cycle is the basis for some form of religious ritual.

20.G. T. Basden, Among The Ibos of Southern Nigeria, (London: 1921; Lagos: University Publishing Co., ed., 1983), p.34.

21.As a youth, the writer always associated harmattan with the Christmas season. Its advent triggered off the Christmas festive mood.

22.G. T. Basden, Ibid., p. 35

23. Ibid., p. 29.

24.Philip O. Nsugbe, pp. 5-6.

25.

26.Chieka Ifemesia, p. 28.

27.F. C. Ogbalu. Omenala Igbo, (Onitsha: Varsity Industrial Press, 1979). p. 7.

28.Indeed, it is the context that determines the make up of "ezi na ulo" at any given time. In special thanks giving offerings at the churches (Anglican in particular), the announcement is made that "Mr. Okeke na 'ezi na ulo ya' ga atu nmanma", (Mr. Okeke and his household/family will make a thanks offering). Depending on the type of thanks offering and who is available, Mr and Mrs. Okeke and his immediate family- those who live in his court yard and any blood relations in the church go the chancel for the offering.

29. Igbo custom allows a man to marry as many wives as he can afford. The first wife is usually the head wife. The head wife could marry a "wife" of her own and becomes the woman husband/spouse. Two factors could cause this to happen. If the head wife is incapable of child-bearing, the surrogate wife bears children under her banner and remains loyal to her. Her first son has right of succession to the headship of the household should the father die. The other reason is based on economic factors. If the head wife has the means and resources, she could marry another who would assist her with chores, work in the farm and yard, and in trading.

30. The concept of "okpara" is carried into Christianity where Jesus, the Christ, is seen as "Okpara Chineke", (the Son of God) or Okpara Chukwu. This adoption of an important aspect of Igbo institution into Christianity has double significance. It acts as bridge that makes Christianity meaningful in terms of the role of the Christ as the only "Okpara" of God. On other hand, the usage in Christianity immortalizes and reinforces the concept in the Igbo setting.

31. Ifemesia, p. 66.

32. Ifemesia, p. 69.

33. Ifemesia, p. 70.

34. There is no set age for assumption of full responsibility by the minor. As soon as he is able to exercise mature judgement and reason, he can preside over meetings. The support he needs is always there. The elders, titled men, the priests and the medicine men are on hand to help with decision making. The Diokpara's mother who is always knowledgeable about procedures even though she may not participate physically in the meetings, always protects the interest of the Diokpara and does make contributions in the acceleration of the Diokpara's maturity. This she accomplishes through private training and coaching.

35. A village-group exists when the sons of the original founder are named after a group of villages that sprang up following direct action of these sons. Sometimes, the original founder assigned portions of land to his sons and from there the villages developed. Whatever the circumstances, the village-groups are related even though each village has its own head. Here, the heads are treated as *primus inter pares* with the most senior village as the head village.

36. Ifemesia, p. 73.

37. The offsprings of umuada are collectively called "umu di ani". The literal translation does not seem to make sense: Children of the husband of the land/Earth. The singular is "Nwa di ani", child of the husband of the Earth. Its etymology calls for further inquiry. The presence of a male nwa di ani is felt at any funeral of a deceased kindred member. He is treated like a sacred cow. He has licence to disrupt the funeral and cause confusion. For this reason, he is given special attention and lavishly entertained with refreshments. In the same manner, any visit of a nwa di ani to his grand father's house is accorded a deserved recognition.

38. See A. O. Onyeneke, The Dead Among the Living: Masquerades in Igbo Society, (Nigeria: Holy Ghost Congregation, 1987).

39.M. S. O. Olisa, "Political Culture and Practice in Igbo Society", in The Conch, (A Sociological Journal of African Cultures and Literatures), Vol. III No.2, Sept., 1971, p.24.

CHAPTER 3

MORPHOLOGY OF THE IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Increased research in the social sciences has led to a turn around from the type of thinking that gave out earlier that the Africans are incapable of knowing God.¹ Some semblance of what is identifiable as religion has now been accorded the people. However, a problem remains as to the taxonomy of that religion. The derogatory word "primitive" in early twentieth century anthropological literature and the substitution of the word "simple"² does not tone down the low status of traditional religion from the stand point of some foreign observers. The major world religions, especially Christianity, backed by sacred documents of long-standing continue to set assessment criteria for traditional religion.

The true nature of the traditional religion continues to suffer as a result of foreign ethnocentrism. Biases are still strong. The God of the Igbo people is still conceived as a "withdrawn" God who is not active in the affairs of the people.³ His attributes, in some measure, show no parallelism with the Christian God. As a result of this posture, Igbo religious behavior lacks "enlightenment". It is superstitious and more or less anachronistic. Perhaps, it

is this popular western standpoint that triggered Dr. Nwoga's book The Supreme God as Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought.⁴

An insider approach, therefore, becomes necessary, so as to see the traditional religion as an entrenched social reality as well as an externalized truth that has been made concrete. Because truth is a "many-sided diamond", an understanding of the religion requires seeing it whole. Attempts to truncate the religion and compartmentalize it into the sacred and secular/profane has not only brought distortion of its nature but also puzzlement to the outsider.⁵

The concept of wholeness or holism embraces three major levels of perception, analysis and meaning. As the principle of hologram has indicated, an overlapping occurs from level to level.⁶ The lowest and first level of density counting from below, incarcerates in its core the third level. Each level by itself constitutes only an aspect or a fragment of reality.

An understanding of the traditional religion has to take into account the outsiders' perception of the religion. Any such perception which by western Christian orthodox standard is predicated on the observable and the concrete is usually encapsulated in the name given to the religion by the ethnographers. Thus, through names purported to encode the essence of the religion, some insights could be gained into the ontological status of the religion.

3.1. IN SEARCH OF A NAME

Paganism, heathenism, fetishism, animism and collective representation are among the names and descriptive phrases used in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century to give identity not only to the Igbo Traditional Religion (ITR) but also to the African Traditional Religion and the religion of others who in the past were called primitive peoples.⁷ The quintessential commonalty observed in the religious behaviors of these peoples in the opinion of the "coiners" warrant the labels in spite of culturally conditioned and varied expressions of religious practices.

3.2. ANIMISM

While heathenism and paganism are labels that were used in the nineteenth century and are not acceptable, Animism as a term, however, comes very close to the picture. P. A. Talbot sees animism as an element in ITR, but to Major Arthur Glyn Leonard it is the soul of the religion.⁸

"Animism" is a term advanced by Sir Edward Tylor in 1871 as the fundamental concept of religion. In his thinking, "the general belief in spiritual beings, is here given to Animism". He goes on to observe that

animism characterizes
tribes very low in the scale of humanity,
and thence ascends, deeply modified in
its transmission, but from first to last
preserving an unbroken continuity, into
the midst of high modern culture ... Animism
is, in fact, the groundwork of the Philo-
sophy of Religion, from that of savages

up to that of civilized men. And although it may at first sight seem to afford but a bare and meager definition of a minimum of religion, it will be found practically sufficient".⁹

Tylor derived animism from the Latin word *anima* which stands for the soul. To him the theory of soul formed the basis of religion. Tylor notes that:

It is habitually found that the theory of Animism divides into two great dogmas, forming parts of one consistent doctrine; first concerning souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities. Spiritual beings are held to affect or control the events of the material world, and mans life here and hereafter; and it being considered that they hold intercourse with men, and receive pleasure or displeasure from human actions, the belief in their existence leads naturally, and it might almost be said inevitably, sooner or later to active reverence and propitiation.¹⁰

Tylor is aware of the antiquity and world-wide philosophical rootage of animism and he set himself the task of researching the "hitherto strangely undervalued and neglected" phenomenon and once more to highlight it. He ascribes the genesis of animism to primitive man's reflection on "two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between a living body and a dead one; what causes waking, sleep,

trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions".¹¹ The product of the speculation was the emergence of the concept of the soul. By extension, the primitive came to believe that animals and even inanimate objects have souls. "The sun and stars, winds, rivers, rocks, trees, all may have life and personality ascribed to them".¹²

Many criticisms have been levelled against Tylor's hypothesis. Some consider it too academic, and "not fitting these peoples who believe in gods which have no apparent relationship to ghost or spirits, but are 'magnified non-natural men'".¹³ From the point of view of some African scholars, there is a total rejection of animism as a term descriptive of ITR and other African traditional religions. While Idowu appreciates Tylor's "scholarly labour" and the traces of animism in every primitive culture, he considers animism as inappropriate as the name for ITR. To him "the derogatory and abusive nomenclature of Africans as 'animists' should cease".¹⁴ Mbiti on his part is more emphatic. "Animism is not an adequate description of these religions and it is better for that term to be abandoned once and for all".¹⁵

Abandonment of the term animism is analogous to throwing away the baby with the bath water. Nationalist jingo, ecclesiastically grounded and theological orientation

should not obscure the jewel in the religious infrastructure Tylor has delineated.

Dr. Mbiti and Professor Idowu are both ordained ministers. As pioneers in the field of African Traditional Religion, the two needed to keep within the parameters of religious orthodoxy and at the same time reconcile what appeared to be pantheism with monotheism. The adoption of diffused monotheism not only met their immediate needs but serves to stress the fact that the God of the Africans is the same universally recognized God. Their posture, however, failed to recognize "animism" as the vehicle of spiritual ubiquity.

Animism as conceived by Tylor is an inclusive, "umbrella" term. It provides the matrix from which any conceivable religion has its root. His work is a bold attempt to reassert and enthrone the concept of the Spirit and soul in an age of rising rationalism and materialism. His work is of so great a value that the term neo-Tylorism is warranted.¹⁶

It should be observed that Animism is only a label and a concrete "handle" to pull together a vast array of phenomena associated with the "psyche" and human behaviors predicated on that psyche. Animism from Tylor's standpoint is only a window into nature and through that objectified window in word, we can make meaning out of all the complex interactions that are embodied in nature.

It should stand to reason that Tylor is indeed a pioneer and deserves much credit. Such new usages as panpsychism and the principle of hylozoism are mere endorsement of animism.¹⁷ Other extensions labelled magic, medicine, fetishism, Juju and pantheism are significant adumbrations that derive from animism.¹⁸

There is no doubt that Tylor uses the expressions, "savage", "lower races", "lower philosophy", "early philosophy" and "primitive animism". He uses them in contrast to the "civilized world" and "higher nations". Superficially, there is some tenor of inferiority attributed to the primitive category in the way paganism and heathenism have been used by earlier missionaries as designation for barbarity and benightedness. Tylor in all probability meant well and should be seen from the totality of the climate of the late nineteenth century Europe vis-a-vis technologically deprived races and cultures.¹⁹ From another perspective, the qualifying words lower, primitive and early denote "pristine". Rather than denigrate the "lower races", Tylor appears to hold them in high esteem:

So well indeed, does primitive animism account for the facts of nature, that it has held its place into the higher levels of education. Though classic and mediaeval philosophy modified it much, and modern philosophy has handled it yet more unsparingly, it has so far retained the traces of its original character, that heirlooms of primitive, ages may be claimed in the existing psychology of the civilized world. Out of the vast mass of evidence, collected among the

most various and distant races of mankind, typical details may now be selected to display the earlier theory of the soul, the relation to the parts of this theory, and the manner in which these parts have been abandoned, modified, or kept up, along the course of culture"²⁰

There are statements made by Tylor that imply a lamentation over the declension of animism with its philosophical ramifications. Tylor opines that:

Although ... the primitive belief in the souls of animals still survives to some extent in serious philosophy it is obvious that the tendency of educated opinion on the question whether brutes have soul, as distinguished from life and mind, has for ages been in a negative and skeptical direction. The doctrine has fallen from its once high estate. It belonged originally to real, though rude science. It has now sunk to become a favorite topic in the mild speculative talk which still does duty as largely as intellectual conversation, and even then its propounders defend it with a lurking consciousness of its being after all a piece of sentimental nonsense.²¹

Furthermore he observes that "among races within the limits of savagery, the general doctrine of souls is found worked out with remarkable breadth and consistency... thenceforth, as we explore human thought onward from savage into barbarian and civilized life, we find a state of theory more conformed to positive science, but itself less complete and consistent".²²

To any would-be adherents of Neo-Tylorism is thrown the challenge of validating empirically Tylor's indubitable

postulation that "the theory of the soul is one principal part of a system or religious philosophy, which unites, in an unbroken line of mental connection, the savage fetish-worshiper and the civilized Christian".²³

3.3. DIFFUSED MONOTHEISM

The commonalty of some elements in the religious behavior of Africans induced Dr. Idowu to conclude the ATR can only be adequately described as "monotheistic". He is however careful to add the adjective "diffused" because there are other "powers which derive from Deity". Although these minor divinities are dependent on the Supreme Being, they are sometimes treated 'almost as ends in themselves'.²⁴

Since Idowu's coinage of this descriptive term, diffused monotheism has been propagated and adopted as the appropriate term for all indigenous African religions. ITR is equally covered in the application of the term. With the release of Dr. Nwoga's view on the exoticness of Supreme Being, the concept of diffused monotheism has come under attack among some Igbo elites. The argument presented focuses on the scant attention paid to the Supreme Being in Igbo traditional worship. The divinities are closer to the people and cults for each abound. The debate so far remains inconclusive.

3.4. OMENANI

The controversy over the autochthony of Igbo conception of the Supreme Deity initiated by Nwoga has reinforced two major polarizations. Understandably, bona-fide Igbo Christians adhere to the descriptive term "Diffused Monotheism".²⁵ The other major group identify with "Omenani".²⁶ Omenani, the customs and traditions of the Igbo people, is culturally endemic and no one can escape its inextricable hold. Because of the pervasiveness of Omenani, the ITR has been labelled "Omenani".

In the Igbo universe, there is no word or expression denoting "Religion" as it is conceptualized and compartmentalized in the West. Thus the adoption of Omenani is only a nomenclature that subsumes what can be called religion in Igboland. The use of Omenani does not in any way simplify the complexity of the Igbo religious structure. It can be seen as a focal point indicating the direction of any religious inquiry. In everyday parlance "Omenani" means "the Way" established by tradition. It is Igbo convention that has endured from immemorial antiquity.

Mazi Mbonu Ojike, the credited first advocate of the term, defines Omenani as "a system which holds that man's activities are limitable by what is good for all". Further he observes that "doing things in conformity with the constitution of the land or the good of all is called Omenani".²⁷

For the purpose of this inquiry, Omenani, in the absence of a better term is to be taken as a descriptive term for ITR. The assumption of Omenani as the label denoting ITR does not pretend to answer all complex questions about it, however, it does give an insight into the structure of the religion. It provides a good starting point.

Omenani or Omenala, "Custom", "Customary" is a wide and broad corpus of actions which are in accordance with the stipulations of the land. Sometimes, it is translated as "tradition". Since it is claimed to have originated at the foundation of the earth, it is inexorably bound up with mother Earth, the Earth goddess and her tenants, the ancestors. Omenani cannot be easily altered, repealed or renegotiated.

Omenani falls into two major categories. One type of Omenani - Custom, covers the domain of morality and the other category is socio-cultural. All the codes that pertain to morality are, in the main, casuistic and therefore, prohibitive. These codes are sanctioned by the earth goddess - Ani and are communicated from her to the living members in the community by the dead ancestors, "Ndichie". The socio-cultural aspects of Omenana not only regulate specific interactional behaviours in all the institutions in Igbo land but also define, and set the norms for each role in the society. The whole broad spectrum of

life from the womb through birth and to the grave is governed by custom. The birth and the naming of a child, the growth process, his/her marriage and eventual funerary rites are significant phases that are ritual-ridden and Omenani bound.

3.4.1. OMENANI AS UZO - PATH

A closer look at Omenani reveals it as a structured approach to balanced, purposeful and successful living. It is a path constructed by the primogenitors of the Igbo people. Treading the path of Omenani implies fulfilling the indications and the requirements on that path. It is interesting to note that path in Igbo land means "Uzo". Uzo in some sense is synonymous with "Usoro" (order). In common usage "uzo" is "way". "Uzo esi eme ihe" is translated as "the way of doing something". "Usoro esi eme ihe" is the order, the sequence of doing something.

Uzo symbolically is omenani in its seminality.²⁸ Uzo as a well-beaten track or trail embodies routinization and therefore conjures up the image of an ordered custom and procedure essentially repositied in the Igbo language. Uzo in the sense of its equation with omenani originated from the foundation of the earth and gives direction to spiritual livingness.

The traditional antonym of Uzo is "Ohia" or "Ofia". Ohia stands for bush, forest or jungle. To depart from the

way is symbolically to consort with disorder and chaos and in fact, to engage in an uphill battle or wander through a difficult maze that leads nowhere. This departure from order is interpreted as a deliberate alliance with the elements and entities firmly entrenched in negativity.²⁹ The average Igbo person on the path is like an athlete engaged in a relay race, fully conscious of his responsibility to the past and to the future. In that consciousness the past and the present are resolved in the equation of the present. Departure from the path - Uzo is a mark of irresponsibility and lack of accountability.

The multi-valency of uzo is indicated in some Igbo names and witty sayings. Names such as "Uzoamaka" and "Uzodimma" stress the beauty and goodness of Uzo. While these names constitute the crystallization of joyous family experiences, they equally connote the perpetuity of the beneficent circumstances contributing to that shared joyousness. The corollary then is that which is good should be preserved and maintained. In the same vein, a name such as "Uzoechina" carries a multitude of meanings. The most significant meaning for the purpose of this study is "let not the path be closed". In Igbo land, where tropical, climatic conditions foster rapid growth of vegetation, experience has taught the people that if the path or trail is not tended and if it is not used frequently, the path is closed by nature.³⁰

In Igbo social situation, there is the recognition of the relativity of "Uzo". This recognition is validated by an expression such as "Nwam puta nka aburo uzo" - "My son, turn around; that is not the way. This is a symbolic expression predicated on practical godliness which is conventionally determined in Igbo cultural context. It is a call that solicits the renunciation of a demonstrated anti-social behaviour. The same effect is intended when an Igbo man is told that "Uzo gi gbara ngorigo". Here, the man is bluntly told that his ways are crooked. To offset the indicated tortuousness, the man is told: "kwuba aka gi oto". "keep your hands straight". This image of straightness which is the same as righteousness is further pointed out by using the symbol of Uzo. Any confirmed evidence of uprightness and righteousness on a continuing basis, earns a person a verbal testimonial couched in the following words: Uzo ya kwu oto - His way is straight. Indeed, it is not hard to see a close parallelism between this Igbo conception of "Uzo" and the essence of John the Baptist's pre-advent message in which he calls for the removal of all obstacles that will interfere with the straightness of "the way of the Lord"³¹

This noted parallelism between an aspect of the ITR and the New Testament does not apply only to John the Baptist's message. The Igbo conception of Uzo finds points of congruence in some aspects of Christ's Sermon on the Mount.³² One of the most salient of the teachings is

Christ's stress on the efficacy of supplication. He enjoined his followers to "ask and it will be given you, seek, and you shall find, knock and it will be opened to you".³³ The Igbo people have an insightful proverb which states that "Onye ajuju ada efu uzo". In a literal sense, the proverb states that he who asks questions relative to the way never loses his bearing. Commenting on Christ's injunction, Matthew Henry, uses the analogue which clearly echoes the Igbo perspective. He puts it bluntly, "Ask as a traveller asks the way"³⁴. What is evident in this embodied idea is not only its perennialness and universality but also its spiritual significance. A Statement credited to the One identified as the son of God by the Christians that finds a perfect replication on the ITR carries its own testimony as to the pragmatic application of spiritual tenets by the Igbo in daily interactions.

The symbolism of Uzo from the standpoint of the Igbo world view paves the way for Christianity. The evolutionary implications for omenani which for now is geotropic and earth-affirming are momentous. When Christ said: "I am the way, and the truth and the life"³⁵, there is no doubt that religious infrastructure already exists in Igbo mentality for the appropriation and subsequent internalization of the deep meaning of the statement. The utility and the importance of Uzo are validated in the names of "Uzoechina" and "Uzoameka" already cited.

It is instructive to observe that the collect for the third Sunday after Easter in Igbo (Anglican) Prayer Book uses the expression "nke uzo nke Krist".³⁶ This is an Igbo way of translating "... all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion".³⁷ "Uzo nke Krist" simply means the way of Christ. Here again the multi-valence of "Uzo" is evident and in this particular context constitutes an adequate bridge that links ITR with Christianity.

Familiarity with the Igbo situation points to the fact that it is not uncommon to observe a way, a path that has fallen into disuse. In Igbo, such a path is designated as "Uzo chiri echi". In other words, this is a track or trail that has been abandoned and is therefore no longer used. The road is closed because it does not lead anywhere. It has no utility and serves no purpose. To maintain a non-functional and non-serviceable road is an aberration totally non-Igbo. Such a road is taken care of by nature and with time will be indistinguishable from vegetation. This aspect of Uzo symbolization is edifying to the Igbo people and does reinforce the fact that a path must be functional and purposeful and as a result must be maintained.

What is significant then is the seminality and the microcosmic representation of uzo in the Igbo world. Uzo is a human construction out of the disorder or chaos of the bush or jungle. This construction or imposition of order when it is achieved symbolizes routinization. Routinization

imposes its own logic of maintenance. In the final analysis, Uzo is religion in embryo. It also epitomizes in a pragmatic way Igbo man's approach to nature and helps define as will be shown later on, what is perceptible as religion in Igbo socio-cultural milieu. But above all, Uzo is omenani par excellence.

Granting uzo as a microcosmic symbolization of omenani, the longevity of omenani dating from the dawn of time and its continued persistence in contemporary Igbo society is a clear indicator of its force and value. As has already been pointed out, omenani regulates life and strives to keep an Igbo man on track in the act of daily living. In spite of its subtle coercion, it is preserved and maintained as a proven and validated structure that guarantees life. As an inexhaustible complex whole, it can be likened to a tropical rainbow that spans the earth and heaven. It is then without equivocation that for the Igbo people omenani is an established modus vivendi for appropriate rapport with the One in whom we live and move and have our being.³⁸

There are apparent problems in the categorical assertion of omenani as the way (uzo) to approach Divinity. The initial problem centres on what is identifiable as the dominant Western concept of religion with its accent on one God who can only be worshipped and approached through the Christ. This one view of religion was propagated and backed by the machinery of imperialism. The result was a secondary

socialization that presented to the Igbo people as well as other colonial peoples another World view with some of its attractive, material trappings. Converts into this secondary world view who cover the gamut of categories in Igbo land vary in their reactions to omenani.³⁹ To the average convert, Christianity and omenani cannot mix just in the same way mmanu (palm oil) and mmiri (water) do not mix in the normal room temperature. The general attitude of the these converts is that omenani is for the "heathens" or the traditionalists. Following the example of the missionaries, rituals associated with omenani are designated as "ikpere arusi" - idol worship. Judaism as well as Christianity is anti-idol worship. It therefore stands to reason that omenani as labelled in Christian circles would not pass as a way to approach God.

Another problem stems from the fact that the structure of omenani in spite of the force of omenani does not readily reveal its meaning and its logic which is deeply esoteric. To the rational mind it has no appeal. It is enjoined by the Igbo society. The direction of omenani is therefore not obviously apparent and to some its terminus is lodged in the ancestors. Here again, it is relevant to cite Dr. Nwoga's book: The Supreme God as a Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought as evidence of the peculiar structure of omenani and its apparent diametrical opposition to the Christian structure. If the Supreme God is a stranger to the Igbo

religious philosophy, it is then inconceivable that omenani should lead to God.

An Igbo proverb: Uche onye adiya njo, is a fitting response to the various positions on omenani. The proverb literally translates as A person's mode of thought/thinking is never objectionable to that particular person. In his estimation, his thinking is right. Roland Peterson has come up with a book - Everyone is Right⁴⁰ which is an endorsement of this Igbo proverb. What the Igbo people have articulated in this proverb is the concept of relativity of truth and go on to validate also the "consciousness of abstracting".⁴¹ But all these positions and their plausible defence notwithstanding, the ITR holds its ground on the basis of experience and practice dictated by the Igbo world view. Omenani is evolving and has not been exhausted and yet has a strong hold on the Igbo people. The key to the puzzle which Omenani presents to the outside investigator as well as to the detribalized or acculturated Igbo sceptic lies in two proverbs.

It is clearly stated that "Aya (aga) emechasigodu Omenani tupu eme Omenenu" - We shall first fulfil the laws or customs of the earth prior to fulfilling the higher laws or the laws of heavens. In other words the Igbo insist on observing that which has been enjoined here on earth as a necessary, appropriate and preparatory step before the implementation of higher laws that operate in heaven.⁴² This

is a valid indication left for posterity by unknown Igbo initiates. This indication is preserved by the continuing thread of Initiates in the Igbo world and popularized in everyday speech. Not only does this proverb demonstrate Igbo sense of pragmatism, it also shows their appreciation of the social reality into which they are immersed and their commitment to the eventual perfection involved in the obligation.

Another significant proverb that gives sanction to omenani is "ife ana acho n'uko enu ka afulu n'uko ani". (That which is searched for in an upper rack or bin is right here in the lower rack). In other words, what you are seeking in heaven is right here on earth. Much as this proverb is abstruse and esoteric in nature it calls for serious reflection. Pitted against the former proverb regarding Omenenu, it seems paradoxical. It is not easily apparent why it is that through geotropism symbolized in omenani one can attain to higher laws.

In the first place, these proverbs should not be underrated.⁴³ It is sufficient for the moment to see them as the "fruit of experience" which constitutes knowledge. Moreover they are the creations of the Igbo initiates as an instrument of socialization. On the basis of the strength and power of these proverbs only individual application and testing will either confirm or disprove their claims. But these proverbs have the solid warrant of time, continuity,

persistence and universality. The discovery of that which is supposedly lodged in metaphysical abstraction or in remote heaven here on the plane of mundane existence is indeed another way of stressing spiritual ubiquity.⁴⁴

The interaction between the viewpoint of jubilantly tracing and actually finding at the tip of one's nose that which others posit in a highly elevated and far-removed location and the execution of omenani before omenenu calls forth the postulated Igbo conception of religion. That conception sees religion as the totality of "all that man does on earth as a pre-qualification for ultimate and eventual union with his divine source".⁴⁵ In this context, it is necessary to recapitulate that the Igbo people like other Africans are said to be earth-affirming. It is not a materialistic earth-affirmation that excludes heaven. It is an affirmation that is in opposition to Christian approach to heaven which preaches escape to heaven from earth in exchange for a paradisiacal status in heaven⁴⁶. For the Igbo, through earth and by it, heaven could be attained. The approach is seen as simple and natural. A seed sends its roots down before the plumule is positioned for photosynthesis. Again it is cited that a child should walk before he can run. Implied in the Igbo thinking is the fact "that heaven is reached by a series of separate steps rather than by a single salvational leap".⁴⁷

On the view that omenani has not been exhausted and that for the moment emphasis is on doing and fulfilling that which has been enjoined here on earth, another supporting proverb is warranted. It is generally given out that "ife nti nata agwuro oda ezu ike" (the jaw/cheek never rests until the stuff being chewed is exhausted). Any initiated activity never ceases until the triggering force or impulse is completely spent. By implication, the path (uzo) is open and will continue to be used. In the same vein, as long as the cycle of life receives fresh impetus through birth, regeneration and the production of human beings, omenani as a force prescribed and endorsed by custom will continue to be operative. Sociologically, Omenani is the means to achieve the social construction of reality. Final construction has not been attained and significantly, therefore, omenani remains valid and relevant in the Igbo world. Thus "ife nti nata agwuro oda ezu ike" is indicative of purposive continuity, a continuity that is progressive and spirals upwards.⁴⁸

Whatever stand one may take relative to omenani, there is always the reminder that "ada ebu ani ebu" - you can never lift earth. Symbolically one should not kick against the goad. The force of omenani is quite strong and ordering as well as inescapable. It imposes the discipline essential for daily living and in the end remains the mode ordained by the Igbo people for the approach to divinity.

Omenani has such an inescapable hold on them so long as they live in Igbo land. The air is suffused with Omenani and every Igbo person lives and moves and has his/her being in it. The scope of Omenani itself gives it its power. Omenani is very broad and virtually all encompassing.⁴⁹ Whether used in a strict or broad sense, there is always that eery air that links it to the past. It is unseen, unwritten and yet an ever-present reality in all interactions. Any citation of an aspect of Omenani, when the situation warrants it, is some times prefaced with: "Nna, Nna Nna anyi-ha kwuru/mere". "Our great, great, great (ad infinitum) ancestors observed or said" that ...". Thus there is no specific reference point as to who in particular initiated this or that aspect of the Omenani and to research it as a totality is elusive as chasing a butterfly from the Igbo stand point - a mirage.

In the anonymity of Omenani lies much of its force and strength. Were it to be personalized, forces of disintegration would have destroyed Igbo monolithic structure and solidarity. The lineage that would have claimed direct kinship with the great initiator of Omenani possibly would arrogate to themselves rights and privileges which would disaffect distant and remote Kins⁵⁰. Again, if a specific human individual was named, there is natural tendency in humans to question and challenge the validity of the person's authority to impose such a regulating structure on his or her progeny. Such questionings usually result in

rebellions as English and European history testify. In Igboland, no infringement or violation of Omenani goes without a penalty. In the attribution of Omenani to "our great, great and impersonal fathers", and the sense of collectivity it inspired and continues to inspire with awe in Igboland, is to be found an embryonic, empirical demonstration for the Christian community, the globalized implication of "Our Father" embodied in the Lord's Prayer.⁵¹

For the skeptics who find themselves engulfed by the far-reaching tentacles of Omenani, there could be some elements of doubt as to the historicity and authenticity of Omenani. The doubt behavior can be buttressed by the Igbo proverb that "he who is not present at the time of the internment of a corpse usually digs it up from the wrong end". By implication the present professions of omenani could be a faulty and a marked departure from the articulations of the unnamed founding fathers who communicated Omenani on behalf of Ani.

Whatever the problems one might have with Omenani, such problems are never voiced. Moreover, conformation is mandatory. There is no particular repository of it and no centralized custodian now exists.⁵² Omenani constitutes part of the corpus of oral tradition that is passed on from generation to generation. The mode of transmission is through the Igbo language which is a veritable guarantee of its continuity. It is the essential content of the

socialization process and various aspects of it unfold as the need for their use arises. Should one exhibit inadequate knowledge of its stipulations in a given enterprise, the elders who are the leading exponents are usually at hand to instruct and give guidance.

Because of the antiquity of Omenani no informer can give accurate responses to the rationale of some specifics of Omenani. The general response that makes meaning is usually: "That is the way it is and has been; tradition endorses it". In other words the informant responds by saying it is Omenani. But this lack of precise knowledge as to the reasons behind some of the prescriptions of Omenani does not in anyway attenuate its structure and force. Some of the reasons are deep and highly esoteric and may be beyond the verbal formulations of the votaries. Should the votary be a highly evolved person and an initiate, the *raison d'être* and the reality of Omenani manifest in the supersensible world to which the votary accesses but veiled to the neophyte and the average person. Under such situations, Omenani is mediated through rituals.

Through rituals Omenani is perpetuated. The form of rituals may vary, as it does from locality to locality but the essence remains intact. Rituals can then be seen as another vehicle for the carrying forward of Omenani. Extreme care is required in making a distinction between ritual and

Omenani. On the other hand both are sometimes intertwined and Omenani can stand for ritual and ritual for Omenani.

3.4.2. THE FORCE OF OMENANI

Geoffrey Parrinder makes the observation that on the lips of most of the "old African administrators", the expression: "This incurably religious people" is often heard.⁵³ Dr. Mbiti clearly attests to this view and articulates it in this fashion:

wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop: he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament.... (Religion) accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death.⁵⁴

The Igbo people share fully in the exhibition of such a stupendous religious behavior. Perhaps, it is this pervasiveness and the inextricability of religion from the totality of life expression of the Igbo man that has earned ITR its labels.⁵⁵ Be that as it may, an insight into the nature and power of the ITR could be gained from the standpoint of early Western Ethnographers who worked among the Igbo people at the turn of the century.

George T. Basden after living among the Igbo people for about two decades (1900 -1920) concludes that "it is a

practical impossibility for the Europeans to comprehend fully the subtleties of the native character". He goes on to opine that "the inner consciousness of the native", could be tapped into only by accident. To him, this is not strange because the native "himself does not know his own mind".⁵⁶ In what amounts to the quintessence of his personal interaction with the people Basden declares that

he (the native) does the most extraordinary things, and cannot explain why he does them. He is not controlled by logic: he is the victim of circumstance, and his policy is very largely one of drift. The will of the tribe or family, expressed or implied, permeates his whole being, and is the deciding factor in every detail of his life. It is a sort of intangible freemasonry; the essence of the primary instincts of the people. Men constantly act contrary to their better judgment, and at times, even wrongly, because they firmly believe they have no alternative: they dare not oppose the wishes of the people.

Consequently though there may be independent thought, there is seldom independent action, probably never where other members of the tribe or family are involved, however remotely ... The ideas of the native are indefinite. He is under the influence of an atmosphere which emanates from the whole tribe. This subliminal consciousness, by which all his movements are controlled, becomes practically a sixth sense. It is inexpressible in words but, nevertheless, extremely powerful in action.⁵⁷

Basden's abbreviated assessment of the "life and customs of the Ibos" should be taken as sincere and coming from his heart and has no intention of denigrating the Igbo

people. Admittedly, he has difficulty understanding fully the Igbo psyche. His difficulty can be appreciated in the light of his national background that imposed on him first, the Western nineteenth century scientific paradigm and second, Christianity as a benchmark vis-a-vis other religions. His protestation of his limited knowledge absolves him of any claim to pontificate on the Igbo religion. He declares that "I am bound to confess that I feel after seventeen years, more puzzled over many things than I did after the same number of weeks in the country".⁵⁸ His avowed limitation notwithstanding, Basden makes a significant contribution to an understanding of the force of ITR. In his recommendations to his countrymen who would be associated with native affairs, he stresses "a careful study of Levitical Law [because] in many ways the affinity between Native Law and Mosaic System is remarkable".⁵⁹ In this reference Basden sees a surprising connectedness of Igbo system with the inception of the rule of Law and order in the Hebraic polity.⁶⁰

As one of the administrators who lived and moved among the Igbo people, P. A. Talbot, on his part, sees "striking resemblances" between the Igbo religious cults and those of "ancient Egypt and the Mediterranean area". To him the religion of the people

would appear to be compounded of four main elements, viz polytheism, anthropomorphism, animism and ancestor worship... Their religion possesses interest in

that, for the most part, it is untouched by modern European beliefs and affords the rare example of tenets belonging to a comparatively early stage of civilization. There exist, however, in it many features which give reason for thinking that it was formerly of a higher type, and has shared in the general retrogradation which appears to have set in during the last few thousand years, since the people have dwelt in the dense forests and allowed themselves to be moulded by their environment, instead of imposing their own character upon it.⁶¹

Through actual contact and experience Talbot observes that contrary to expectation the ITR had affinity with monotheism and that the passage of time has led to "a gradual increase in ceremonial, until the spiritual content of the rites is partly swamped by the outward form and ritual". He asserts unequivocally that "pure animism can hardly be said to exist, or it is so combined with anthropomorphism that it is difficult to separate the elements".⁶² In his estimation, the deities, barring a few exceptions, are represented by symbols. It is before these symbols that sacrifices are offered and all offertories and intercessions made. He thus banishes the idea that the Igbo people are idol worshippers. The symbols afford:

"a convenient means of concentrating the attention and (provide) a point for worship ... To a certain extent, however, the principle of sympathetic magic is connected with the use of symbols, since it is believed that some rapport is set up, some relation exists between a symbol and the being or thing symbolized so that any action on the one will affect the other, and the divinity would realize more quickly the presence

and desires of his worshipers - not that he can be hurt thereby".⁶³

Writing authoritatively as one who has witnessed first hand and as if to correct the arm-chair investigators of the late nineteenth century, Talbot declared that "true fetishism, in which the object of worship is not symbolic but is worshipped for itself...is absent from this country. Much of the rituals is aniconic".⁶⁴

Talbot impresses on the reader the deep nature of his insights and awareness of the religious practices of the Igbo people. According to him, "the most widely spread symbol is a clay pot, almost always containing water - the great fertilizing fluid of ancient belief - and, often, small, round stones representing eggs, phallic cones of chalk- or, more accurately, kaolin - and pieces of red and yellow dye - woods. Other very common ones are stones, trees, posts and images".⁶⁵ Some of the trees are named but above all, he makes a remarkable statement about these symbols.

The constant presence of these symbols must affect the conscious and unconscious powers of the mind and give these an urge to action. Each is consecrated the service of a particular deity, from whom an emanation is supposed to enter its presentment, either for the whole time during its worship is maintained, or at the actual moment that the service takes place.⁶⁶

For further insights into the nature of ITR, Major Arthur Gilyn Leonard's ten-year, on the spot experience and account deserve serious attention. Leonard recognizes, like

Talbot, the antiquity of the traditions of the Igbo people and admits that much "have long, long ago been forgotten". He however sees in the people's folklore which deals principally, and almost entirely with the animal world and again in their deities evidence of the surviving relic of a "very ancient mythology".⁶⁷

Major Leonard operated under a clear premise. He thinks that in order

to get a clear and thorough insight into the characteristics and temperament of a people, it is, ..essential first to obtain a comprehensive grasp of their religion, even before attempting to master their laws and customs.⁶⁸

In this understanding, he appreciates the fact that it is "extremely difficult to define religion". But it should be observed that his long contact with the Igbo society, a society which to him is representative of a "state of society which shows a very early and initial stage of civilization"⁶⁹, enabled him to articulate his own conception of religion and his theory of the origin of religion. The environment as he sees it is unique; the physical and climatic conditions constitute the cradle of "natural" religion. He says that "what I do mean to imply is that there is not in existence on the whole surface of the globe a more fitting environment for the center of natural religion than this pestiferous and malarial region".⁷⁰ This posture taken by Leonard gives added impetus to the fruit of his experience and therefore warrants closer consideration.

After meandering his way through the labrythine customs and practices of the Igbo people, Leonard comes to the conclusion that the term "juju" meaning an idol "is neither adequate nor expressive enough to define and express in one word the various formulas of the Delta [Igbo] religion". On the other hand, "animism" is much too exclusive. To extricate himself from what he considers an "awkward predicament" he settles on a word - "Naturism" - which "most expressively and comprehensively defines the entire situation". He observed that "if these natives have any religion at all, it is ... a purely natural evolution"⁷¹. According to him then,

Naturism, as it exists in the various beliefs of the Delta (Igbo) people, stands for Nature pure and simple, as represented first of all by her four great divisions of the human, animal, vegetable and mineral, and then by the elements, forces, and energies within her, including even the minutest material objects, animism is its animating principle. In other words, it is the principle which endows naturism with soul or spirit, - its internal aspect as represented in fetichism by objects, in idolatry by idols, and in totemism by emblems, - living or otherwise."⁷².

With the enthronement of naturism as the superlative word descriptive of ITR, Leonard proceeds to call the Igbo people "sons of nature".⁷³ By implication the Igbo people are born and "baptized" in nature. Their psyche and the totality of their behavior patterns are determined and regulated by nature. Their belief is under the subordination of

those instinctive principles which attribute a pre-causation to all acts, events, and occurrences in this existence as merely reacts or recurrences of a former period or existence - instincts whose divergent principles, although their origin can be traced to the monism of Nature, have so far remained undiscoverable because of the absolute simplicity of its inner subtleties".⁷⁴

As seen through the eyes of Leonard, no aspect of the life of the Igbo people can be divorced from Nature. Although he thinks that "the philosophy of these natives is not deep" yet he credits them with "undoubted subtlety and powers of silent observation". The product of their observation is embodied in their philosophy, and "philosophy to them is the very essence of religion".⁷⁵ Nature understandably provides the motif of all philosophizing. In his words:

Nature, ie. the earth, with its contiguous and surrounding elements, as it appears to them, is as it were a vast form or organism, which lies closed and inert, yet active, and always in a state of spiritual pregnancy ... Yet a nature which they believe to be inspired by the spirit or animating principle, good and evil, according to the adjustment of the balances, that speaks to them not in mere words but in hard acts, which alone are intelligible to a limited and literal intelligence such as theirs... Looking around them, as these people have done, and are still doing, they have found themselves confronted by matter in every single form or aspect of Nature, and connecting spirit with matter and matter with spirit, it is only natural that they discover in material utility an association and a source that is purely spiritual. Be the matter what it may, an opaque stone, a stream of clear and sparkling water, a

quivering leaf... to them there is something indefinite and indefinable, which all the same imparts to the material organism a tangible consciousness... which is connected in their minds with the shadow - soul - in other words, with the animating principle of all things.⁷⁶

Nature is totally instrumental to whatever characteristics the Igbo people manifest. Because nature has been very liberal to them, "there is nothing left for them to do" and incentive is lacking. Much time is spent "brooding" in silence over the hard problems of a dual and divided existence".⁷⁷ In graphic terms Leonard describes them as

Holding life as cheap as any palm-nut, and spilling blood as if it were water, they sacrifice it aimlessly, according to our advanced ideas, merely to pass it on to another existence, according to their own antiquated notions. Yet valuing it as they but do the coco-nut, because of its substantiality, and sanctity, from the dual aspect of human fertility and spiritual consciousness, they take it easily, looking with the same simple ease on the comedy of it with infinite relish and many a coarse jest, although the pathos of existence is always open to rude and brutal disruption, and the grim tragedy of death is not merely an omniscient spirit ready to strike at any moment, but which lives with, and forms part of their natural existence.⁷⁸

Continuing the character delineation of the Igbo people, Leonard categorizes them as averse to change and slaves to "custom and conservatism, and the iron discipline of their bogey-ancestors- who in their belief only depart from the

flesh to continue a much potential existence and government in the spirit". The generality of the people have "their thinking done for them by the priest doctors, and diviners, who are *de facto* the active thinkers and thought-leaders of their communities".⁷⁹ He makes it clear that he is not denying the masses the ability to think. He is only highlighting a peculiarity he has monitored, and that is that

They are all dreamers of dreams ie. they think in a vague, indefinite, and impulsive kind of way thoughts that unconsciously become reflected and repeated in their dreams, which to them, however, are actual and personal interviews and interchanges of conversation between their own detachable and mobile souls and those of the departed.⁸⁰

The conclusion Leonard reaches after an intense decade of personal association with and of study of the Igbo people is best expressed in his own words:

Their religion, which, in fact, is their entire sociology and existence, is nothing from beginning to the end but a long chain of ancestral precedents, every single link and rivet of which is an association that is now designated under the general and comprehensive term of custom, as a law, from their spiritual fathers unto themselves in the flesh.⁸¹

To drive his point home Leonard asserts that there is no such word as religion or its equivalent in the language of the Igbo people. He points out that no such idea, or even

thought about religion as conceptualized by "all civilized nations" ever occurred to the people. The reason for this lack is to be traced to the fact that

the ancestral worship or veneration of their fathers, which to them was as natural as eating, drinking, sleeping, and procreating, had been derived from Nature, simultaneously with those other basic instincts of preservation and reproduction, so that from the very commencement the entire matter was an integral part of their actual existence, therefore in every sense natural and personal, and one of association, pure and simple.⁸²

3.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OPUS OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TRIUMVIRATE

As indicated in the foregoing, Basden, Talbot and Leonard were of British extraction. Although they were of the same nationality they represented different interests and groups and were of different orientations. The trio operated contemporaneously in the Igbo Society at the turn of the century. They wrote copiously and as evidenced, bequeathed us their observations and summations of "Omenani".

In their works, there is a secularized and weighted replication of the classic, Biblical Gospel.⁸³ They wrote about the Igbo people as they saw and heard about them. To better understand these ethnographers and their various perspectives, the same question the Christ put to the crowd regarding John the Baptist, might here be addressed to the

ethnographers: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold?"⁸⁴ This question in all its ramifications and amplifications brings into a synthesis the ethnographer, his purpose and mission and perceptions. Though the subject of investigation is the same, in the style of the Gospel writers, the purposive infrastructure colors their entire approach. An appreciation of each of the ethnographer's positional tinge will lead to an objective transcendent of the shortcomings of his work and highlights the gem the work embodies.

As no perfection has been claimed for the Biblical Gospel analog, to expect faultless ethnography is asking for the impossible. The problem of what has been called in General Semantics terminology "the Consciousness of Abstracting" or the "psychologists fallacy"⁸⁵ still remains with all works. In other words, the "elephant" allegory in which any perceived part is taken to represent the whole elephant must be taken into account in any critical consideration of the three ethnographers in question.⁸⁶

The three were caught in the cobweb of the intellectual and religio-anthropological climate of the late nineteenth Century Europe. They came from a background suffused with Tylorianism, evolutionism, humanism, materialistic science, religious revivalism, nascent spiritualism and Imperialism. Each represented a combination of these forces in varying proportions. But the Igbo world they went to investigate

confronted them as a strange, monolithic world diametrically opposed to the world they knew in Europe. To them and in keeping with popular bracket, the Igbo world was a primitive, heathen world. In their encounter with that world, there were moments when "truth" as they saw it flashed forth. That truth was seen through coloured glasses and therefore misinterpreted by their European auditors and led to its targeting for extinguishment. But the truth remained on the basis of its enduring meaning for the Igbo people.

In spite of the fact that the three ethnographers looked down on the Igbo people as inferior and uncivilized and of lower intelligence, when stripped of this prejudice emanating from late nineteenth century European thought, the works constitute a true frame of observable facts relative to the Igbo people. All acquire added importance when translated to the worlds of meaning and significance. Basden was unable to effect this translation because only Christianity in his religious orientation has exclusive admission into the supersensible world where only the Christ holds religious sway. This mental set, in part contributed to his puzzlement about Igbo customs.⁸⁷ It is Major Leonard's contribution that attains the rank of the Gospel of John both in its mystical as well as factual dimensions. His delineation of the entire Igbo situation as mere "naturism" ranges the whole holographic gamut⁸⁸ and will

bear closer analysis. Significantly then, the inquiry into the ITR perforce must include not only the mere mundane, temporal objective world but also the subjective, metaphysical world for a better understanding of the Igbo polity.

In sober moments the authors see the Igbo people behaving and acting precisely like people everywhere in the world. Basden in a deeply esoteric and psychological statement observes that "human nature is much the same all the world over, and among the Igbos, as elsewhere, evil deeds are mostly the outcome of selfish desires".⁸⁹ Leonard from a different standpoint comes to the same significant conclusion. He notes that

it is the fashion of the civilized unit to talk lightly and airily of customs and superstitions as relics of barbarism. Substitute 'naturism' for the latter word, as the more accurate and expressive definition of the meaning to be conveyed, and we will find that even among our cultured selves there are many of these self-same relics which are as strongly implanted in us as they were in our primitive ancestors. Not only implanted, indeed, but ineradicable, being as they are inherent principles belonging to the mystic and all-containing protoplasm.⁹⁰

Here we have deep anthropo-psychological statements worthy of further investigation. Underlying the observations of the three ethnographers is the perplexing question as to what constitutes religion. Western categorization of religion did not find a duplicate with luxuriant growth in Igbo environment at their time of research. Nor did Eastern

mystical structure find any semblance of expression in Igbo society. The three researchers emerged from a tradition where it is given that in order to understand a people it is necessary to understand their religion, a view still echoed by Wilfred Cantwell Smith.⁹¹ As already pointed out the Igbo people have no name for religion and as a result, the three ended up studying the people directly in order to distill what appeared to them to be the religion of the Igbo people. Their methodology in a way foreshadowed another way of looking at religion.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith has now drawn attention to a "fundamental step which has been the gradual recognition of what was true in principle, but was not always grasped: that the study of a religion is the study of persons". Smith's argument is that the study of religion includes not only the tangible externals such as "symbols, institutions, doctrines and practices" but also "ideas, ideals, loyalties, passions (and) aspirations that cannot be directly observed".⁹² To him, "religions do not exist up in the sky somewhere, elaborated, finished, and static; they exist in men's hearts".⁹³ By placing religion squarely in men's heart Smith makes a deep observation and at the same time echoes Igbo philosophy "Uka di nobi".⁹⁴

The view of studying persons as a means of arriving at an understanding of religion finds a classic expression in Major Leonard. His conclusion that the product of Igbo

people's observation constitutes their philosophy and that their philosophy is the very essence of their religion deserves restating. Again, he sees their religion as "their entire sociology and existence which the people designate their 'custom'". Here it is easy to see a very broad and holistic view of religion. It is a throwback to the archaic period when philosophy embraced both religion and science. Major Leonard in all probability is unaware of the knowledge treasure he and his colleagues unearthed for global revitalization.⁹⁵ They struck deep at a culture they did not fully comprehend and religion gushed out from its seminal pedestal revealing a massive infrastructure woven with an interdisciplinary fabric.

3.6. OMENANI POWER DERIVATION

The testimony of Basden and Major Leonard is so strong as to leave the auditors of their ethnographic works on the Igbo people in no doubt as to the encompassing force of Omenani. Both need recapitulating. To Basden, the Igbo man

is under the influence of an atmosphere which emanates from the whole tribe. This subliminal consciousness, by which all his movements are controlled, becomes practically a sixth sense. It is inexpressible in words but, nevertheless, extremely powerful in action"⁹⁶.

Basden is convinced of the remarkable affinity between the "Native Law and the Mosaic System".⁹⁷ In a succinct way Major Leonard testifies that "their religion... is now

designated under the general and comprehensive term of custom, as a law from their spiritual fathers unto themselves in the flesh".⁹⁸

Basden and Leonard provide some hints which border on the subjective or the metaphysical. Usages such as "Subliminal consciousness", "a sixth sense", and "their spiritual fathers" point the direction to look in the quest for the power base of "Omenani". In this light Mbonu Ojike's attempt to articulate Omenani for Western audience assumes many levels of meaning.⁹⁹ His definition of Omenani as "doing things in conformity with the constitution of the land or the good of all" is rather a symbolic mode of expressing that which Basden has categorized as "inexpressible in words".

To attempt to determine the root of Omenani or ITR is equally an exercise in the origin of religion in general. In this regard, Pettazzoni postulates that

The sky, in its unbounded immensity, in its perennial presence, in its wondrous luminosity, is particularly well suited to suggest to the mind of man the feeling of a sovereign and mysterious power. The sky elicits in man the feeling of a theophany. This is the feeling of a manifestation of the divine, which finds adequate expression in the notion of a Supreme Being.¹⁰⁰

There is no doubt, the sky inspires in man a feeling of "creatureliness" and evokes in him the idea of a Power greater than him. This admission, however, raises some fundamental question. Does this suggestion by the sky to

"the mind of man the idea of sublimely" account for Basden's notation of the "subliminal consciousness" that moves the Igbo man into varied activities that are bracketed under the denominator of religion? While this deduction is plausible, it is not easily apparent in the practice and expression of Omenani. The sky in the context used by Pettazzoni symbolically presupposes the abode of the Supreme Being and by implication posits the supreme Being as the direct, central Object motivating religious behavior. Omenani does not answer to any such religious expectation in which the immediacy of God or the supreme Being asserts itself and commands straight attention and obedience. Omenani, rather than focus on the sky, is oriented to "the earth, the soil, the land, and also custom, tradition, law, constitution"¹⁰¹. Thus the presence of the sky and all that it connotes is not enough to account for the earth-affirming nature of Omenani and therefore necessitates a deeper search for its motive force.

It is interesting to note, and especially for its significance for the purpose of this study, that Major Leonard drew his conclusion on the actual base of religion as a result of his experience of the Igbo world.

From Leonard's standpoint man is constitutionally programmed to be responsive to his environment. Man's initial response is instinctive and sensational and the result of such a response is the stirring of the emotions.

Continued exposure to the environment leads to mental development and by using the imagination further leads to the isolation of objects that act benevolently on the individuals. "In this way" Leonard observes, "we arrive at the basis from which, through other sensational and emotional agencies emanated those thoughts which resulted in primary religious ceremonial". Objects that excited fear in man triggered "a propitiatory ceremonial to avert the wrath or to secure the support of the avenging or evil spirits".¹⁰²

As Leonard sees it, the concept of confidence and veneration while being spontaneous outcome of man's natural instincts and therefore of his emotions, came into active consciousness as an instrumental check against threats to his existence. As a back-up against man's position of "absolute helplessness" when confronted on all sides by human and spiritual enemies, man turned to the spiritual head of the family. This spiritual head when faced with bewildering circumstances turned to the spirit of his father, "whom during his lifetime he had honored and revered, and to whose spiritual aid, when he was victorious, he at once attributed the victory". Through a progression of alternating triumphs and failures and a correlating invocation of graded spiritual ancestors, man not only developed the idea of hero worship but also the notion of

the "Supreme One" whose power guaranteed victory. Major Leonard then postulates that

having recognized the existence and presence of a Creator and evoked his aid, the next stage in the process was the formation of a system by which the victory of the Supreme One and his great influence were to be commemorated and kept alive.¹⁰³

It should be restated that Leonard has used the reality of Igbo social experience as a launching pad to explain man's initial propitiation of the Supreme One which is the core of all religions. His insight into man's psychological make up as it pertains to instincts, emotions, and imagination is part of the preoccupation of the New story of Science which is geared towards a synthesis of science and religion.¹⁰⁴ What can be said for the moment is that Leonard's approach is another way of looking at the origin of religion. As has already been stated, the emphasis of both Igbo corporate and individual religious expression is primarily geotropic and Leonard recognizes this. His reconstruction of the origin of religion and the interposition of the supremacy of the Supreme Being possibly applied to the Igbo people in prehistoric times and in all probability accounts for the ascription to the Igbo people by both Talbot and Major Leonard of an earlier pure religion which suffered degradation with time.

Major Leonard makes another significant observation which could unlock the key to the foundation of Omenani. He

indicates that "there was in the beginning no conscious effort, on man's part, to develop any religion".¹⁰⁵ He recalls that the word religion, based on its Latin root is but "a mere label, which conveys no meaning beyond the performance of a something binding".¹⁰⁶ He then proceeds to articulate his experiences in Igbo land by stating that "religion is not a mere matter of creed or dogma, but a personal and spontaneous outpouring and uplifting of the emotions from the individual to the infinite".¹⁰⁷

The concept of religion as an engagement in acts that are purported to facilitate the process of "binding back" introduced by Leonard again, leaves many unanswered questions. The questions become more poignant against the background of a posited beginning when religion was either non-existent or rather rudimentary. Does Leonard presuppose a paradisiacal state or a golden era that predated the inception of religion? As a corollary was there a period in time of a "fall" or sinfulness which is equated with separation from man's divine source that necessitated a binding-back or a progressive process of reconciliation?¹⁰⁸ In a positive affirmation of these questions lies the riddle of Omenani.

What is in keeping with the spirit of this inquiry is that such a golden age in which spiritual beings commingled with men existed for the progenitors of human race which includes the Igbo people. During that period men and the

animal kingdom coexisted in right, harmonious relationship.¹⁰⁹ As a result of the declension and consequent degradation, Omenani could be seen as a way instituted for progressive restoration to a period of Golden Age cherished in their consciousness.

For Omenani to be understood and appreciated, it has to be seen against the background of the Igbo world view. This world view forms the foundation of Igbo philosophy and provides the matrix for Igbo responses to its environment.

1. Geoffrey Parrinder, African Traditional Religion. (London: Sheldon Press, 1962), p. 9. See also E. Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion, A Definition (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973), pp. 94-97.

2. Ina Corrine Brown, Understanding Other Cultures (Englewood Cliffs; Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p.7.

3. Idowu, pp. 63-67.

4. Donatus Ibe Nwoga, The Supreme God as Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought (Ekwereazu, Nigeria: Hawk Press, 1984).

5. See Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1958) pp. 1, 10-11. Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, The Nature of Religion, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and world, Inc., 1959, p. 10. Eliade argues that the opposition between the sacred and the profane are rather superficial. In actual fact the profane is a vehicle for the manifestation of the sacred.

6. Ken Wilber, Eye to Eye, The Quest for the New Paradigm (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1983), pp. 83-84.

7. Justification for the use of such blanket labels could be attributed to a possible common origin of all races. It could be asserted that the preservation of the common, original, religious thread in various forms in the simple cultures has perpetuated the usage of these names in Western Literature.

8. P. A. Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1926. Reprint, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 14. See also Major Arthur G. Leonard, The Lower Niger and its Tribes, (London: Macmillan, 1906. Reprint, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 114.

9. Edward B. Tylor, "Animism" in The Making of Man, an Outline of Anthropology, ed. V. F. Calverton (New York: Modern Library, Inc., 1931), pp. 635-636.

10. Ibid., p. 636.

11. Ibid., p. 237.

12. Parrinder, p. 21.

13. Ibid.

14. Idowu, p. 134.

15. Mbiti, p. 8.

16. Neo-Tylorism is coined by the present writer to stimulate further research on "Animism" and to resurrect it in its true light. The new scientific paradigm might yet borrow from Tylor his philosophical concepts.

17. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy S. V. "Panpsychism" by Paul Edwards. See also, Alice A Bailey, Esoteric Psychology Vol. I, (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1962), p. 149.

18. More Research is needed to establish the connection between the ubiquitous modalities of the sacred which Mircea Eliade identified in Patterns in Comparative Religion pp. 10-12, and the "breath of the divine life" cited in Alice A. Bailey's Esoteric Psychology Vol. I, p. 149. It can be posited that animism is the expression of the key factor in the various forms of hierophanies.

19. Tylor obviously did not detach himself from the "evolutionist" or "occidental" perspective of the late 19th. Century. But that position did not obscure his insights in the doctrine of souls, a doctrine that needs revitalizing in the late twentieth century.

20. Tylor, Ibid., p. 639.

21. Ibid., p. 649.

22. Ibid., p. 658.

23. Ibid., p 59.

Consideration has also to be given to the observation that "the soul is the principle of sentiency, underlying all outer manifestation, pervading all forms, and constituting the consciousness of God Himself". Alice A. Bailey, Esoteric Psychology, Vol I., p. 53.

24. Idowu, p. 138.

25. Categorization as a bona-fide Christian calls for caution. Such a Christian could be ardent and practising as well as believing in One God as a result of his Christian upbringing. But no such Christian lives in isolation as the environment suffused with Omenani impacts on him. There is the other problem of the criteria of assessment of a Christian; regular church attendance and participation in all Christian activities do not make one a true Christian.

26. Omenani is the customs of the Igbo people. A close example of it is the tradition of the elders in Biblical

Times. Omenani has not been abrogated. It is active and fully dynamic in content. It is a regulator of behaviour.

27. Mbonu Ojike, My Africa (New York: The John Day Company, 1946), p. 182.

28. Uzo-Path is here portrayed as Omenani in embryo. It indicates in a way the imposition of order in place of chaos. To construct a road, obstacles have to be removed. Following the elimination of the impediments the path becomes functional. In another sense it shows man's wrestling with nature and the subordination of nature to subserve human interests.

29. The Igbo proverb that reflects the situation is "atualu Omalu Omala atulu ofeke ofelu isi banye n'ofia". When a proverb is used to instruct a man, the wise person decodes the proverb and lives by the internalized meaning whereas the stupid person does not comprehend and fumbles. The stupid person is literally said to "shake his head and dash into the bush" (a maze where he probably would be lost).

30. The theme of struggle and maintenance is stressed. It is said that Nature has a way of taking from us what we do not need. Another proverb indicates that if you do not constantly weed and maintain the track/trail that leads to the farm it will definitely "close".

31. Luke 3: 4-5.

32. Matthew 7: 13-14.

33. Ibid., 7:7.

34. Matthew Henry, V:89.

35. St. John 14:6.

36. Ekpere Na Abu. (Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshop), p 115.

37. The Book of Common Prayer. (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1959), p 193.

38. Acts 17:28.

39. The various reactions have been discussed in the preceding chapter.

40. Roland Peterson, Everyone is Right, A New Look at Comparative Religion and its Relation to Science. (Marina del Rey, Ca: Devross and Company, 1986).

41. Gina Germinara, pp 57-58.

42. This is the conceptualized impulse that is back of progressive evolution in Igbo society. It is the basis of social construction of Reality.

43. The Igbo proverbs can be taken as the encapsulations of the garnered wisdom of the Igbo people. Each proverb by itself can constitute a theme for a long sermon.

44. Alice Bailey, The Rays and The Initiations. (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1960), p 38.

45. A definition of Igbo religion from the point of view of this investigator. See page 43-44.

46. In essence Christianity sees the world as evil. Bishop E. H. Bickersteth in his hymn "Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin" reflects this idea.

47. Alice Bailey, Labours of Hercules. p 133.

48. This proverb complements the idea of fulfilling Omenani before "Omenenu". Human activity will therefore, continue untill perfection is achieved.

49. A beginning has been made in the systematic codification of Omenani by Dr. S. N. C. Obi. See Ifemesia, Ibid. p. 35.

50. The personalization of Omenani would also create disputes focusing on the legitimacy of what was purported to have been said. Moreover, the fate of Omenani would rise and fall with perceptions of the lineage in the eyes of the Igbo Society.

51. Igbo Traditional Religion is rooted in democracy and brotherhood. If Christianity is grafted on the essence of ITR, a revitalization could occur in the Christendom in which brotherhood and right human relationship could be fostered. Such a brotherhood is predicated on the indicated fatherhood of God. More is to be said about this view as the writing progresses.

52. The dominant Igbo myth of creation which focused on the Eze Nri - the king of Nri - ascribed much ritual powers and influence to the king and his successors. In the prehistoric times, Nri naturally had custody of much of the customs and gave directions on procedures. At the turn of this century, Nri people continued to exercise leading role in the installation of Onitsha Kings and Ozo titled men. Nri people also had the sole right of cleansing every town of

abominations. In recent years, much decentralization has taken place and the customs are now known by many elders. See E. E. Metuh, "the Religious Dimensions of African Cosmogonies: A case study of Igbo of Nigeria" in West African Religion Vol. 17 No. 2, (Nsukka, Nigeria: University of Nigeria, 1978), pp. 9-21.

53. Parrinder, Ibid. p., 9.

54. Mbiti, p. 2.

The Igbo people continue to be incurably religious. This phenomenon has increased in intensity. This writer visited Igbo land in the spring of 1988, fall of 1988, and in 1989, and again in 1991. On each occasion, he made of point of travelling in commercial vehicles,- "Luxury" buses, vans and station wagons - that transport Igbo passengers either to Lagos or Enugu. On each vehicle there is always a "preacher" who will call the people to prayer soon after the vehicle glides off the "motor park"/bus station and heads to its destination. These "preachers" are ordinary passengers. The phenomenon is so common that anyone can preach or comment on religion even on the spur of the moment.

55. From this perspective, the label heathen or pagan is valid and acceptable as long as its derogatory connotation is abrogated. In this sense, ITR will act as a positive foil to Christianity on the grounds that Christianity is not only said to be marginalized but also operates in a dichotomized world. It is instructive that Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, (CBC) in its late March 1991, Open House, reported a revival of a "Pagan" movement in province of British Columbia.

56. Basden, Ibid., p. 9.

57. Ibid., p. 19.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., p. 11.

60. Ibid., see also p. 31.

61. P. A. Talbot, The peoples of Southern Nigeria Vol. II (London Cass and Company Ltd. 1926; reprint ed., 1969), p. 14.

62. Talbot, Ibid, p. 15.

63. Ibid, pp. 19-20.

64. Ibid. pp.20-21.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid. The significance of his summation will be reflected in the analysis to follow.

67. Major Arthur Glyn Leonard, The Lower Niger and its Tribes (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd. 1906; reprint ed., 1968), p. 20.

68. Leonard, Ibid., p. 79.

69. Ibid., p. 61. Leonard further notes that among the Igbo "progress ... has remained where it was, possibly some thousands of years previous to the Christian era" - Ibid.

70. Ibid., p. 113.

71. Ibid., pp. 115-116.

72. Ibid., p. 57. Again underlining is the writer's as it highlights a key factor in the ITR.

73. Ibid., p. 5.

74. Ibid., p. 55.

75. Ibid., p. 57. Again underlining is the writer's.

76. Ibid., pp. 62-63.

77. Ibid., p. 58.

78. Ibid., p. 56.

79. Ibid., p. 59.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid., p. 67. Underlining is the writer's.

82. Ibid.

83. In the Biblical Gospels, The four Gospel writers wrote from different perspectives which colour their respective works on the life and ministry of the Christ. In the same vein these ethnographers wrote about the Igbo people at the turn of this century but from different standpoints.

84. Matthew 11:7 (REV).

85. "Consciousness of abstracting" amounts to picking up some characteristics of a phenomenon while ignoring others and at the same time assuming the partial selection as the total

characteristics. "Most of us tend to take our quick impressionistic evaluations of things to be equivalent to the total truth about them". Gila Cerminara, Insights for the Age of Aquarius, A Handbook for Religious Sanity. (Wheaton, Ill: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1973), pp. 57-58. "Psychologist's Fallacy" is "a failure to realize the impossibility of seeing anything except through the screen of the individual's own experience". Marc Edmund Jones, Occult Philosophy (Boulder, Colorado: Sabian Publishing Society, 1948), p. 8.

86. The story of the six blind men and the elephant is world-famous and requires no retelling and citation. No critical evaluation of the ethnographers is contemplated as such an exercise falls outside the scope of the present work. Interest, however, is centred on what the ethnographers have said and the extent of their understanding of the target people - the Igbo.

87. Basden's puzzlement is a result of his confining the Igbo world to the limited empirical and observable level without consideration of the holism and the world of meaning implicated.

88. Major Leonard in his insight covers the whole holographic gamut. His conception of "Naturism" is holistic and also subsumes "animism" which in effect is neo-Tylorism. He penetrates behind the veil of materialistic science without knowing it, in order to reveal the gem of the true science.

89. Basden, Ibid., p. 216.

90. Leonard, Ibid., p. 107.

91. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Comparative Religion: Whither - and Why?" in The History of Religions Essays in Methodology. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 34.

92. W. C. Smith, Ibid., pp 34-35.

93. Ibid.

94. When a Christian is asked why he missed or skipped church attendance, the response sometimes: "Uka di nobi" meaning that worship occurs in one's heart. It is usually a cynical response indicating that mere participation in worship is not the ultimate approach to God. It also means that a one to one encounter with Divinity seems the right mode. At another level it is a response calculated to deride Christians

whose behaviour patterns do not accord with their religious professions because of impurity of heart.

95. There is much talk about a marriage between science and religion. In most academic circles, the emphasis is on inter-disciplinary approach which if further interpreted means holism. In the Igbo world there is no separation and in their philosophy all disciplines are fused as will be explained later. The situation is best articulated by Will Durant: Human knowledge had become unmanageably vast; every science had begotten a dozen more, each subtler than the rest... philosophy itself, which had once summoned all sciences to its aid in making a coherent image of the world and an alluring picture of the good, found its task of coordination too stupendous for its courage, ran away from all these battlefronts of truth, and hid itself in recondite and narrow lanes, timidly secure from the issues and responsibilities of life... No wonder that all the world applauded when James Harvey Robinson sounded the call for the removal of these barriers and the humanization of modern knowledge". Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: Pocket books, 1961), pp. vii-ix.

96. Basden, Ibid., p. 10.

97. Ibid., p. 11.

98. Leonard, Ibid., p. 67.

99. Ojike, Ibid., p. 182.

100. Raffaele Pettazzoni, "The supreme being: Phenomenological Structure and Historical Development" in The History of Religions Essays in Methodology ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 59.

101. Ojike, Ibid., p. 182.

102. Leonard, Ibid., pp. 86-89.

103. Ibid., pp. 88-89.

104. Robert M. Augros and George N. Stanciu, The New Story of Science (Toronto: Bantam Book, Inc. 1986), pp. 55-59. See Mary Baily, A Learning Experience (New York): Lucis Publishing Company, 1990), pp. 137-138.

105. Leonard, Ibid., p. 88.

106. Ibid., p. 83.

107. Ibid., p. 84.

108. Christianity is established on the redemption work of the Christ. The concept of redemption is meaningless if not predicated on sin or fall of Biblical Adam. Through Christ, Christians believe that man is reconciled to God. Here again the necessity of "binding-back" to Divinity becomes imperative.

109. Some Igbo proverbs purport such a golden age of harmonious interaction with animals. The concept of regeneration embodied in Isaiah 11:6 assumes an earlier period of such a relationship. There are incipient signs of this restoration in the activities of "Green Peace" movement.

CHAPTER 4

IGBO WORLD VIEW

4.1. IGBO COSMOLOGY

The Igbo people do not have a central, unifying tradition of creation myth. However, the Nri myth of creation appears to be widely known. The extent of its influence in precolonial times is now hard to determine. There are two other major variants, which in all possibility came into being as result of the operations of historical forces.

The Nri creation myth has it that at the dawn of time, Chukwu/Chineke, God created a super human being Eri, who mysteriously descended from the sky. Eri found himself standing in the morass of the world with water all around him in the vicinity of what has now come to be the hills south of Anambara River. Eri appealed to Chineke regarding his plight and Chineke sent down a blacksmith who blew on the waterlogged earth with fire using his bellows until dry land appeared. Eri is said to have married and multiplied.

Eri's first son, Nri one day became hungry and appealed to Chukwu. Chukwu asked him to kill and decapitate his senior son and daughter, and after making sacred purification marks (ichi) on their foreheads, to bury the heads in small mounds in simulation of crop cultivation. Nri complied with this order from Chukwu. Following this and

with time out of the head of the son grew yam (ji) and out of the head of the daughter taro (ede) grew.

The blacksmith sent by Chukwu to make the ground dry and therefore fit for habitation became the progenitor of the Awka people who in Igboland, since that time, have been the foremost blacksmiths.¹

The Nri creation myth is loaded with meaning and great signification. It, therefore stands to reason that emphasis should not be placed on the historicity, authenticity and rational acceptability of the legend. To evaluate the logical structuring of the myth in the light of contemporary human evolution of consciousness and societal norms would be to overlook the spiritual impulse which the myth embodied.²

First and foremost, there is the divine involvement, if not direct participation, in the coming into being of "ani", land. Chukwu acted through human agency. His words impelled Eri, Nri and the anonymous blacksmith to act with his authority. The descent of Eri and the blacksmith postulates a mystical time when man interacted with spiritual beings in a spiritual world. The creation of land by accredited divine emissary proffers sanctity to earth and thus the sacramentality of Ani is acknowledged. Perhaps more mysterious and awe-inspiring is the derivation of Yams and Cocoyam from the decapitated heads of son and daughter of Nri. Not only does this legitimize animism and the religious festivals associated with the planting and

harvesting of crops but also wide-spread cases of metempsychosis reported by early ethnographers in Igboland and allegedly still going on.³ By the same token, the peripatetic Awka blacksmiths and craftsmen execute divinely ordained function in Igbo society while the Nri descendants held the key priestly initiation rituals and kingship installations in precolonial era.⁴

The Nnewi creation myth has a local flavor and is not as encompassing as the Nri Myth. In the beginning Chukwu lived in the skyey heaven with some primordial beings who acted as his emissaries and carried out operations and tasks as assigned to them by Chukwu. Of these superhuman beings Edo, a female, was the one that was most favoured because of her assiduity. Tradition has it that one day Chukwu assigned Edo the task of surveying the firmament. Before undertaking her mission Chukwu gave her a piece of his scepter made of Nzu (white chalk) and an earthen-ware pot containing water. As Edo was in the process of executing her mission, she lost her bearing. Using her resource, she began to grind the white chalk and thereafter scattered the particles until they hardened to form ani (land). Edo descended on the land she made. Exhausted and lonesome, she needed company and assistance. Chukwu came to her aid and turned the four pieces of chalk Edo left in the pot of water into human figures. Then the breath from Chukwu's mouth gave them life and endowed them with human characteristics. The four sons

were named Otolu, Uruagu, Umudim and Nnewichi respectively in a descending order of ranks. Edo is alleged to have addressed her four sons in the following words: "I am the mother of you all - Nnewi, and this land on which you are walking in ANA-EDO - that is, my prize from Chukwu because the "Nzu" with which you are made is special gift and privilege from Chukwu."

These four sons of Edo became the primogenitors of Nnewi as each became the head of each of the four villages - Otolu, Uruagu, Umudim and Ichi. Tradition has it that these four went to Aro-Chukwu, another Igbo town, and took four beautiful sisters as their wives. Ana-Edo - "the land of Edo" is their common heritage and mother of all Nnewi. Awolalu and Dopamu observes that today in Nnewi, Edo is the greatest divinity and her worship transcends all other foreign religious practices. The Edo cult is firmly rooted and observed in two ways - one by the women every seven years, and another by men every nine years. During the festival all sons and daughters of Ana-Edo come home to celebrate the Ikwu-Aru festival of Edo, meaning - re-dedication of body and soul to Edo. The venue of this great festival is at Nkwo-Edo square or spot where Edo first landed. This Ikwu-Aru Edo is a week-long festival and during that period the whole town is in the gayest festive mood.⁵ This myth is as old as the Nnewi town itself and shares some common attributes with other creation myths which are found

the world over. Suffice it to indicate that it gives supernatural and sacred endorsement to the foundation of the Nnewi town with its four villages. Also it underlies the integration and cohesion that exists in the town today.⁶

The significance of the myth can be appreciated from Alasdair MacIntyre's characterization of myths. He observed that myths evade the sharp "questions about truth and falsity." He further states that "a myth is living or dead, not true or false". In his thinking a myth cannot be refuted "because as soon as you treat it as refutable, you do not treat it as a myth but as a hypothesis or history ... (Myths) express the collective mentality of a given age".⁷ A myth is, therefore, what has been indicated to a group of people and as a result conditions group behavior.

In the Nri and Nnewi myths the divine origin of the Igbo man, as is the case in some parts of the world, is apparent. Constitutionally man is an aggregation of differentiated matter plus a touch of divinity, which in Igbo land is called "Chi".⁸ In the same token, the lower kingdoms in nature - animal, vegetable and mineral - are of divine origin. Cosmologically all things that are on earth materialized as a result of divine impulse. This divine impulse is the germ of interconnectedness and interdependence which is clearly noticeable in Igbo consciousness and manifests in their corporate behavior.⁹

In the Igbo world, it stands to reason that God stands at the apex of the creative process. God's position within the universe is an incontrovertible one. He is Chineke, the supreme God that creates. There are other local variants of His name such as Chukwu, the Great Chi or the Great God, Olisa, "Obasi di Nelu", Olisa, Osebuluwa and Eke.¹⁰ Chukwu does no wrong.¹¹ "Chukwu anabaro laru" meaning that God does not go to bed and sleep like ordinary human beings. He is eternally active.¹² This anthropomorphic conception of God is not surprising from the Igbo standpoint. As evidenced in the myths of creation, anthropomorphism flows from the initial interaction, between God and His primordial emissaries. Resort to anthropomorphism, then constitutes an approach that renders the initial creative act intelligible to the human mind and facilitates the transmission of that process from man to man through the medium of language.

The predominant act of God in creation is already noted. If He is not directly involved in creation, He is the "prime mover". The descent from the skyey heaven of man irrespective of the circumstances prompting the descent can, at a close scrutiny, be equated with the contemporary "Big Bang" theory.¹³ Subscription to the big bang theory, however does not nullify the supreme position of Chineke in the created order.

It is in the descent from the abode of God that lies the genesis and force of Omenani. Granting this position,

the definition of religion as a process of "binding back" becomes momentous. In this light, religion becomes an all-encompassing and all-inclusive preoccupation of mankind. For the Igbo people religion embraces all that a person does on earth as a prequalification for ultimate and eventual union with his divine source. This Igbo window on religion is gaining currency in Anthropological researches. Charles H. Long agrees with the critics who claim that a *sui generis* approach to the nature of religion is impossible. The position of the critics is that "religious experience and expression must be reduced to the level of biology, psychology, economics, or social structures before they can be understood". The conclusion they drew is that "religion...functions as a sanction and an ideology for these more essential and primary human relations. What is real or ultimate is not the religious experience but the economic, social, or psychological equilibrium which religion helps to maintain".¹⁴

While the views of the critics of Rudolf Otto delineated by Long come close to the Igbo religious experience, vestiges of the standard western approach remain in the sense that the materialists would see religious experience as the end of the disciplines enumerated. Moreover an existentialist would see the posture of the critics as a justification for his philosophical standpoint. To the Igbo people however, all activities have obvious

religious content in them. In other words, religion is the motive force behind existence. Deep in their consciousness is a dim recollection of a paradisiacal state or golden age characterized by order, harmony, purity and holiness. These recollections of divine attributes in synthesis constitute the matrix the Igbo people seek to replicate in Omenani. Thus Omenani is a drive toward "practical godliness".¹⁵ While Omenani is geotropic, it embodies many prohibitions and objectionable factors tending toward "non-being". Any behavior considered abhorrent is regarded as an offence against "Ani" and in turn is not only an individual but a social pollutant.

The force of Omenani still calls for further elucidation. Any rational explanation is to be predicated on the symbolism of the Igbo creation myths. In the first place, the divine intention or purpose in the "descent" that occurred is inscrutable. What is clear from the myths is that there is no abandonment of either Chukwu's emissaries or man implicated in the accounts. Whether it was man's errancy or prodigality that sequentially necessitated the concept of sin and separation, Chukwu came to the aide of the primordial beings that invoked Him and assisted in the work of creation. In other words the act of forming land or ani had his blessing. His energy mediated through the primogenitor and galvanized the earth with life. Although the accounts of the myths do not give us all the details

there is an implied sense of satisfaction with the created order. It is that magical moment of creation when, according to the Nri tradition, fire and air were involved in the emergence of land from water, that is the reference point of Omenani. Nto-Ani, the foundation of the earth is the dating of Omenani. In Igbo consciousness, therefore, customs and practices that are said to originate from Nto ani, the foundation of the earth are not challenged as they are ordinations from the dawn of time. Nto ani is, therefore, the inception of the conditioned and the concrete of which the earth is the known epitome.

Two hypotheses can be posited to explain the Igbo preoccupation with Omenani. The first hypothesis focuses on a period of order and harmony in which man interacted on earth with superhuman beings, the animal world and the totality of nature. But because of some form of contamination and pollution caused by man, the interaction was terminated by Chukwu.¹⁶ Omenani in this case is the natural reaction of the premogenitors of the Igbo people to the sad experience of the imposed barrier between them and divinity, a barrier that brought death into the world. The post-"barrier" period was one of expiation and penance, a period of pain and struggle. This would mean that man was left to gain experience and work his way back to divinity.

The other hypothesis centers on the descent from skyey heaven and the veil that was interposed between the human

kingdom and the spiritual realm. Here the purpose of the descent is couched in a mystery and must have been obliterated out of normal consciousness by passage through the "Rivers of Forgetfulness".¹⁷ Man, however, subconsciously is sensible of his divinity. Separated by the veil, man has no choice but to engage in Omenani, that which obtains on earth. This position gives added meaning to Parrinder's observation that the Igbo people and the Africans in general are "earth-affirming". The Igbo people in particular affirm it with gusto. The latter hypothesis might give the impression of unwonted materialism and fatalism. This impression is quite remote from the Igbo social experience as will be subsequently indicated.

The two forgoing hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. They both offer insights into the rationale and the hold of Omenani on the Igbo people. These hypotheses are born of indications from the Igbo world. Whatever interpretations they may carry cannot uproot the reality of Omenani that prompted them. Omenani remains the charter and goal-director for the Igbo society.

Omenani, from what has been indicated in the preceding chapter does not imply the worship of "Ani" - Land. Omenani carries the connotation of learning and especially "doing". Any one engaged in the act of omenani would usually refer to the exercise as "ime omenani" that is, to "do" omenani or fulfil omenani. In other words, the individual or group

involved in the act of omenani is implementing an imperative urge implanted from the dawn of time, that is, since "nto ani", the foundation of the earth. The ultimate end of Omenani is "practical godliness", and this constitutes the charter of the Igbo people as a collectivity.

4.2. IGBO CONCEPTION OF NATURE

The Webster's Dictionary defines Nature as "the external world in its entirety". For the purpose of this investigation, nature is operationalised as the Divine objective manifestation. It is the phenomenal world that leads to the generation of empirical data because of its appeal to human five-dimensional sensory mechanism. From the Igbo cosmological standpoint, this definition transcends the Realist's or materialist's conception of the empirical world that is limited only to a first level of a tripartite world.¹⁸ To the Igbo, the tripartite world is coterminous and holistic and it is best demonstrated by a hologram.¹⁹ The Igbo see underlying the objective manifestation some vitalizing force and some coherent purpose which cannot be accounted for in terms of matter alone.²⁰ The manifested world, therefore, makes impact on both the exoteric and inner senses of the Igbo people. That world constitutes nature, which for the purpose of description and better

understanding is divided into four - Earth, Water, Space and Heaven.²¹

4.2.1. ANI - EARTH AND THE EARTH GODDESS AND MOTHER

The Igbo creation myth has already been discussed in the foregoing. That account stresses the supreme position of Chineke - God - in the act of creation and acknowledges the sacramentality of Ani. The immediacy of Ani in the consciousness of the Igbo people and the resultant attachment to it, however is not emphasized. It is especially mentioned that Ani acquired the status of a divinity. Focus was on the derivation of Omenani from the foundation of the earth - Nto ani. Inference is only left to be made that Ani as part of created order is an integral component of nature. For a better appreciation of the views of the Igbo people and their attachment to Ani, the Biblical account of the creation story in the Book of Genesis which is well-known, needs to be recalled. Important in that sacred delineation are the facts of the "Breath of God" and the plurality of the primordial beings participating in the act of creation under the superintendence of God.²²

Commenting on the initial outpouring of the spirit of God,

²³ C. W. Leadbeater says:

The result of this first great outpouring [the 'moving' of the Spirit] is the quickening of that wonderful and glorious vitality which pervades all matter

(inert though it may seem to our dim physical eyes), so that atoms of the various planes develop, when electrified by it, all sorts of previously latent attractions and repulsions, and enter into combinations of all kinds."²⁴

Another significant and relevant passage is the mystery that St. John attempts to decode in his gospel. Writing of the Logos, the Word, he observes that "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made".²⁵ This text is the core of the Christian Nicene Creed in which Christ is believed to be "the only - begotten Son of God, Begotten of the Father before all worlds; ...Being of one substance with the Father; Through whom all things were made: Who for us men ...came down from heaven".²⁶

In the two foregoing critical references to the Bible lie what could be identified as the doctrinal infrastructure of Christianity and an indicator of the pervasiveness and ubiquity of the Christ impulse in the created order²⁷.

A close look at the Christian doctrinal position is very illuminating. The Christian standpoint gives added flesh to the Igbo view. But what is of great interest is the fact that the Igbo religious structure is of the same philosophical foundation as it derives from the same God. The idea of "Breath" is a common feature of the two approaches. When the Igbo people use the foundation of the earth as the reference point for their custom and tradition, is it not a reference to the primary materiality of the Divine essence with all the known ascribable attributes?

Indeed, that reference to the foundation of the earth is, in fact, the grounding of the ageless wisdom which is otherwise known as perennial philosophy. In other words, it is a reference to the time when the Logos initially assumed form.²⁸ Nto Ani - the foundation of the earth if reduced to modern technological symbolism is a reference to the launching of our planet, earth, in space at the dawn of time on its divine mission. This mission implicates divine purpose, will and desire.

Omenani in the light of this divine mission, becomes the constant pursuit of the pristine objective which the remote ancestors of the Igbo people apprehended at the dawn of time when the earth was formed. The earth - Ani not only keeps custody of the sacred objective but in fact embodies it and bears divine imprint.²⁹ Heraclitus is credited with saying that "God has poured himself into the world of objects" and that "if we take these objective and leave God unheeded, we take them in earnest as 'the tombs of God'".³⁰ As has been pointed out earlier, the earth - Ani, is the most concrete object into which this outpouring is most concentrated.

This notion of outpouring brings to the fore the metaphysical significance of "Odinani" (What inheres in the land/earth).³¹ Literally, "Odinani" connotes that which the earth embodies. It is a reference to the motivating, recycling and regenerating capability of the earth.

Essentially numinous, "Odinani" is the residual, divine impulse resident in the earth and constitutes the main instrument that calls for harmony, order, and purity. Without its coherent force the earth would disintegrate. But suffice it to observe that the significance of "Odinani" as it couches the relation between spirit and matter is not exhausted. Omenani is only a first preliminary step in the execution of Odinani.

By virtue of the repository of the divine essence in Ani, Ani is anthropomorphized and is credited with a modicum of consciousness.³² In Igbo land, Ani is in fact a deity and is called mother earth. In Ifemesia's words,

"The one phenomenon which most effectively demonstrate both the complete integration and intrinsic humanness of Igbo cosmology is the transcendental cult of Mother Earth (Ani, Ali, Ana, Ala). The earth was far and away the most important single factor in the many-sided life of the traditional Igbo community".³³

Among other things, the earth bears and harbours innumerable plants and animals and also nourishes and sustains them. It is the sources of springs and streams. Into its womb are lodged the remains of Igbo ancestors and those of their descendants. Through its inherent power, the three subhuman kingdoms - the mineral, the plant and the animal - exhibit remarkable interdependence and

interconnectedness and as a result establish a linkage with the human kingdom.

In all probability, the most momentous accreditation to Igbo with reverence to Ani comes from Pope John II who acknowledges the earth, Ani as the first ritual each time he sets foot in any country he visits. It is traditional for him to touch the earth with his forehead soon after disembarking from a plane. This ritual in Igbo land is known as "Ikpo isi ani" (Bowing the head till it touches the ground).

It is possible for an Igbo Christian to glibly dissociate himself from any practices allegedly tainted with "paganism" because of Christian and missionary attitudes. To such a person, especially if well educated, "ikpo isi ani" such as the Pope indulges in is an abhorrendum. But this scorn from the educated Christian does not reduce or attenuate the values and the sacred position of Ani in Igbo consciousness, as these are transmitted through the Igbo language which the Christianized Igbo uses like his other non-christianized relatives and associates. The use of the Igbo language which embodies the meanings of the practices scorned shows the spurious nature and hypocrisy of the disposition.

The immediacy of Ani and the way Ani looms large to the point of being taken for granted is illustrated by the

following. These usages feature in everyday speech to the extent that the esoteric and metaphysical implications seem to have slipped out of normal consciousness. But be that as it may, Ani remains the matrix of verbal formulations.

"Too nti n'ani" - Lay the ear to the ground - earth - Ani. easily comes to mind. This really means to lay yours ears flat on the ground and listen to Ani- Earth. It is an injunction given out of hand to one who is not paying attention or to one who is fumbling. Contextually it is used when mistakes have been made by the addressee as a result of not following instructions. It is also a prefatory injunction for careful and close listening to an anticipated statement, or advice of great importance. Metaphysically, however, the expression derives from the fact that Ani is an embodiment of wisdom and therefore, an excellent mentor as well as an instructor. Without equivocation anyone who lives by Odinani or Omenani will not err or stray in the act of daily living. The other point of interest is the obvious recognition by the Igbo people that the "ear" is one of the sense organs for the appreciation and comprehension of nature. By the use of this specific auditory sense organ, knowledge is equally appropriated. While Christ as the objectivated Logos draws attention to the utility of the ear in the injunction, he that hath ear, let him hear, (the word), Igbo people stress the primacy and the propinquity of Ani as the initial source of direction and knowledge. What

the Igbo man is saying is that the ear is so programmed or so constituted that it is capable of picking up data geared to successful living from Ani. Knowledge in this context is both exoteric as well as esoteric being an emanation from a deity.³⁴

Another classic is the phrase "Anyu ilu Ani". This in a literal sense means "eye reaching the ground - Ani". It is an evaluative expression for appraisal of a person new to an environment. This person could be a house help, - a maid or a servant or a would-be bride visiting the home of the suitor for behavioral assessment by relatives and close elders. In the case of a future bride the testing and silent interview is subtle, rigorous and yet comprehensive. If the informal or formal verdict is given in the form of "anyu luru/ruru ya ani," his or her eyes are close to the earth, it is a warm approbation of behaviour and conduct. "Anyu ilu ani" in reference to a person is a testimony of adequate socialization. In other words, the interviewee has conformed to prescribed social conventions within the interactions involved in the set ring-pass-not.

It is interesting to point out that a negative appraisal is expressed in the form of "anyu idi n'enu". In this case the "eye is said to be up or high". The eye is focused upwards instead of downwards to Ani. The simple meaning is that the referee has not been well-bred. He or she is careless, mannerless and untutored in the accepted

social conventions.³⁵ The result of such a statement is the rejection of the person's candidacy or the institution of remedial procedures to bring about proper socialization of the individual.

"Anya iru ani" like "ito nti n'ani", brings to the fore the use of ani as the reference point for acceptable social behaviours. It is necessary to recall that the Igbo say that "ife anacho n'uko enu ka afulu n'uko ani - that which is sought in the upper rack is right here below.

The sense of touch as perceived by the Igbo in relation to ani connotes obvious mystical element at work. It is generally said that "nwa zolue ukwu n'ani nnaya obi esie ya ike" - When a child sets foot on the land of his father, his heart becomes strong". There is an implied mystical protection afforded a resident by ani. It is understood that this protection is predicated on good behaviour. Dr. Ifemesia observes also that "at the start of a wrestling bout ... each contestant genuflected and touched the ground with both hands in reverence to Mother Earth, whose help he thus solicited during the precarious encounter."³⁶

The mystical power of Ani has been extrapolated into Christianity in Igbo land. "Ka anyi gbue ipkere n'ani" - Let us place our knees on the ground - ie an Igbo translation of "Let us pray". Such a call to prayer is responded to with such an automatism that no one hardly thinks of the metaphysical symbolism encoded in these words. That act of

kneeling, if given some thought, transcends mere humility which it is purported to implicate. It "connects" the Christian worshipper to that which has been since creation in the sense it is articulated in Igbo consciousness. It is indeed kneeling before and objectivated presence to the extent that that act alone is sufficient and efficacious that in itself it constitutes silent an unvoiced prayer. Also during the reading of the sentences leading to general confession in the Igbo Christian churches, the priest or the liturgist says "ka ayi kwuputa n'obi di ume-ala(ani)" - Let us confess with a mind/heart analogous to the lower breath i.e., breath that is associated with ani. This is an Igbo translation of a confession with "a humble heart". Ume-ani" is the "lower breath", which is exhalation as opposed to inhalation, the upper breath. What is important is the coupling of Ani with this preferred breath and therefore a vindication of perpetuation of Ani in Igbo consciousness.

Ani is sacred and abhors pollution "Ilu ani" is to pollute ani, and from it is derived aruru ani which is an act characteristic of a miscreant or a social deviant. To pollute ani is an act of abomination. Pollution in this context does not necessarily mean an offence committed directly against Ani but one directed against one's fellow man. Here the yardstick of measurement is omenani.

In the man - ani relationship is found the genesis of "transparent living" and the impulse to ordered, peaceful

coexistence. Ani maintains the social balance and any derangement of that equilibrium by humans unleashes dire consequences. To maintain this concept of balance and justice on the human level, the Earth Deity has a priest in various localities. "The priest of the Earth Deity was a mild and modest, a peaceful and uncontroversial, personality". As Ifemesia remarks "Mother Earth (Aja Ani, Aja Ala) was the most sworn oath a person could be called upon to swear. Quarrels, violence and litigations of all kinds were strictly proscribed during her sacred month, lest the crops and flocks should not multiply, and children not be born, because Mother Earth had withheld fertility and increase and prosperity"³⁷ Dr. Ifemesia cites P. A. Talbot's eye witness account confirming not only the high esteem of Ani but also the translation of her recognised attributes into religious behaviour.

Perpetuation and continuity of Ani in

the hearts and minds" of the Igbo people is made concrete in some of the names Igbo people assume. These personal names are expressive of Igbo world view : "Achebe (Anichebe : May Mother Earth protect); Agbogu, (Anigbogu, Anigboo ogu : May Mother Earth settle the fight, resolve the conflict); Akwuba (Ani kwe uba : May Mother Earth permit increase, if Mother Earth permits increase ...); Anikwenze (May Mother Earth permit [the enjoyment of] titled-prestige ...)"³⁸

Major Leonard's observation is quite appropriate at this juncture. He states that "with these natives there is no such thing as theory ... what they believe in they

practise, or to reverse the order, and be still more accurate, what they practice they believe".³⁹ With Leonard's indisputable observation in mind, an appreciation could be made of Dr. Ifemesia's testimony. He notes that

even today, in public gatherings of Igbo people, one can hear an elder, be he Christian or Traditionalist, intone the invocative apostrophe, preceding a libation : An'Igbo mul'ayi, ayi ekene-i: 'Igbo land, which gave us birth, we hail thee!'⁴⁰

Though Ani looms large in the minds of the Igbo people, it is not all that is in nature. While its key position remains unquestioned, it does not function in isolation. There is a recognised interaction between Ani, Space and the Skyey heaven.

4.2.2. WATER

Water in the Igbo world view is part of the created order and therefore an aspect of nature. It does not acquire the same global deification among the Igbo people as is the case with Ani. There is the recognition by the Igbo people that "there are not many Ales (Anis) but one alone. All those worshipped among different nations are but parts of the one great goddess".⁴¹ The oneness of Ani does not apply to the water bodies that are rather fragmented in the form of rivers, lakes and springs. In some localities water is hard to come by. The geographical location of the Igbo people

precludes them from cherishing the view of massive oceans that unite to form one mass of water body. But this is not to say that water - mmiri - does not mean the same thing to the Igbo people in terms of its utility and mystical worth. Water is generally considered sacred, as in Egypt and other lands. "Water is used in many rites, purification is by water and it is associated with the production of life".⁴² Water in Igbo thinking acquired its sanctity at the dawn of time. The Igbo creation myth - the Nri myth - postulates the pre-existence of water before the creation of land. Equally so, the Biblical creation story, already cited in the foregoing, observes that "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters".

Some rivers and springs are so sacred that the fetching or drawing of water from them is prohibited on specially designated holy days of the Igbo week. Breach of such a prohibition provokes severe punishment and consequent atonement. While the sacredness of water is more or less taken for granted, what is revered most are the entities, visible and invisible that make water their abode. Chiefly, these living creatures that inhabit the water are fish, crocodiles and snakes. Basden gives a vivid picture of his experience:

"No such fish may be taken from the stream; should one by chance find its way into a water-pot it must be restored as quickly as possible to its native haunts. If a woman inadvertently takes one home in her pot, she must return

with it to the stream without delay, and make an offering, seeking forgiveness on the plea that the fish was taken

unwittingly."⁴³

Basden adds that "these fish (and sometimes crocodiles) are commonly spoken of as 'our mother' (nne-ayi), the idea being, that they are the protectors of the people." In his estimation "this appears to savour somewhat of ancestor worship".⁴⁴ He also recognises that "over the greater part, if not over the whole, of the Igbo country the python is sacred, more especially the smaller species called ekke-ntu". To injure any of the pythons constitutes a very serious offence. If a man has the misfortune to kill one accidentally he will mourn for a year and abstain from shaving his head".⁴⁵ The situation is far deeper than the calculations of Basden and in fact transcends mere totemism as embodied in anthropological literature.⁴⁶

The fact is that the Igbo people enter into mystical relationship with these sacred aquatic animals.⁴⁷ The animals act as vehicles for the souls of some people. It is claimed that the souls of some ancestors find temporary repose in some of the water animals while awaiting reincarnation.⁴⁸ In some other cases a person can consciously "enter" an animal and through the animal wreak a vengeance on his enemy.⁴⁹ Some of the water spirits are malignant to the extent of "overturning canoes, especially those of men of whom their aid had been invoked".⁵⁰

In Igbo land it is well-known that some of the water-spirits are mostly beneficent. The pythons in particular, sometimes come out at night and "creep into beds and sleep by a person's side". If this happens it is taken to be a good omen as well as a blessing.⁵¹

Another documented complex relationship with the water spirits exists. Some water spirits are claimed to have "earth" brides whom they visit "every eighth day". Some of these brides are priestesses who are obliged to keep themselves holy on the days of the impending visits. In exceptional cases one or two of the priestesses have in addition human husbands. Talbot was told that:

In the olden days the spirit of such a woman used to go down into the water for the space of seven days after which she usually returned to her own people. When the serpent husband comes up to visit his wife he is invisible to ordinary eyes, but the priestess herself can see and talk with him in his shrine".⁵²

This mysterious marital relationship with water spirits has lingered into the present time. A canon in the Anglican Church, interviewed by this researcher in Onitsha in 1988, disclosed a confessional statement from a young Christian girl who was a victim of such an under water matrimonial relationship.⁵³ A native doctor interviewed in the same period at Nnewi gave a parallel account of a sixty-five year old Christian(woman) under his treatment.

This strange underwater marriages with supersensible entities would appear incredible. Marriage with water spirits is a social reality in Igbo land. When such a relationship is established and detected, efforts are made by qualified native practitioners to detach the victim from such a tie especially when the connection affects orthodox marriages of real, normal life adversely. The general symptom is multiple personalities or schizophrenia. Some suffer from dissociation and lack of identification with reality of every day normal consciousness.

There is no doubt that many philosophical and phenomenological questions are provoked by the idea of human, underwater spouses. Of crucial importance is how and when are these relationships entered into and are the victims fully conscious when they contract the relationship? Again it is outside the scope of this investigation to probe the subject further. However, the phenomenon has tremendous potential for an interesting study.

Water in spite of all that is claimed to be going on within it that is not visible to the naked eye remains a key factor in human survival on earth. While it is recognised as a sustainer of life, the Igbo also dread it as a dispenser of death. For instance death by drowning in water is regarded as bad death and the victim is denied decent sacramental burial. Water generally is credited with various powers. One of such powers is the ability to neutralise some

dangerous charms and bad medicines. On the basis of this potency, harmful and dangerous medicines/charms are thrown into rivers and lakes. Some of these are claimed to have burst into flames on touching water.

Whichever way water is viewed, it is from Igbo stand point part and parcel of nature and shares the duality that is inherent in manifested order.

4.2.3. SPACE

Space as part of nature is difficult to define as its tangibility is not apparent to the sense organs in the way "Ani" and water are to the Igbo people. This difficulty, however, is minimized by the fact that space is seen as a medium in nature through which tangible and invisible entities manifest themselves. The principal manifestation of nature in space is "Ikuku" - wind. Sometimes "ikuku" is taken to be synonymous with space and this element of intangibility and indefiniteness is clearly expressed in the proverb - "Ikuku ama n'onya" - The wind cannot be trapped or snared. This is an indication of the wind's lack of concreteness even though it is a powerful force in nature.

The breath that is taken and which symbolizes life in an individual emanates from space. When breath is abstracted as a denotation of death, that life essence returns to space. This vital interaction between space and man gives the Igbo person a reinforcement in his attribution of

sanctity to nature. Moreover, the connection between this breath that stimulates the rhythmic inhalation and exhalation in man and the "Great Breath" which assumed "the character of pre-cosmic Ideation " at the time of creation⁵⁴ has lapsed into a taken-for-granted status in people's consciousness. The recession of the link between the human breath and "*fons et origo*" of force into the back-burner of daily consciousness does not in anyway imply severance nor interruption of the purpose back of "the vast scheme of cosmic Evolution". The continuity of that link in space gives added momentum to the Igbo people's operationalisation of animism. In Christian parlance it is nothing short of an exemplification of "spiritual ubiquity".

Space acting as a link between the skyey heaven and ani assumes importance as the abode where rain is formed and through it rain falls to the ground. All the phenomena associated with rain such as rainbow and lightning pass through space during their manifestation. The Igbo people exhibit their penetration by the indication that thought or ideas which are now known to be "things' reside in space. It is generally said that "Uche ebiro ebi". The statement categorically notes that "thought or ideas" do not dwell in a person but come from space. This metaphysical apprehension calls for further amplification but for the moment the Igbo perception throws some light on what spiritual masters call "Rain-cloud of knowable things". These "knowable things" are

real and as a totality constitute the source of various forms of impressions. These are ideas that come from the universal mind and are supposed to float in space. The location of these ideas which are spiritual in space is made meaningful by Igbo word for understanding.

A further analysis of the word understanding as used by the Igbo people gives the impression of life in the environing space but this life is of high order. Very often, in a group or gathering assembled for problem solving or for the resolution of a conflict, the presiding elder be he a Christian or a traditionalist invokes the impartation of "Mmuo nghota" - (the spirit of understanding) At the time of the invocation, the "spirit of understanding" had not settled within the group. The hope is that as the meeting progresses the invoked spirit or atmosphere will prevail. Underlying the expression "mmuo nghota" is the implied belief that understanding is the positive manipulation of a spirit. The spirit in question establishes its residency in space and comes into operation when readiness is demonstrated by the invoking group. The spirit is moved by the law of attraction, a law that is basic in Igbo peoples' interaction with nature.⁵⁵

The spirit functions under the same scientific principle that produces wind as a result of pressure differential.⁵⁶

In another sense the spirit is mediated through words, words that penetrate the hearts and minds of the individuals that compose the group and there effect the change thereby inducing "understanding". Words embody thoughts or ideas. As has been indicated in the foregoing the Igbo say that "Uche ebiro ebi" . Thoughts, ideas do not reside in the individual but flash forth on demand. These ideas float in space and are spiritual in nature.

The opposite of mmuo nghota is "mmuo nkposa" - the spirit that scatters or causes confusion. In some prefatory invocations the desire is expressed that this type of spirit be not allowed entrance into the hearts and minds of the people assembled in a meeting.⁵⁷

In space as in other aspects of nature the Igbo people contend with duality but in general the collective will is polarised on the side of order, the good and the harmonious. If the group thought is good, it is obvious that good spirits will be attracted.

It can be posited that it is this idea of good and harmony which is back of the Igbo effective use of Sound in large gatherings to achieve group solidarity. The classic usage of Sound is epitomised in the famous "Igbo Kwenu". Again in a large gathering of Igbo people, the chairperson sounds out "Igbo kwenu" three times and each sounding draws forth a loud echo of response "ya!" This process involves prolonged alternating inhalation and exhalation that

respectively fill and empty the lungs with air for the production of the loud responses that send vibrations through space. The magical effect of the sound is immediately perceived in the calm that generally supervenes in the group.

To the Igbo man, reality is ascribed "both to the here and now (of time and space) and to the beyond".⁵⁸ To them (Igbo) space is constitutive of nature and equally conditioned by transactions and activities that occur in space.

A question could be raised as to the mode of perception in space. How do the Igbo people become aware of the activities of the entities that live in space? An Igbo proverb readily provides the answer to the mode of cognition. Very often it is said that "ukwu n'aga wala wala, anya naga wala wala n'afu ya". (Fast moving feet are seen by swift/rapid moving eyes). In other words, a correlation exists between speed, movement, activity and the instrument of measurement or registration. Modern technology corroborates the idea behind the proverb.⁵⁹ In Igbo land there are initiate seers, native doctors (dibia) and elders who have the faculty of seeing entities that inhabit space.

The Igbo response to the aggregation of energies (God in manifestation) assumes many forms when a person is forbidden to squat, sit or lie between the door posts, the reason is that by being in such a position, one is denying

access or entrance to the unseen visitors, an act that would bring adverse repercussions. For the same reason, no elder whether he is a host or a visitor sits in the Obi (ancestral temple) with his back to the front yard. He either sits facing the front yard or with his back to the side wall. Contravention of this practice is regarded as disrespect to the invisible visitors. Other precautionary measures are taken, sometimes in the form of rituals to ensure that harmonious relationship exists between human beings and spatial entities.⁶⁰ Some of the rituals take into consideration that negative force is transmitted through space, and measures are taken to either counter them or neutralize them.⁶¹

There is another form of travel through space. When two or three people engage in a discourse, the expression "ejirim ntalumanya je Uromi" is heard - (I was able to travel to (Uromi) a distant and faraway place through the faculty of imagination). This expression is based on the operation of the principle "from the known to the unknown". Based on the vivid description given or the analogy presented, one is able to build mental pictures and indicate an "understanding" of something that is remote and not physically present.⁶² Hanlon illumines the situation when he observes that no

real step in understanding the nature
of time and space could be taken without
voyaging, on the one hand, into uncharted

regions of space , and, on the other,
into the mysterious depths of nature...
Space was not only basic to the universe,
it was equally a necessary condition of
my own existence as a conscious being.
At times it seems there is no division
or barrier the space in which the stars
move and myself as soul or spirit, and
the Kantian doctrine of time and space
as models of the mind becomes a simple
though powerful experience.⁶³

Hanlon contemplates the spatial structure of his room and notes how he appears physically confined in it. He then adds that although the room encloses his body his mind is not similarly restricted "for my imagination extends beyond them (the dimensions of his room) to the external world, to the east and west, the north and south, and through the earth and overhead to the stars, in all directions".⁶⁴ The experience of Hanlon is all too familiar to the Igbo man who though geotropic in orientation is nevertheless fully conscious of the environing space. His close and intimate interaction with nature gives him first hand knowledge of the peculiarities of space. He appreciates space as a link between earth, water and heaven, thereby establishing the unity of nature. Being of nature its modality is of a different order and its rarefaction and reduced density are recognised. The property of space is clearly made concrete by the visible, winged insects and animals that fly in it. Without wings none of these creatures would operate in space. Spider, which does not possess a wing, by its own ingenuity constructs a web in space and even traps some

flying insects. The morphology of the spider's web by itself endorses the modality of space. Space therefore imposes its own category of requirements on man. Man unaided by physical apparatus accesses space by the instrumentality of the mind faculty. In his dream he flies and floats in space an experience which is another confirmation of its elevated ranking in nature. It is through that direct contact with space that ideas are tapped for the social construction of reality on the physical plane of human existence.

4.2.4. THE SKY

The sky as an aspect of manifested nature refers to the supernal spheres. In Christian terminology it is identified as heaven which is popularly accepted as the abode of God. Its precise location in this Christian context defies specificity even though each and every one points upwards as the direction to look. In Igbo land "Enu Igwe" - heaven when closely examined gives greater clarity to the meaning of heaven. But this is not to say that the specific location is concrete and describable in meaningful human terms.

"Igwe" refers to the sky and it is the sphere in which the sun, stars and the moon are purported to exist. "Enu Igwe" then means top of heaven or above heaven. God dwells in "Enu Igwe". Contact with Christianity has popularized this concept of God dwelling in heaven. The often said "Our Lord's Prayer" starts with "Nna anyi nke bi n'enu igwe"⁶⁵ -

Our Father who lives or dwells in heaven. But rarely is attention paid to the distinction between heaven as conceptualised by the West and the Igbo meaningful "Enu Igwe".

Enu-Igwe, for the purpose of this investigation is to be taken in its strict Igbo meaning as beyond space. It is relevant at this juncture to cite Juan Donso Cortes' indication that the classical Greek world view is the product of pagan preconceptions about the Absolute. The osmotic absorption of these Greek Ideas "into Christian-Catholic preconceptions" and subsequent transmission into the middle Ages is not a significant question at this point. What needs stressing then is the accretion which those pristine pagan ideas have gathered in the West. While these ideas have virtually gone underground in the West, in the Igbo world, they are fully active and current.

The survival of the Igbo Language, a language that is constitutive of Igbo reality again endorses the thesis of this work. The concept of Enu-Igwe is not only a classic case but also crucial. Pitrim Sorokin distinguishes "three basic metaphysics that, prevailing in given societies, colour all their thinking."⁶⁶ Interestingly, one of the three categories is "a realm beyond space and time". Enu-Igwe fits perfectly into this realm that is beyond space. It is, however to be observed that Enu-Igwe, and Igwe - Sky can in some situations be used interchangeably. Among the Igbo

people, sky as a classification in nature is the supreme paradigm. It acquires this supremacy by virtue of its veiling the abode of God. It is the motive spring of the Hermetic principle of "as above so below". The sky is the source of order, regularity, pattern and rhythm. The sun, the moon and the stars set the example for the human beings below and in fact impel them to comply. Their compulsion cannot be restricted. Their remoteness precludes any human rebuttal. Essentially, this aspect of manifested nature is the concretised mainspring of evolution in nature.

Behind all the manifestations in the sky is the Prime Mover, God, Chukwu. He is all pure and powerful. One of the variants of his name is "Osa ebu uwa" - He that carries the World/earth.⁶⁷ As has been indicated, He is righteous and never sleeps. God 'can never do evil ... (He) gives protection against bad jujus and punishes wrong doers". As Talbot observed, "Chineke ... is held, through almost the whole region, as the power at the back of everything - the great First Cause from which gods and men have sprung".⁶⁸ Numerous Igbo names testify to the omnipotence of God. Chukwu gbo ogu - Let God settle the fight or conflict, Chukwu ka dibia - God is more powerful than the native doctor. With Chukwu at the hierarchial apex, everything else flows from him.

Within the sky - Igwe - there are divinities/deities that work on behalf of Chukwu. One of these is Amadioha or

Kamalu which is the God of Thunder. In Igbo land, the God of Thunder is regarded as the divine agent of destruction. It metes out justice by eliminating crystallized evil and social pollutants of many classifications. It originates from the sky and in fact it is called "Egbe Igwe" - the gun of the sky and traverses space to be grounded. Once it touches the ground, Mother earth neutralizes its force. But before that, its work is usually accomplished.

The victims of thunder strike are suspected of harbouring evil machinations or of keeping dangerous and harmful medicines. Any trees destroyed are claimed to be temporarily tenanted by souls of evil men. In some cases, its target is only the bad medicine.

The "Mbari house" which was a common feature in some parts of the Imo state area is a classic symbolization of the god of thunder.⁶⁹ The house contained figures representing all sorts of animals and strange monsters, "the like of which were never seen on land or sea". These creatures "alternate with life-like reproductions of denizens of air and earth in every stage of development, from procreation till the final laying to rest in the arms of the Earth Mother".⁷⁰ The house is erected in honour of Amadioha, the thunder god and this deity is usually the prominent figure within the main entrance. Amadioha is seated, "white from head to foot, and bearing in the right hand, a sword, spear or bayonet and in the left, an

imitation of one of the old stone axe-heads thought by the natives to be thunder bolts".⁷¹

It is interesting to note a tinge in the conception of Amadioha in Imo state area based on Talbot's description of the Mbari house. Amadioha is characterised as having a consort, to whom various names are given. These names are synonymous with the "Earth Goddess Ale, Ala, Ana or Aja". Talbot observes that:

When Amad'ongha (Amadioha -the Thunder God) is paramount, he appears to arrogate to himself the functions of Igwe, the sky god proper, thus following in the footsteps of his Grecian prototype, 'Zeus, God of the bright sky' who is also 'Zeus, God of dark sky'; and it is in this capacity as Lord of drenching rain-storm, that he fertilizes his consort the Earth Goddess.⁷²

With the exception of Amadioha, the god of thunder, the Igbo people do not preoccupy themselves with super-celestial gods.⁷³ Both the sun and moon are recognised but are not regarded as gods. Occasionally there are private rituals and therapeutic modalities that tap the energies/forces that emanate from them. It is not surprising that super-celestial gods are given scant attention⁷⁴ since the Igbo people are earth oriented. Moreover, they clearly say that it is necessary to fulfil "Omenani" before "Omenenu". In other words graduation in the customs of the land will qualify a person for "things above". On the other hand, it could be postulated that the Igbo people are engaged in the observance of the hermetic axiom "as above so be it below".

This postulation is corroborated by the statement already expressed which indicates that, that which is in the upper rack is found right below. This postulation is tenable because the Initiates who subjectively contact the higher realms are forbidden to disclose the ontological status of the entities they encounter. They either code their encounter in a cryptic symbolism or dramatize it through a modality that gives out the meaning.

One such materialization of subjective realities is the "igwe ka ala" oracle - The sky/heaven is greater/more powerful than earth. The name of this oracle has far reaching significance. It endorses the primacy of Igwe - sky over "Ani' earth. By implication it portrays the long evolution ahead of the Igbo people. In Igbo religious expression, the immediacy of the earth has priority over Igwe in spite of the supremacy of Igwe. With passage of time, however, evolution will bring them to the stage where the "Laws of heaven" will become operative for them.⁷⁵ For the present, and as it was in the past, Omenani holds the key to that progressive evolution.

Igwe Ka-ala as the name indicates is an oracle that symbolises the superior power of the sky over earth. It was one of the Oracles that exercised considerable sway in pre-colonial times. Located in Umunneoha about twenty Kilometres north of Owerri, it had powers to look into the future as well as the ability to adjudicate and spot the culprit

between disputants. The oracle resisted "pacification" by the British at the turn of this century and was as a result dynamited in 1902. But that military operation did not totally extinguish the oracular activities which are still carried on to the present.

Igwe ka-ala serves as a reminder of human potential to ground that which is perceived as operative in the higher realms of nature. It raises as a result some fundamental questions such as what is the constitution of man? Is the central point in religion the evolution of man or the worship of God? These questions will be attended to subsequently from Igbo standpoint.

4.3. UNITY OF NATURE

Earth, water, space and the sky are four components of nature. These components are not mutually exclusive in the eyes of the Igbo people. Only Earth - Ani - appears to have a definite boundary but apart from that these components are interconnected and interdependent. They all derive their origin from one source and as a result of that derivation they all participate in the essence on the Prime Mover - Chukwu.

Talbot drawing from his experience of the Igbo people comes to this conclusion:

Contrary to general opinion, the religion of the West African negro does not seem to be animism in the sense that all the forces of nature are personified

and the universe is a congeries of uncorrelated and independent entities. To him the world is a vast organisation and all phenomena are set in motion, and controlled, by hierarchies of beings, ranging in power and responsibilities from the highest conceivable God down to the lowest rock elemental, each in strict subordination to its superior".⁷⁶

Talbot implies that there is a vitalizing force that holds the world together. He appears to accept that force as animism so long as it is not interpreted as isolated forces operating in separate entities that have no affinity for each other. He gives the impression of a dynamic law that guarantees correlation in the internal world organization. Whatever shortcomings his conclusions might have, they obviously stem from the fact of his being an "outsider". He acknowledges that "after months or years of careful study, one fondly dreams that the bed-rock of religious ideas has at length been reached, a chance word, or vague hint shows that, beyond all yet learnt, lies a deeper depth still".⁷⁷

Major Leonard's ascription of monism to the Igbo world view is apt and cogent. This ascription in essence endorses the unity of nature. Marc Edmund Jones defines monism as "the view in METAPHYSICS reducing all REALITY to one uniform component"⁷⁸ Monism in the context of the Igbo world view is to be accepted in its "pre-logicality" category. Monism in this regard is seminal and inclusive of reality in its totality and is divested of the hair-splitting arguments that have typified western philosophical

concepts. Monism as used by Major Leonard embraces both "Substantival" and "attributive" monism. Substantival monism holds that "the apparent multiplicity of substances is really a manifestation of only a single substance in different states or from different points of view" and its leading exponent is "Spinoza, with his God - or - Nature.⁷⁹ It is claimed that "Spinoza rejected attributive monism, which maintains that all the substances that there are, whether one or many, are ultimately of a single kind."⁸⁰ A typical Igbo response to this type of argument is: "Welu ewu manye ogbu na welu ogbu manye ewu bu ofu ife" (Take the goat and put to a leash and take the leash and leash the goat all mean the same).

In the Christian Nicene Creed, the concept of monism is implicated. Christ is said to be of one substance with the father, and of Christ's substance all things are made. Under this Christian belief system it is then incontrovertible that we live and move and have our being in Him. This characterization is totally in accord with the delineation of nature from the Igbo standpoint.

It is again necessary to recapitulate Major Leonard. He considers "Naturism" as a word that "most expressively and comprehensively defines" the Igbo situation.

"Naturism ... stands for Nature pure and simple, as represented first of all by her four great divisions of the human, animal, vegetables and mineral, and then by the elements, forces, and energies within her, including even the minutest

material objects, animism is its animating principle which endows naturism with soul or spirit.⁸¹

The insights and observations credited to Talbot, Major Leonard, and Athanasius⁸² in the foregoing, when objectively and meditatively distilled, point to the essential commonality in nature. Not only does that distillation confirm the view that what Is is eternally present, but also the popular expression that nothing is new under the sun. Monism then stands as a densification or symbolisation in word of an abstracted veritable reality which is universally perceptible and applicable. Such variants as animism, spiritual ubiquity, monotheism, pantheism and emanations are other ways of articulating monism and are at times reflective of cultural bias and therefore a validation of "consciousness of abstracting"

A new word that surfaced in the early twentieth Century is "Holism". Holism when properly examined means the same thing as monism. Holism is applied to the world view of aboriginal and traditional societies which of course includes the Igbo world. Recent studies of such societies have come to the understanding that such worlds do not separate the sacred from the profane and where a modicum of boundary exists, it is very thin. It is this lack of appreciable division in nature that has warranted the ascription of holism to the non-Western world.

Marilyn Ferguson states that the architect of "Holism" was Jan Christian Smuts, the Boer general and twice prime minister of South Africa. In her words:

Jan Christian Smuts...formulated a brilliant concept that anticipated many scientific breakthroughs of the late twentieth century. In 'Holism and Evolution', Smuts called attention to an invisible but powerful organizing principle inherent in nature ...There is a whole making principle in mind itself, Smuts said. Just as living matter evolves to higher and higher levels, so does mind. Mind, he said, is inherent in matter.⁸³

Smuts, as noted by Marilyn Ferguson, was describing "a universe becoming ever more conscious". Smuts' insights that led to his categorical and defensible assertion of an invisible but powerful organizing principle latent as well as active in nature, do not come as a bolt from the blue. Again the Igbo man has a quick response to Smuts' "awakened" consciousness: "Mgbe onye jiri teta ura ome ututu ya". (Whenever a person awakens from the night's sleep he performs his morning rituals which include breakfast.) In this particular context, there is no synchronization of the awakening of consciousness to that which already exists and known for eons. Moreover, Plato is said to have conceived thinking as "participating in eternal pre-existent ideas".⁸⁴ Thus, Smuts did not say something new. The credit he has, derives from the timing and the forceful mode of articulation which had some impact on the western audience

following on the heels of World War I. It is interesting to note that Smuts held the view that mind is inherent in matter and that mind is a whole-making principle. This is a deep metaphysical-religious statement. The interpretation is that God is the Universal mind. This conception resurrects once more the idea of animism, spirit and consciousness which are in a sense synonymous.

Modern Science, as Marilyn Ferguson has indicated, has waded into the area of holism or wholeness in nature. Results are confirming the concept of Unity of Nature. Excursion of modern science which otherwise is known as "exact science" into a domain or dimension hitherto regarded as either the exclusive preserve of faith and belief system or the negative pole of superstition for verification and possible validation strengthens the mainstream of this work.

In the Secular Abyss, Gerald Graham and John Alexander set out to explore questions relating to the human situation by reconciling "many ancient beliefs with modern scientific knowledge and philosophical understanding".⁸⁵ Writing in 1967, they stated that "Nature has proved inexplicable to us, and the human constitution and individual destiny are also beyond our understanding". In their attempt to solve the riddle of nature, they turned their "attention to the drawing of analogies from the observable patterns in Nature". They invoked what they called "Natural Laws" to arrive at "holistic" conclusions.⁸⁶

A bolder approach to scientific progress relative to nature is adopted by Dr. Paul Churchland. He says:

"The curiosity of Man, and the cunning of his Reason, have revealed much of what Nature held hidden. The structure of space, time, the constitution of matter, the many forms of energy, the nature of life itself; all of these mysteries have become open books to us. To be sure, deep questions remain unanswered and revolutions await us still, but it is difficult to exaggerate the exposition in scientific understanding we humans have fashioned over the past 500 years."⁸⁷

While Churchland is warm and exuberant about the "encouraging progress" modern science has made in revealing some of the secrets of Nature, he makes an assertion which parallels true pantheism within the bracket of monotheism or monism:

"The phenomena to be penetrated are now the common focus of a variety of related fields. Philosophy has been joined by psychology, artificial intelligence, neuro-science, ethology, and evolutionary theory, to name the principals. All of these sciences have made contributions to what used to be a purely philosophical debate."⁸⁸

Some observations appear proper on Churchland's posture. All the disciplines Churchland cites and alludes to are mainly philosophy decentralized and are now reaggregating in the guise of inter-disciplinary co-operation in order to cast a search light on nature. Philosophy, as Will Durant points out, "once summoned all sciences to its aid in making a coherent image of the world

and an alluring picture of the good".⁸⁹ Science with all its branches is essentially a bifurcation of philosophy; being a part, the part is never greater than the whole. The impression given by Churchland that science is making all these marvellous discoveries about nature, while correct to some extent, needs some adjustment. It is necessary to indicate that the era of a dichotomous world artificially separated in the West is virtually over. Serious consideration has now to be given to the reality of an incontrovertible "mono-animistic" world revolving and rotating on one inclined axis.⁹⁰ The discoveries of modern science can only serve to illuminate nature and at the same time corroborate the quintessence of philosophy and the rootage of religion anchored in traditional societies which find exemplification in the Igbo world. This, therefore calls for a sense of focus on one indivisible world. Without this focus, the Igbo world will continue to elude the outside investigator. A universal sense of focus can be drawn from the revelation of "Oneness and of Unity" given out by that Identified Being Who, speaking in the Bhagavad Gita, says "having pervaded the entire universe with a fragment of Myself, I remain".⁹¹

By implication then, God, Chineke or the Prime Mover can no longer be abstracted from science or from the world of human endeavour or even from Nature. What can be inferred is that what Smuts calls the "invisible but

powerful organizing principle inherent in nature" and the "whole-making principle in mind" are all emanations from God, the Prime Mover. The world of Nature which is the field of scientific activity is also the same world that is penetrated by the Shaman. And it is worth noting that the Igbo counterpart of a Shaman is called a native doctor (Dibia) and in some cases is styled an ordained priest as well. The sacred art of the Igbo native doctor has now come to be known as African science.⁹² The knowledge acquired by the Western Orthodox Scientist and by the Shaman can only serve to add to the pool of knowledge available about Nature.

The Igbo people have known for a long time that various aspects of nature are interconnected. This knowledge conditions their behaviour. A clear illustration is articulated in this proverb: "Ofu mkpisi aka luta manu ometu ndi ozo". A literal translation runs as: If a finger touches oil, the rest of the fingers will equally be soiled. This proverb is often sounded as a warning or a reminder against any act that may be tantamount to pollution. The repercussions of pollution or anti-social behaviour normally would contaminate others. The proverb is predicated on the knowledge of the invisible side of nature. This esoteric knowledge presupposes a balance in nature and any derangement of that balance triggers off an equilibrizing activity which is analogous to an ill-wind. Restoration of

equilibrium is contingent on the elimination of the pollution or performance of the prescribed appropriate ritual that offsets the disorganization.

The western orthodox scientific understanding of this balance in Nature has been called the "homeostasis model".⁹³ Homeostasis is defined as "a relatively stable state of equilibrium or tendency toward such a state between the different but interdependent elements or groups of elements of an organism or group".⁹⁴ The concept of homeostasis is based on the view that "All is Energy". Spiritual scientists "and our modern scientists agree, that all manifestation is energy".⁹⁵ Roland Peterson goes on to state that "Back of each visible structure or form in all of the kingdoms of nature is said to be an invisible pattern of energies and forces that serves to direct the formation of the form".⁹⁶ Based on this idea many hypotheses have been formulated by biologists regarding the existence of "morphogenetic fields". Rupert Sheldrake, a biochemist, has postulated that "the persistence of material forms depends on a continuously repeated actualization of the system under the influence of its morphogenetic field; at the same time the morphogenetic field is continuously recreated by morphic resonance from similar past forms".⁹⁷

In a sense there appears to be a meeting of the ways for the modern scientists, the Igbo initiate and the eastern metaphysical traditions. The belief that patterns of energy

underlie form is now held by many and moreover, "there is a growing body of belief that health stems from a balanced flow of energy through this underlying web, and that disease becomes manifest when the flow is disturbed, blocked or out of balance".⁹⁸ It is not, after all, primitive superstition when the Igbo attribute illness or the outburst of an epidemic to pollution in one form or the other. The Igbo man, like the Eastern counterpart, holds the view that "the etheric dimension extends beyond individual form and that we are each embedded within an etheric realm, spanning the cosmos, in which every individual etheric body is part of a vast web of energy relationships".⁹⁹ For this reason no Igbo person sitting down will allow another person to step over or cross his leg.¹⁰⁰

The concept of a vast web of energy relationships in nature is also endorsed by modern physics. Triangles Bulletin 93 notes that:

"Fritjof Capra writes that, from the angle of the particle physicist, 'the whole universe appears as a dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns'. In the chaos theory physicists, mathematicians and cosmologists are suggesting that all nature is fundamentally interconnected, that the slightest movement or change in one place is part of a much greater movement of energy, and not an isolated event. At the turn of the century the poet, Francis Thompson, wrote of this web of relationships that 'all things by immortal power, near or far, hiddenly, to each other linked are, that thou canst not stir a flower without troubling

a star'."101

While there is an acknowledgement of some traces of the meeting of the ways between modern science and some of the observations of ITR and religions in general relative to Nature, many problems of common identity remain to be ironed out. The Igbo people posit Mmuo-"Spirit" as the "whole-making process" or that spirit constitutes what Smuts termed an invisible but powerful organizing principle inherent in nature. The Igbo position asserts without equivocation the existence of inner, subjective adjusters and manipulators of energy which are hierarchically structured in nature. These entities or spirits operate under law. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines spirit as "an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms; a supernatural being or essence". The dictionary points out that spirit derives from the Latin word Spiritus which literally means breath and that there is a relationship with the Latin word Spirare which is to blow or breathe. From its etymology, spirit as articulated by the Igbo people is part of the Great Breath of God already traversed in the foregoing.

Increasingly, many researchers are either awakening to this sense of oneness underlying all phenomena or at least have caught some glimpses of it even though they suffer from some form of astigmatism as they are only seeing through the combined eyes of the flesh and mind.

Fragments are seen but in reality these fragments are subjectively interconnected. The Igbo people recognize the erroneous perception that results from conclusions drawn from one-dimensional, sensorimotor view or from one fragment of reality. This error is avoided by the prescription of the symbolism of the masque dance. An Igbo aphorism would summarize it as "Adi ano ofu ebe ekili mmo" (spirit-masks are not viewed [and enjoyed] from one standpoint).¹⁰² The observer or viewer has to move around to get a clearer picture of the masquerade. There is another proverb that discredits an arm-chair view or an opinion based on isolated fragmentary knowledge. It is said that "mkpaghari ka nwata ji ebu" (a child grows by getting around). Growth results from interactions and expanded contacts with as many individuals and environments that one can possibly achieve.

The Igbo people are aware of consciousness but have no specific word for it. The closest phrase is "ima ife" (to know) or "amam ife" (knowledge, wisdom). The Igbo understanding of consciousness can be vivified by Ken Wilber's conception of "A Mandalic Map of Consciousness". Wilber's objective is to apply his comprehensive paradigm to "produce a broad-spectrum map or model of consciousness on the whole...stretching from material and sensory stages to mental and verbal stages to transcendental and spiritual stages".¹⁰³ Wilber, in his construction and investigation of this map of consciousness like Marilyn Ferguson, invokes

Jan Smuts' "holism". Reechoing Smuts, Wilber states that:

"Everywhere we look in nature we see nothing but wholes. And not just simple wholes but hierarchical ones: each whole is a part of a larger whole which is itself a part of a larger whole. Fields within fields within fields, stretching through the cosmos, interlacing each and every thing with each and every other...The universe is not a thoughtlessly static and inert whole - the cosmos is not lazy but energetically dynamic and even creative. It tends to produce higher - and higher - level wholes, ever more inclusive and organized."¹⁰⁴

Wilber cites Werner, Jakobson and Bateson as scholars who have validated Smuts insights as they apply to human psyche. Wilber on his part is in agreement and observes that "As a general approximation, then we may conclude that the psyche - like the cosmos at large - is many-layered ('pluridimensional'), composed of successively higher-order wholes and unities and integrations".¹⁰⁵ In confirmation of the evolution of consciousness in psychology by which "the whole of any level becomes merely a part of the whole of the next level which in turn becomes a part of the next whole". Wilber indicates that Koestler devised a "holon" as a model of consciousness. A holon is an "entity which, looking down, is whole, looking up is part".¹⁰⁶

From the Igbo standpoint, consciousness in nature is both qualitative and quantitative. From Igwe (sky) to Ani

(earth) differentiation in the levels of consciousness is posited. The supremacy of Igwe over ani is articulated in "Igwe ka ala", "Heaven is superior/greater than earth), already indicated. The kingdoms in nature are hierarchically structured in terms of consciousness. With the human kingdom at the top a declension in consciousness is experienced sequentially in the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. Most of the proverbs about Nature embody this thought. The gap in consciousness between a man and a tree is reflected in the saying that "Obu osisi nuru na aga egbu ya kwuru" (A tree on recognition of the fact that it will be cut down or killed refuses to budge and move away or even take a defensive action). The implication is that a man with a higher level of consciousness reacts to the threatening idea. Also it is said that "Ogologo abughi na nwam etola" (physical height is not an index of growth or maturity). The Igbo people go beyond external appearances to assess an individual. The qualitative ontological status of consciousness is the supreme criterion of assessment. In other kingdoms of Nature, whatever state of consciousness that is registered remains a secret guarded by the Igbo initiates. There are reports of talking plants and walking trees.¹⁰⁷

Some research has actually demonstrated that plants talk or emit sounds that are capable of being monitored by sophisticated computer systems.¹⁰⁸ In the same vein, Laura

Thompson uses a significant *proem* for her chapter on Languages of Symbolism. She quotes Panchanan Mitra: "Some day these stones will speak to us and tell us their story."¹⁰⁹ It is, therefore, not surprising that when the Igbo elder engages in the act of instructing a minor, he uses the expression: "Toonti n'ani" (listen to the earth). The assumption is that a state of consciousness and even a symbolic communication mode is ascribed to ani-earth. The Ojibwa and the Cree peoples of Canada, on their part say: "The Creator has given you the knowledge. Listen to the trees, the streams, the birds, the animals. Listen! Look!"¹¹⁰ This call to listen to Nature in its differentiated manifestation goes beyond the affected symbolism. It refers to a higher level of meaning and significance where the call becomes literal and cannot be interpreted any other way.¹¹¹

One of the contemporary scientists who are transforming our conception of nature is a British scientist Dr. James Lovelock who in 1979 published a book entitled Gaia, A New Look At Life on Earth.¹¹² James Lovelock took the title of his book from Gaia who was the ancient Greek goddess of the earth. Lovelock "argued that our planet constitutes a single, self-regulating system which is maintained by and for life, that the earth, in other words, is a single, living being".¹¹³ The Gaia Hypothesis is predicated on the observation that the "earth's atmosphere

and oceans are maintained as highly sophisticated buffering devices by the totality of life on the planet".¹¹⁴ There is an inference in the Gaia hypothesis. If the earth is a living being, it is natural to credit her with a measure of consciousness.

The weight of evidence now seems to endorse the Igbo geotropism and Igbo conception of consciousness. As Paul Churchland puts it:

"According to a broad and growing consensus among philosophers and scientists, conscious intelligence is the activity of suitably organized matter, and the sophisticated organization responsible for it is, on this planet at least, the outcome of billions of years of chemical, biological, and neurophysiological evolution...Basically, it requires a system of physical elements (such as atoms) capable of many different combinations, and a flow of energy (such as sunlight) through the system of elements. This describes the situation on the pre biological earth, some 4 billion years ago during the period of purely chemical evolution. The flow or flux of energy, into the system and then out again, is absolutely crucial."¹¹⁵

Churchland appears to be an exponent of natural evolution of a materialistic cast. He recognizes the importance of energy in the evolution of conscious intelligence. He, however, remains to be convinced that the energy he refers to is God in manifestation.

Be that as it may, both science and religion now seem to be going in the same direction. The observations of each

discipline point to the "unity of all in nature, in its Ultimate Essence". It is one mono-animistic natural world spawning from Igwe to ani. To the Igbo people, there is but one indivisible and "absolute Omniscience and Intelligence". Any differentiations are only apparent. In their world view , all things are interconnected and interdependent.

1.R. N. Henderson, The King in Every Man: Evolutionary Trends in Onitsha Ibo Society and Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 59 - 61. See J. O. Awolalu and P. A. Dopamu, West African Traditional Religion (Ibadan: Onibonoje Press Ltd. 1979), pp. 57 -59. E. E. Metuh, Ibid., pp. 9 - 21.

2.It is sufficient for now to agree with Malinowski that myth is a "pragmatic charter for primitive faith and moral wisdom" Metuh, Ibid., p. 10.

3.This aspect of the myth has deep spiritual significance. It sanctions the concept of sacrifice which attained its greatest height in the life of the Christ. A close consideration of the myth will reveal the fact of the oneness of all things at the spiritual level in spite of the apparent, physical boundaries. It should not also be forgotten that Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac in the Biblical Old Testament.

4.Blacksmithing and other related crafts are by virtue of the myth divinely ordained.

5.Awolalu and Dopamu, Ibid., pp. 58 - 59.

6.The four villages are still ranked in their descending order: Otolu, Uruagu, Umudim and Ichi, and have ever since formed the basis of the political structure that lent itself to "Indirect Rule" under the British Colonial administration and local government in post independence period. It is not difficult to see the inseparable nature of the political, religious, economic and social life of the people of Nnewi that comes under the umbrella of Ana-Edo. To them, everything is sacramental and "holistic".

7.The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Myth", by Alasdair MacIntyre.

8.Chi is the divine spark in man and is the same as the soul.

9.This is the basis of the "monism" which Leonard ascribes to ITR. Again, "animism" is fundamental to this interconnectedness.

10.Ojike, Ibid., p. 180.

11.Leonard, Ibid., pp. 423 -424.

12. The contextual utterance of such a statement borders on invocation. To prove his innocence, the utterer invokes Divine justice in the full knowledge of God's ability to look into men's hearts and the inevitability of justice being dispensed.

13. Robert M. Augros and George N. Stanciu, Ibid., p. 58.

14. Charles H. Long, Alpha: The Myths of Creation (Toronto: Collier - MacMillan Company Canada Ltd., 1969), p. 7.

15. Matthew Henry observes that the "end of the whole scripture is practical godliness". Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Vol. vi. (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company. n.d.) p. v.

16. There are fables that indicate how separation between divinity and man occurred. One account states that a woman was pounding yam with her pestle and mortar in the process she hit heaven and as a result heaven withdrew from its very close propinquity with earth.

17. Raymond A. Moody, Reflections on Life After Life (New York: Bauntam Books Inc. 1978), p. 13. The Igbo people sometimes refer to seven seas/rivers/oceans and seven lands/countries (mmiri n'asa na mba n'asa). The origin of this expression is not known but it is used in connection with a very distant place.

18. Reference is here made to the phenomenal world, the world of meaning and the world of significance. Some mystics would use the words: idol, ideal and idea, as synonymous with these worlds.

19. Webster Dictionary defines a hologram as a "three dimensional picture that is made on a photographic film". Ken Wilber uses the word "holon, holography and holoarchy" to convey the same meaning. (K. Wilber, pp 84, 133-134).

20. The view which is typical of simple societies is confirmed by Lucien Levy Bruhl as will be shown later on. Marilyn Ferguson states that Richard Buck, a Canadian physician in Cosmic Consciousness written in 1901 "described the experiences of an electrifying awareness of oneness with all life. Persons who experienced such states of consciousness were becoming more numerous ... walking the earth and breathing the air with us, but at the same time walking another earth and breathing another air of which we know little." Ferguson, p 48. see also Alice Bailey, The Consciousness of the Atom. p 14.

21. This division corresponds to the Igbo quaternary which is symbolized in the four-day week or market cycle.

22. On the creation story Blavatsky has this to say: "The initial four chapters of Genesis are the fragment of a highly philosophical page in the World's Cosmogony... Left in their symbolical disguise, they are a nursery tale, an ugly thorn in the side of science and logic, an evident of Karma. To have left them serve as a prologue to Christianity was a cruel revenge on the part of the Rabbis, who knew better what their Pentateuch meant. It was a silent protest.

23. Genesis, 1:2.

24. Annie Basant, Esoteric Christianity. (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1953), p 123.

25. St. John, 1:13.

26. The Book of Common Prayer. p 71.

27. Ephesians 2:20, Colossians 1: 18-19.

28. "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth" Proverbs 3:19, calls for serious reflection. Wisdom is assumed to be of God and was anchored on earth at the time of the creation or foundation of earth - "Nto ani".

29. The Ojibwa, the aboriginal peoples of Canada, have the tradition that the earth and plants received the initial instructions from the great Spirit (God). They believe that the instructions are still preserved by the earth and plants.

30. Ibid., p 38.

31. Ifemesia. p 35.

32. Consciousness is holistically conceived as spirit, ideation, intelligence. In this regard animism claims relationship with consciousness.

33. Ifemesia, p 34.

34. The deity referred to is the Earth.

35. This is more than a behavioral psychologist looks for or is testing. The overall assessment in the Igbo context is total and holistic. Difficult assessment sometimes requires the services of a diviner.

36. Ifemesia, p 30.

37. Ibid., p 36.

38. Ibid., p 30.

39. Leonard, p 391.

40. Ifemesia, p 37.

41. Talbot, The Tribes of the Niger Delta. p 27.

42. Parrinder, p 49. This citation applies to the Igbo people. "The custom of holding certain waters to be sacred appears to be common throughout the Igbo country". Basden, p 217.

43. Basden, pp 217-218. Basden further remarks that "the result is that the fish are quite tame varying in length up to fifteen or sixteen inches, swimming quite unconcernedly between the legs of the women filling their pots". p 218.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., Talbot observed that "should the priests find a python lying dead, they give burial, just like a chief". Talbot, p 35.

46. Totemism is to be as an object serving as the emblem of a family or clan and often a reminder of its ancestry. Sometimes it is a carved or painted representation of such an object.

47. The Northeastern Indians of North America in pre-colonial period entered into contractual relationship with the animal world. See Calvin Martin, Keepers of the Game Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur-Trade.

48. Other versions of this type of relationship exists. The belief is that some people at death use trees as temporary abode for their soul. Some souls are said to perch on trees while awaiting adequate funerary rites.

49. Various accounts are given by Talbot.

50. Talbot, p. 32

51. Talbot, p.69. Early in the century, following the introduction of Christianity, Christian converts started killing the snakes. Basden recounts a bizarre experience regarding the mysterious disappearance of his native house maid soon after the killing of a snake. This researcher was

told that pythons used to be good and trusted baby sitters up to the early decades of this century.

52. Ibid., pp.39 - 40.

53. Rev. N. N. Kwulunebe, "Keep Away From Secret Societies" in The Torch, (Onitsha: The Varsity Industrial Press, Ltd., 1985) Vol. 2, No. 5, pp.7 - 9.

54. The idea of the Great Breath does not feature in man's consciousness primarily because of man's immediate preoccupation with the activities of daily living. Moreover, it is a philosophical question which is not the preserve of the ordinary, average citizen. On the other hand, its lack of prominence is an offspring of the concept of "Deus Otiosus"- a withdrawn God that has some plausibility in the materialistic, contemporary, human society.

55. A typical example of the law is "ife icho ka'ifu" - that which "you seek you get".

56. Wind is scientifically known as the movement of air from high pressure area to low pressure zone. This is a natural process and its secret is known by the Igbo initiates who are capable of inducing high winds and also of making rain.

57. It is not uncommon to see some "dibia" or medicine men who could manipulate this spirit - "mmuo mkposa".

58. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s. v. "Sociology of Knowledge", by Werner Stark.

59. The rotating propeller of an aircraft is not easily observable to the casual looker. However, an experienced observer will be able to detect the fast moving propeller. Also a radar at a distance easily picks up the speed of an oncoming car.

60. The main entrance into a yard, "ama", "ezi" is usually protected with some charms designed to neutralize any malevolent forces that might intrude into the premises.

61. A credible informant claims to be an adept in this exercise. He also cited the case of another dibia (medicine man) who is a "sky walker". This sky walker was able to traverse a space of over twenty kilometers in under five minutes.

62. See Robert M. Augros and George N. Stanciu, The New Story of Science, pp. 19 - 20, 171 - 172.

63.A. C. Hanlon, Into the Fourth Dimension, (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1977), pp. 16 -17.

64.Ibid.

65.Nna anyi nke bi n'enu igwe is very significant from the Igbo person's perspective. Nna, Father, is institutionalised in the Igbo social organisation. Father, as indicated, is the social, religious, political and economic head in his household. In a polygamous family, the affected wives and their children call the husband/father, the head of the household, nna anyi, our father. The father in this polygamous setting carries out the full functions entrenched in the society. If an Igbo father executes all his function its is easy for the Igbo to relate to and make better meaning out of God, Our father in heaven. Most proverbs point out the inviolate nature of Igbo fatherhood and also the father-son relationship. For instance "nwa ada aka nnaya", a son is never greater than his father, remains valid to the present in Igbo philosophy.

66.The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. s. v. "Sociology of Knowledge", by Werner Stark.

67.P. A. Talbot, Tribes of the Niger Delta. pp. 19 - 20.

68.Ibid.

69.The Mbari house was usually constructed by select young single men and women who had undergone some initiatory and purificatory ceremonies. For the period of construction, they remained celibate and isolated from the rest of the community. See P. A. Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults. (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc. 1967 New Impression).

70.P. A. Talbot, Tribes of the Niger Delta, Their Religions and Customs. (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd. 1967 New Impression), p. 275.

71.P. A. Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults. p. 23.

72.Ibid. p.61. The common characteristics between the Igbo God of Thunder and the Greek Zeus are striking and do provide clues for further investigations.

73.Amadioha is not universally accorded the attributes of a divinity and at best it is regarded as a divine force in manifestation. It could be invoked and directed to wreak havoc on an enemy by a medicine man.

74. See Ilogu, p. 35 for the treatment of the sun as a form of divinity.

75. This is posited as the global objective of evolution for mankind. The position taken is predicated on the Biblical injunction to be perfect as God is perfect.

76. Talbot, Life in Southern Nigeria. p. 20. Underlining is mine.

77. Ibid., p. 8.

78. Marc Edmund Jones, Occult Philosophy. p. 374.

79. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. s. v. "Monism and Pluralism", by Roland Hall.

80. Ibid.

81. Leonard, p. 114.

82. Athanasius is said to be the architect of "one substance" in the Nicene Creed.

83. Marilyn Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy, Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's. (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980). pp. 48 - 49. Underlining is mine.

84. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. s. v. Werner Stark

85. Gerald S. Graham and John Alexander, The Secular Abyss an Interpretation of History and the Human Situation. (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1967). Editor's Review. Underlining is mine.

86. Gerald S. Graham and John Alexander, pp. 11 - 12.

87. Churchland, p. 1. Underlining is mine.

88. Ibid.

89. Will Durant, p. vii.

90. "Mono-animistic" world is a coinage of the writer. The logic of the word is rooted in holism already discussed. A deeper reflection on Christianity indicates that indeed in Christ there is no East or West and that the church is one foundation. Mono-animistic world, therefore is an offspring of the fact that Christ rose to infuse all things. In this regard, James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis becomes a

scientific endorsement of "pagan"-Igbo belief relative to earth/Ani.

91. Cited from Alice Bailey, Esoteric Psychology. 1:15-16.

92. Most Igbo people see the art of rain-making in Igboland as part of African science. Victor Uchendu uses the expression "ordained priests" as adequate designation for "Dibia" (Medicine Men/Shaman), p. 81. Alutu goes so far as to address them as Reverend.

93. The World Book. s. v. "Homeostatis" by Gordon Farrell, see also: Bert Kaplan ed. The Inner World of Mental Illness. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964). p. ix.

94. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 547.

95. Roland Peterson, Everyone is Right, A New Look at Comparative Religion and Its Relation to Science. (Marina del Rey, Ca: DeVorss and Company, 1986), p. 95.

96. Triangles, "The Etheric Dimension" No. 93, September 1990 (New York: Lucis Publishing Company).

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. The idea of withdrawing one's leg has been so internalized that it is now done so automatically that it does not require and conscious thought.

101. Triangles No. 93.

102. Ifemesia, p. 8

103. Wilber, p. 83.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid., p. 84.

106. Ibid., pp. 84 - 85.

107. Talbot, Tribes of the Niger Delta. pp. 114 - 115.

108. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation evening newcast, March 20, 1988.

109. Laura Thompson, The Secret of Culture: Nine Communities Studied, (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 319.

110. See Appendix #1.

111. The situation here calls for the development of higher sense organs which come with altered state of consciousness.⁶

112. Ideas "The Leading Edge: Gaia Hypothesis" (Montreal: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985), pp. 1 - 3; Ideas "Religion and the New Science", (Montreal: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985).

113. Ideas "Religion and The New Science", p. 1. Underlining is mine.

114. Ideas "The Leading Edge: Gaia Hypothesis" p. 1.

115. Churchland, p. 147.

CHAPTER 5

IGBO PEOPLE'S HOLISTIC INTERACTION WITH THEIR WORLD

In this chapter, we shall have a closer look at the Igbo man especially in the light of the fact that Wilfred Cantwell, as earlier indicated, has pointed out that "the study of a religion is the study of persons". While working on Cantwell's premise, there is the added recognition that the Igbo man is part of the created order. His human kingdom tops the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms which in their aggregate form the Igbo quaternary as well as part of nature. His world in its totality is a symbolic one and bears the imprint of divinity. It should also be put into consideration that, as Talbot observed, "the constant presence of these symbols must affect the conscious and the unconscious powers of the mind and give these an urge to action."

It stands to reason that the psyche of the Igbo man deserves some attention. As the principal actor endowed with the power of speech and symbol making propensity in his holistic environment, it becomes necessary to determine how he apprehends and appreciates his world. What lessons has he learnt from his world? What meaning has he distilled from the world that surrounds and influences him and how does he interact with that world?

It needs to be pointed out that underlying the entire discussion are two other considerations. William Alston

recalling William James' view states "that in every religion there is some sort of awareness of what is called divine and some sort of response to this divinity". He further maintains that based on that reasoning it is necessary to ask in each case: "where is the divine (the object of religious responses) primarily sought and located, and what sort of response is primarily made to it?"¹

To make meaning out of Alston's ideological tapestry that suffuses this investigation, it can only be restated that the divine in the Igbo world is in nature which also includes the Igbo man/person himself. The other consideration is Leonard's critical assessment of the Igbo people which is summed up in the these words: "What the Igbo people believe they practice and what they practice they believe".

The Igbo people in the estimation of Major Leonard are sons of Nature. According to him, as already noted, the word that most expressively and comprehensively defines the entire Igbo religious situation is Naturism. The integrity of Naturism as coined by him remains valid to the present. Naturism tenaciously holds as the infrastructure of the Igbo world view and in spite of contact with the Western World constitutes the skeletal structure of any abstracted or segregated designation of the Igbo religion such as animism, fetichism, juju and totemism. Naturism as "Nature pure and simple" is an illustrated and well-articulated statement of

Leonard. It is worthy to observe that the description of Nature in the preceding chapter as a unit with many differentiations is quite in accord with Leonard's perceptive digest.

Naturism is not a popular word, nor is it in the dictionary as a known designation of any world religion. Although it appears to be an obscure word, it should not be confused with "naturalism" which is a western philosophical term tainted with materialism and which denies "that an event or object has a supernatural significance". Naturism to the western mind is as curious and inexplicable as Omenani which is the Igbo name for Naturism in this context. The validation of the nexus between Naturism and Omenani was made by Leonard himself when he gave out that what the Igbo people believe they practice and what they practice they believe. That practice, as has been stressed all along, is essentially geotropic with focus on Ani/Earth and holds out that Ani embodies all constituents of Nature. It is further stated that through practice and familiarity with what obtains here on earth, one can become acquainted with the laws of the skyey heaven and eventually evolve to gain mastery of those laws.

This futuristic postulate of eventual conformity to the higher laws and order constitutes the end of religion. In this position, there is the validation of the definition of religion as that of "binding back". But this is a future

event which has significance in the fact that Omenani is evolutionary, and that while it is preoccupied with here and now in a pragmatic sense, its dynamism cannot be overstated.

Constancy of response to Nature presupposes perpetual impact of Nature on the Igbo people. It will be wrong to conceive this response as what is generally regarded as "nature worship". Also the perpetual impact of Nature on the people is not unidirectional. As will be illustrated later on, the relationship is interactive. The designation of the people as "Sons of Nature" not only provides some illumination into the relationship, it also indicates that the people are part and parcel of nature and also accept nature as their teacher.

Whatever views others might hold, the Igbo people cling to their belief and practice that belief. If the Igbo man says "Too nti n'ani" (place your ear close to the earth - listen to the earth), he is indeed saying: "Be instructed by Mother Nature".

Such Igbo statements as "Anya ilu ani" (to focus the eye on earth) and "Obi ume ani" (humble mind), have the earth as their reference point. This form of geocentricity expressed in words by the Igbo people serves to emphasize the key role of earth in the process of socialization which is synonymous with teaching.

The Igbo people are not the only ones who ascribe teaching function to Nature. More than three thousand years ago, the Psalmist tells us that:

"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy."²

This personification of nature articulated in Psalm 19 by itself shows Nature in its full power to teach and to instruct. This view of Nature is not lacking in modern times. Dorothea Cochran quotes Albert Pike as poignantly saying that:

"The first scriptures for the human race were written by God on the Earth and Heavens. The reading of these Scriptures is Science. Familiarity with the grass and trees, the insects and the infusoria, teaches us deeper lessons of love and faith than we can glean from the writings of Fenelon and Augustine. The great Bible of God is ever open before mankind."³

From the standpoint of Christian religious orthodoxy, Albert Pike's observation would mark him out as blasphemous, sacreligious, iconoclastic and profanatory. Such characterizations made by votaries of orthodox Christianity in their struggle to insulate Christianity from apparent pollution and dilution by "paganism" or dissenters obscure

the profundity of the truth such as Pike seeks to assert. This Christian attitude is a sharp contrast to the practice in the Igbo world where the initiates who are the custodians of knowledge abstracted from Nature are revered and respected. These initiates are under moral and social obligation to spread the knowledge to the rest of the society. The truth remains that the instructional potentiality of Nature cannot be hidden.

The core of Igbo world view remains relatively constant. Their beliefs and practices which are interactive are predicated on that cosmology. Ani-Earth, which is the concrete anchorage of their customs is eternally present, confronting and challenging them to live up to their sonship. Their persistent faithfulness is epitomized in Omenani and in Omenani is lodged the "Golden Thread", that continuity of the perennial philosophy which constitutes the infrastructural arcanum of all religions.⁴

5. 1. NATURE'S METHODOLOGY

Nature presents itself holistically with simplicity for human edification. That aspect of it that appears to be concrete and therefore perceptible to human sensory apparatus is only a symbol of an inner, subjective aspect. The inner and the outer aspects are inseparable in spite of many differentiations and gradations that exist within the broad spectrum that constitutes nature.

Nature presents three levels or phases of itself in its encounter with man. Each level/phase is a facet of the diamond analog. In the Igbo world, the tangible aspect of Nature is meaningless without reference to the subjective realm that has impelled form. To them, the inner aspect is ever-present and this means that the concrete and perceptible aspect of Nature is always symbolic of the invisible, hidden portion. In this regard, the analog of the tip of the iceberg is quite valid.

Nature's symbolic mode of instruction has given rise to three methods of understanding it. The universality of these methods not only confirms their antiquity but also their constant and persistent application in the Igbo world. Patanjali who supposedly compiled the ancient teachings of the East about 10,000 BC⁵ sees a symbol as "a form of some kind which veils or hides a thought, an idea or a truth".⁶ In one of his Sutras he posited that:

The consciousness of an object is attained by concentration on its fourfold nature: the form, through examination; the quality (or guna), through discriminative participation; the purpose, through inspiration (or bliss) and the soul, through identification.⁷

The point that Patanjali seeks to drive home is that any meaningful symbolic interaction has to be engaged simultaneously and holistically at the fourfold levels he has identified. This calls for an appreciation of the three aspects of body, mind and soul all at once. Patanjali,

however, recognizes that this high level of consciousness is only attained by an adept or an initiate. For the uninitiated, a step-by-step approach is recommended until he/she is able to cultivate total comprehension faculty. To arrive at the "objectless" embodied in form, the aspirant has to build himself "a ladder by means of which he arrives eventually at the objectless". The starting point is therefore, the concrete and the manifested and this is the method adopted by nature.

Increasingly in the West, Nature's method is gaining ground among those who have transcended the mere tangibility of Nature. Matthew Henry, commenting on "sacred writings" observed that such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom seen fit to take in conveying the light of divine revelation to the children of men, that this heavenly food might have (as the Jews say of the manna) something in it agreeable to every palate and suited to every constitution. If every eye be not thus opened, every mouth will be stopped, and such as perish in their ignorance will be left without excuse.⁸

Although Matthew Henry's comment focuses on the "Sacred Writings", his observation is fully relevant when applied to Nature which is the "soul" of the Sacred Scriptures. In other words what he says of the scriptures is a veritable commentary on Nature. In this connection he says that the method he has identified "directs us in what order to proceed both in studying the things of God ourselves and in

teaching them to others". This method is equally the method of nature. This methodological structure presents at the first encounter, "very plain and easy, narratives of matter of fact, which he that runs may read and understand, and which are milk for babies, such as they can receive and digest, and both entertain and nourish themselves."⁹ Matthew Henry sums up the three methods in a powerful imagery:

The waters of the sanctuary have hitherto been but to the ankles or to the knees, such as lamb might wade in, to drink of and wash in, but...(from this level) we are advanced to a higher form in God's school, and have books put into our hands wherein are many things dark and dark to be understood, which we do not apprehend the meaning of so suddenly and so certainly as we could wish, the study of which requires a more close application of mind, a greater intenseness of thought, and the accomplishing of a diligent search, which yet the treasure hid in them, when it is found, will abundantly recompense. The waters of the sanctuary are here to the loins, and still as we go forward we shall find the waters still risen...waters to swim in, not fordable, nor otherwise to be passed over - depths in which an elephant will not find footing, strong meat for strong men.¹⁰

It is interesting to note that Matthew Henry wrote in 1710 and used a symbology of man's interaction with water, a situation all too familiar to an Igbo person to illustrate the method of making meaning out of scriptural writings. In doing this he unconsciously highlights the method by which nature teaches his lessons, which is that of direct

encounter leaving the individual to draw, according to his or her capacity, from the many levels of meaning proffered.

Ken Wilber's comprehensive paradigm is a bold attempt at a synthetic method which parallels nature's mode of presentation. Wilber describes his paradigm as dealing with "empirical science, philosophy, psychology, and transcendental religion; about sensory knowledge, symbolic knowledge, and spiritual knowledge; and about how they might all fit together".¹¹ He identifies three categories or "Eyes" in his "transcendental paradigm". The "Eye of the flesh" deals with the "gross realm", the realm of space, time, and matter. It is the "empirical eye, the eye of sensory experience."

The second category is labelled the "eye of mind" or the "eye of reason" and this eye participates in a "world of ideas, images, logic, and concepts". The third eye, the "eye of contemplation" is "transnational, translogical, and transmental". The eye of contemplation focuses on "the Immutable", the Self which is Reality. Wilber admits that this transcendental paradigm would encounter the problem of verification and proof demanded of "empirical science".¹² What needs to be observed is that what Wilber sees as complex from the perspective of nature is simple and well sequenced. To the Igbo adept, the simultaneous use of the three eyes constitutes no problem. The facility in their use is a function of training and experience as will be

demonstrated later on. As it was the case with Kepler, to the Igbo initiate "nature's simplicity and unity was a commonplace".¹³

5. 2. LESSONS OFFERED BY NATURE

The subject matter of all the lessons delivered by nature is the idea of "evolution". The theme of evolution is so driven deeply into the consciousness of the Igbo people that all social activities are subservient to its goal.

It needs to be recalled that the Igbo environment is like other traditional societies in which no separation exists between the real and the unreal and as a result is said to be "holistic". Holism, according to the Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, is "a theory that the universe and especially living nature is correctly seen in terms of interacting wholes (as of living organisms) that are more than the mere sum of elementary particles".¹⁴ Underlying the concept of holism is the idea of evolution. It is therefore, relatively easy to see that the Igbo holistic orientation is indeed a lesson learned from nature.

In spite of the apparent differentiation which is most diverse at the concrete level of manifestation, the underlying unity is known by the Igbo initiate. What appears to be fragments in nature are symbolic holograms which, when seen with the "three eyes", reveal their wholes

and their inextricable linkage with the One, the source of all things or rather with the One Life. Thus any lesson Nature offers at the concrete level and in any form resonates and draws attention of those whose faculties have developed to the underlying, unifying essence. In other words, "Nature expresses invisible energies through visible forms".¹⁵ This is equally a thinking that undergirds the metaphysical foundations of modern science. As Burt points out,

The sun, according to Kepler, is God the Father, the sphere of the fixed stars is God the Son, the intervening ethereal medium, through which the power of the sun is communicated to impel the planets around their orbits, is the Holy Ghost.¹⁶

Burt's comment on Kepler's insight is worth quoting because of the illumination it carries:

"To pronounce this allegorical trapping is not to suggest, of course, that Kepler's Christian theology is at all insincere; it is rather that he had discovered an illuminating natural proof and interpretation of it, and the whole attitude with its animism and allegorico-naturalistic approach, is quite typical of much thinking of the day."¹⁷

The far-reaching implications of Kepler's view cannot be overestimated. He more or less restated views held by people of antiquity in a manner that was amenable to theological ears as well as to the incipient scientific mentality. In his explanation the implication of spiritual

ubiquity mediated by the "Son" through the Holy Ghost is clear enough. It is the same spiritual ubiquity that was earlier denigrated as "animism" in the traditional societies. The important fact is that regardless of what label is used to depict this perception of divine immanence in nature, the world view of the Igbo people as well as other traditional societies essentially remains unaffected.

Animism in Igbo world view can be equated with divine immanence. The Igbo person can easily identify with Kepler's thinking that the Sun is God symbolized. Moreover, "Helius" in ancient mythology is said to be "the god of fire in the sun".¹⁸ Deep reflection on the words "heliotaxis", and "heliotropism" with the "three eyes" fully awake show the power and impact of the sun on the vegetable kingdom. It stands to reason that the attribution to the sun of divine qualities is not pagan but religio-philosophically and scientifically sound.

The sun then, as part of manifested nature seen in isolation, is the prime teacher and the major lesson is evolution. The sun is the symbolic regulator of evolution which pervades nature. The lessons which the sun teaches are immense and inexhaustible and range from physical laws to moral and spiritual laws. To the Igbo people, who have been called by Major Leonard the Sons of Nature, the expectation is that they have been steeped in the ways of nature as a result of first hand instructions from nature.

The Igbo people, like everyone else, are part and parcel of nature. However, distinctions come when the faculties are developed that enable one to penetrate the physical plane of existence and behold the subjective world back of manifestation and make meaning out of the manifested, symbolic world. Success in making this penetration results in holism, the ability to "see" in wholes and not in fragments. The Igbo people, who are sons of nature, live and move and have their being in nature. They know the ways of nature and respond appropriately to the evolutionary process in nature.

Nature, among other things, has taught the Igbo people rhythm, cycles, mathematics, harmony, beauty, music of the spheres, the concept of time as well as both physical and natural laws. All these lessons have been delivered by nature as a result of ceaseless interaction between "Anyanwu", (the sun) and "Ani" (earth).

The primogenitors of the Igbo people lived in a pristine and virgin natural environment and their knowledge of nature was first hand. What they learned has been handed down and transmitted from generation to generation.

The Igbo people knew early in time the significance of the sun in their daily living. With the sun rising in the morning and the setting at night the duality of day and night was established, creating as well the concept of time and numbers. The repeatability of this day-night rhythm and

the apparent coursing of the sun around its orbit, set the cycle of seasons - (okochi na udummiri, rainy and dry seasons) and pointed to the existence of inexorable laws of nature.¹⁹ Each episode, apparently complete by itself in time and space, is but only a cog in the wheel of evolutionary process. The responses of the vegetable and animal kingdoms to the impulses emanating from the sun equally constituted instructions to the Igbo people.

Nature presented them with intricate geometric, beautiful patterns, sounds and melodies as well as the mystery of life and death. These experiences of nature were not documented by the Igbo people but have been preserved verbally and in other symbolic modes.

5.3. APPARATUS AND MECHANISM OF RESPONSE

5.3.1. EXOTERIC SENSE ORGANS:

The Igbo man, like any other person, initially uses his five well-known sense organs to reach out and appreciate nature. As he matures and grows in consciousness, other inner faculties awaken in him. These exoteric sense organs and the inner faculties link the objective world of phenomena with the subjective world that is not visible to the naked eye, thereby establishing in the consciousness of the Igbo initiate one indivisible world which is his only apparent differentiations.

Thus, through the exoteric senses the objective world of experience, the tangible, physical world "in which he dwells in the flesh," provides him an adequate field of unfoldment. It goes without saying that the Igbo man like any other man is sensitized to what exists. The degree of sensitization and appreciation depends again on which "eye" out of the "three eyes" the individual is focusing. The determinant of the eye that is dominant is a function of the evolutionary process as it is the case with the Igbo elders. Other variables include the conscious acceleration of growth through training and initiation, and the rare cases of infant prodigy. In the latter situation, the newly born has the faculties of an adept held in a state of latency and ready to be triggered into functioning by environmental stimuli.²⁰

5.3.2 INSTINCT AND THE BODY OF DESIRE

Interposed between the physical sense organs and the mind is a body not fully recognized in the west - the desire body. This body in a sense is also known as the body of emotion.

In Igbo land the awareness of this body is demonstrated in habit of not allowing another person to cross over one's leg while seated as this would lead to astral contamination. Its development among the elders is also stated in the proverb "Nwata chuo Nna ya oso ibubo akwatue ya" (if a child

or young man chases his father or an elder the father's/elder's aura overpowers the young man). This indicates the force of the Aura or astral body.

The Igbo man like other men, is programmed with this subtle apparatus of response. If, according to medieval thinking, "the world of nature existed that it might be known and enjoyed by man"²¹ the body of emotion is part of the instrument of knowing ie of acquiring knowledge. That body, as Dante pointed out, is a natural equipment given to man to "bear (him) on". Noting that "All things whatsoever observe a mutual order", Dante makes this observation about instinct:

"This beareth the fire toward the moon;
this is the mover in the hearts of things
that die; this doth draw the earth
together and unite it."²²

The Igbo world view, no doubt antedates the medieval line of thought. But both are similar, the only significant difference is the christianization of the medieval thought. As said earlier, the Igbo people are earth-affirming and enjoy the earth with gusto. But another dimension brought out by Dante is that instinct draws the earth together with the rest of nature. Instinct from the orthodox scientific point of view is a force because it defines force as push or pull. Inherent in the force demonstrated by the body of emotion is the law of attraction and repulsion. In religious and social terms it is equated with love or hate. Dante credits the earth as also possessing instinct. Is

this instinct the same as the force of gravity exerted by the earth?

The Igbo man would respond in the affirmative and state that what is called instinct in the vegetable, animal and human kingdoms can be equated with earth's gravitational force. In a literal sense he confirms gravitational force by saying "aku fecha odalu ani" (the winged termite, after its [exuberant and acrobatic] flights eventually falls to the earth). In a more esoteric sense the earth, from the perspective of the Igbo initiates, displays the law of affinity. The earth accepts what is congruous to its prescribed laws. This is, in other words, a manifestation of the law of attraction. Anything in opposition to this law is repulsed. In the operation of this law lies the root of pollution. The reality of this situation is embodied in a proverb which states that "okuko rua ani, ani achuba ya oso" (if a chicken pollutes the earth through abominable behaviour, the earth pursues/repels her). Up to the first four decades of the twentieth century people among the Igbo who died of suspicious causes, or rare and abnormal diseases, were not buried. Their remains were disposed of in such a way that contact with earth was prohibited.

Another concrete validation of this belief is couched under the expression: "ani naru oku" (the portion of the earth that is "hot" or furious). This is usually a spot where either murder was committed or an abomination of the

deepest dye was perpetrated. If no ritualized decontamination occurs in such a place, the penalty paid by those who inhabit the area is occasional mysterious deaths. If the incidence of such mysterious death increases in frequency, the area is abandoned as "ani naru oku". It is this belief in part that accounts for the "foundation ceremonies" that precede the erection of any new house. Before a house for human habitation is built by anyone, regardless of religious affiliations or social status, a ritual involving the killing of a goat or prescribed domestic animal has to take place.

What is important is the recognition by the Igbo people of a force which the earth emits, a force that can reward or punish. This force is dual and therefore can be positive or negative. It has the capabilities of attracting and repelling, and contact with it is through the body of emotion.

To give added insight into this vehicle which has been allowed to sink into virtual oblivion in the west, Alice Heim formulates her thesis as "the inseparability of the three aspects of experience".²³ One aspect of experience "is the cognitive". Cognition "covers the thinking and knowing aspect of experience". The other two aspects of experience are covered by the word "orexis" which denotes "the affective and conative" components of experience. Four major attributes are identified as manifesting orexis -

"impulse, appetite, desire, emotion". Some other qualities such as "motivation, prejudice, mood, attitude" are added to the list. In a further clarification of orexis, she isolates "affect" (the noun of affective which includes "the emotional and feeling aspect [eg. anger, fear, pleasure]"). She applies "conatation" "to the striving, doing aspect of experience (eg. running a race, keeping order in the classroom, trying to attend to two things at once)". She claims that in all probability "all human experiences include the three aspects, but their relative importance varies with the circumstances". She then proceeds to give an illustration which is "sitting for an intelligence test":

"The subject is aware that he is taking a test and he thinks about the problems (cognition); he is also eager or apprehensive, co-operative or antagonistic, enjoying it or disliking it (affect); he may be putting forth little effort or he may be striving to do well (cognition)."²⁴

She cites the case of a student sitting for an intelligence test as a good example of how inseparable the three aspects are in practice.

The importance of Heim's thesis centres on the fact that attention has been drawn to a fact of life which has been taken for granted. The body of emotion is the power house back of the activities of most people. This body is the next stage of activity soon after contact is established with an object with the physical senses. The affective and the conative dimensions take over after physical contact to

determine one's reaction which is either negative or positive. This body, therefore institutes the response appropriate to the individual and the occasion. It is equally in this vehicle that the religious phenomenon takes root. For the initiate it can be posited that the emotional body is also the first level of contact in any altered state of consciousness.

The concreteness of the emotional body is made visible in the names given to its manifestation. A name shared through convention is a denotation of an existence of a force visible or invisible. The name "anya oku" (hot eye) is a vivid designation that amounts to covetousness. As the Igbo see it, it is a powerful impulse originating from the emotional body and literally "inflames" the eye. Closely tied with covetousness is jealousy. The Igbo name for jealousy is "anya ukwu" (excessively large eyes). "Anya oku" (hot eye) and "Anya ukwu" (large eyes) presuppose, as in the case of an Egyptian Cobra, the emission of negative force that forcibly and aggressively desires another person's rightful property or possession. The outcome of such a negative interaction is usually disruptive. Similarly "Iwe" or "Onuma" (anger and violent anger) is emotional force/steam that explodes through the sense of touch. In the same vein, "Akpiri ogologo" (long throat) or simply (akpiri" is a social label for gluttony. Here again, the implication of inordinate desire is expressed in strong

terms and indicated as concentrating in the throat. All these forces are easily detected in social interaction.

All said and done an understanding of the emotional body as an apparatus of response does throw some light on the problems some late nineteenth century researchers such as Lucien Levy-Bruhl and R. R. Marett experienced in understanding "primitive" people.

5.3.3. THE MIND

There is much information in the West about the mind even though there is considerable and endless debate about its ontological status.²⁵ Among the Igbo people the mind is a reality and is accepted as such without argument. It is a faculty that is regarded as a natural endowment of man, but a problem arises as to its exact name. Sometimes it is identified with "Obi" (heart), and in some contexts it is simply called "Uche" (faculty of thought). Another form of reference to the mind is "akonauche" (wisdom, reasoning faculty or intelligence). The identification with "Obi" (heart) not only indicates the considerable resources of that organ but also the combined activity of the heart and mind which is characteristic of the initiate group.

The reality of the mind, as known in Igbo land, is demonstrated in its activities or through what is considered in the West as "mental states".²⁶ Through introspection one comes to a knowledge of one's mind. It is generally said

that "itua onwegi mbo imalu ka onadi" (if you pinch yourself you know how someone else would feel it). This statement is particularly significant because it points out the intermediary position of the body of emotion between the physical body and the mind.

The mind is of a higher order when compared to the body of emotion. In its uncontrolled nature the astral or emotional body obscures reasoning. It creates a type of fog that blocks mental illumination. An expression such as "Isim di ka abubu" (my head is fibrous), is indicative of a confused state. However, through structured training, the emotional body can be regulated and the powers of the mind allowed to come to prominence. When the mind is fully developed it calls into action the powers of the soul (chi). This means that the individual has an instrument of contact and response extending from the physical world of tangibility to the subjective, formless world.

Much credit should go to Lucien Levy-Bruhl for accurate delineation of the mentality of the "primitives". His insights and observations apply to the Igbo people. Of necessity his words will have to be quoted at great length. He recognized that in the study of the primitive mentality "a fresh terminology" would be required because the western world had placed emphasis only on the "intellectual or cognitive phenomenon". Writing about the primitives, he said that:

Their mental activity is too little differentiated for it to be possible to consider ideas or images of objects by themselves apart from the emotions and passions which evoke these ideas or are evoked by them...By this mental activity in primitives we must understand something which is not a purely or almost purely intellectual or cognitive phenomenon, but a more complex one, in which what is really 'representation' to us is found blended with other elements of an emotional or motor character, colored and imbued by them, and therefore implying a different attitude with regard to the objects represented.²⁷

In his graphic details of the primitive mentality he uncovers the root of what makes the primitive "religious" at all times and "incurably" so. He goes on to say that:

"not only that the primitive actually has an image of the object in his mind, and thinks it real, but also that he has some hope or fear connected with it, that some definite influence emanates from it, or is exercised upon it. This influence is a virtue, an occult power which varies with objects and circumstances, but is always real to the primitive and forms an integral part of his representation...I should say that this mental activity was a mystic one."²⁸

Lucien Levy-Buhl was careful to make a distinction between the primitive man's mysticism and "the religious mysticism of our communities, which is entirely different". This type of mysticism "implies belief in forces and influences and actions which, though imperceptible to sense, are nevertheless real".²⁹ Summarizing this view he observes that:

"the reality surrounding the

primitives is itself mystical. Not a single being or object or natural phenomenon in their collective representations is what it appears to be to our minds. Almost everything that we perceive therein either escapes their attention or is a matter of indifference to them. On the other hand, they see many things there of which we are unconscious...Since everything that exists possesses mystic properties, and these properties, from their very nature, are much more important than the attributes of which our senses inform us, the difference between animate and inanimate things is not of the same interest to primitive mentality as it is to our own."³⁰

Whether the target people are called "savages" or "primitives" is not the question. What Levy-Bruhl said is what is important and particularly relevant. His main thesis book is that "the mind of the non-literate is mystical, or magical, in its identification of causation. Behavioral patterns that have perplexed Western observers become perfectly clear when we accept the supernatural epistemology and phenomenology of the tribesmen".³¹ Because of lack of understanding of the mechanics of this primitive mentality as Levy-Bruhl understood it, most nineteenth century and early twentieth century scholars saw that mentality as "prelogical". Rather than prelogicality, the term that is most appropriate for this mentality is "seminality". It is a mentality, when fully functioning, that embraces the three eyes articulated by Ken Wilber. It is an all-inclusive mentality in which the eye of

contemplation overrides and at the same time empowers the eye of the intellect/mind and the eye of the flesh. Indeed this type of mind which Levy-Bruhl sharply portrayed is the mind steeped in holism. This mechanism cannot be properly understood without an insight into the Igbo belief in a soul.

5.3.4. SOUL (CHI)

This is the highest known apparatus of contact and response available and known to the Igbo people. Moreover, it is the fact of chi that is the substratum of the study of a person as a means of studying the person's religion. Chi is on the lip of everybody. It is rare to have a household in which chi or its modification is not a constituent of the name of any one member. There is no argument as to its reality. Rituals exist that are directly associated with Chi. All considered, it is the root of Igbo holistic psychology - that is exoteric as well as esoteric psychology.

Chinua Achebe asserts that "without an understanding of the nature of Chi one would not begin to make sense of the Igbo world-view".³² In addition, Ejizu sees the most striking aspect of chi as its "religio-moral character". Ejizu highlights this significance on the grounds that "religion...is the most essential factor of life in the traditional background underpinning a highly integrated

cosmology".³³ With all these observations in mind, we shall go further to show that chi is the highest "organ" available to the individual for sight and response to the supersensible world. To achieve this, we shall rely on the pool of meanings provided by Igbo names and proverbs.

Most common names of people have chi either as a suffix or as a prefix. Such names as it is the case with other Igbo names are complete sentences with significant meanings. Some of the commonly used Igbo names that bear on chi have, for the purposes of this research, been arbitrarily put under three broad categories. In the first group names such as "chinedu" (the Soul leads/guides) and "chidube" (let the soul lead/guide) are classified. The names in this category clearly show Igbo strong belief in the trusted power of the soul to lead and direct. In a sense chidube is more of a supplication whereas chinedu is an assured certainty grounded on the power of the soul to provide adequate protection. The individual so named is surrendered and committed to the guidance and leadership of the soul. This assurance that direction comes from Chi is predicated on at least a modicum of omnipotence inherent in the soul.

The second category includes such names as Chibundu (the soul is life), Chibuogwu (the soul is a medicine), Chidiebere (the soul is merciful), Chilaka (the soul ordains or rules), Chinazo (the soul saves or rescues from danger), Chibuike (the soul is strength). In this category the

attributes of the soul are illustrated. The soul is life; it is medicine that heals and restores and is merciful and kind. At the same time, it ordains and makes ultimate decisions in the life of the individual. The soul exhibits strength and rescues one from danger.

Other soul qualities are articulated in names in the third grouping. The ability of the soul to recreate and make good human imperfections is expressed in "chikezie" (let the soul rightly create). The soul also has the power to bless as indicated in the name of "chigozie" (let the soul bless). The soul is the acknowledged bestower of gifts and bounty. Names such as "Nwachinemere" (the child whose path is smoothed by the soul or the beneficiary of the bounty of the soul) and "Nkechinyere" (that which is given by the soul) are illustrations of this act of soul benevolence.

In the third category could be added two other names that reflect the contemplative aspect of the soul. "Chinelo" (the soul thinks through and plans or meditates), "Uchechi" (the thought/plan of the soul) and "Chima" (the soul knows) are indicators of the thought process of the soul and border on the accreditation of omniscience to the soul by the Igbo people.

Each of the names cited above is only a fragment of the qualities and attributes of the soul. When all the meanings of the names are brought together, the reality and the

synthetic, transcendent power of the soul in Igbo consciousness stands out as the pivot of Igbo Traditional Religion. In these names can be traced the root of Igbo philosophy and psychology. These names go beyond the Igbo exercise of creative intelligence to highlight their understanding of the metaphysical activity of that which is unseen by the naked eye and yet ever present and ever-acting.

While the names, as they are given at birth, symbolize some form of prefiguration, the actual materialization of the thoughts embodied becomes subject to other variables of daily living. In most cases the individuals bearing such names live the meanings intended. But where the expectation is not met, the delineated characteristics of "Chi" remain inviolate while the frustrated vision is ascribed to other psychological problems.³⁴

In addition to the ontological status of Chi revealed in names, there are proverbs that add to the illumination of Chi in the Igbo world. One of the most significant proverbs that add to the knowledge of the soul is "efi enwero odu chi ya na egbulu ya ijiji" (any cow that has no tail, its soul kills the flies that come to harass her). Under normal situations, cows chase off flies and harassing bugs with their tails. Should the tail be missing or non-existent for any reason, the soul of the cow offsets the deprivation by meeting the need. If the soul of a cow is able to meet

needs in such a miraculous way, the human soul on a higher state of consciousness has powers to work miracles. The human soul is all seeing and powerful and knows when one is harassed and acts promptly to save the individual from any ugly situation.

"Ofu nne n'amu ma ofu chi ada eke" is another proverb of importance. The literal translation of this proverb is "although one mother gives birth to many children, each child is the product of one specific chi/soul". The implication is that there are as many souls as there are individuals. When this proverb is used, one is generally reminded that one should not expect uniformity of behaviour from children of the same mother. Furthermore, the proverb attributes specific characteristics to each soul thereby opening up complex philosophical and psychological issues which are explained in other proverbs, statements, idioms and the overall Igbo world view.³⁵

The soul/chi is perceived as an indwelling, spiritual entity that brought the individual into incarnation. In daily expressions the impression is given that the chi and the personality, the human physical body or what the modern esotericist calls the lower self, or the "I" of the modern psychologists are two interacting entities. There is an implied recognition of the christian doctrines of free will and what can be termed the errancy of the lower self. The

situation is best appreciated again from what the Igbo people say.

Sometimes to inspire and motivate a person it is said "onye kwe chi ya ekwe" (if one resigns to a situation, one's soul also resigns to it). The individual, the actor on the physical plane of human existence, is assumed to make a decision and the soul accepts that decision. At the face value of the statement, there appears to be an apparent contradiction based on the powers of the soul. But when it is realized that the objective of the statement is to flagellate the addressee into action, it becomes obvious that the soul does not cherish indolence. In other situations it is said "ama ife ya na chi nya kpalu" (no one knows the agreement the individual has with his/her soul). This statement is generally provoked by an abnormal situation in which a person appears to be neutral to life occurrences by the exhibition of a disturbing passiveness. The person listens to advice but does not act on it.

The sense of duality is sharply brought into focus by the often heard exclamation "chim egbuem" (my soul has ruined/killed me). This is another paradoxical statement which, if put into proper perspective, unleashes ideas that go to support the strength and power of the soul in a positive commendable sense. On the other hand, it highlights the emotional fog that obscures the reasoning faculty of the one who makes the exclamation prompted by a

mishap. The general belief is that "chi" is always good, dynamic and on the side of order. The polar opposite of "chim egbuem" is "chi ya mu anya" (his soul is fully awake). "Chi imu anya" (the alertness of the soul) is applied to a situation in which a danger or a serious accident has been providentially averted. Such escapes from danger usually amount to the miraculous and defy ordinary rational explanation and are only possible through the intervention of the soul.

Underlying the whole conception of the soul, in Igbo land, is the idea of duality. There is the instinctual, almost animal man propelled by desire and there is the real man, the chi/soul. The soul indwells in the natural, physical man. It can be postulated that the activity of the soul depends on the nature and quality of the "form", the lower man that veils it. If the eye of the flesh is dominant the impact of the soul is minimal and one could be said to be very responsive to the law of gravity without regard to a pull from above. With the progress of evolution, however, the lower man equips itself to respond to the soul.

Another dimension of the soul/chi is brought out by Dr. Ilogu. He notes that to the Igbo people

Man is believed to be created by Chi-ne-ke, 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 each man a part of his divine nature

called Chi which becomes the spiritual double of the man throughout his life.³⁶

Chi in this case is the "divine spark" in man. In Christian circles, this divine spark is said to be the Christ principle which dwells in human heart.³⁷ If a careful consideration is given to St. Augustine's observation which is universalistic, more insights into Chi as an apparatus of vision could be gained. St. Augustine said that "our whole business in this life is to restore to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen".³⁸

The concept of Chi as the divine spark in man, paves the ground for an effulgence of the spark when the heart is rendered pure.³⁹ Suffice it again, to indicate that when the radiance of the soul manifests then one can acquire inner sight or vision.⁴⁰ The credibility of Meister Eckhart is enhanced by his comment:

Philosophers say the Soul is double-faced, her upper face gazes at God all the time and her lower face looks somewhat down, informing the senses; and the upper face, which is the summit of the soul, is in eternity and has nothing to do with time: it knows nothing of time or of body.⁴¹

These philosophers of ageless Wisdom confirm that the soul is an apparatus of vision. The Igbo people not only believe it but demonstrate its practicality through the process of initiation.

5.3.5. INITIATION AND THE INNER MECHANISM OF CONTACT

Initiation connotes expansion of consciousness. In a strict sense, rites of passage which are essentially religious exercises, form part of the organised instrument of initiation. In a broad sense, the art of daily living with its implied interactions contributes to progressive expansion of consciousness and each significant initiation adds a milestone on the path of evolution. As stated earlier, the Igbo people do not regard physical growth as real unless growth correlates with expanded consciousness.

In Biblical terms, initiation can be said to be a conversion experience. Moses, Isaiah and St. Paul are said to be initiates. Christ himself is indicated as undergoing five major initiations.⁴² Initiation, then is an identity altering experience.

Among the Igbo people, "increased awareness" or expansion of consciousness can be accelerated through a structured process. The initiation elements may vary but a universal pattern involving three phases has been identified. Victor Turner, citing Arnold Van Kennepe, the one who made the discovery, denotes the phases as those of "separation", "margin" and aggregation.⁴³

The separation phase implies the detachment or the removal of the neophyte from his familiar surroundings. This is a form of deprivation that facilitates greater concentration on the objective of the initiation. The margin or the "liminal" phase is the intervening moment in

the cycle. The candidates are in a state that is analogous to the Chrysalis. They are "neither here nor there, they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial". This phase is usually likened to "death, to being in the womb, to invisibility (and) to darkness".⁴⁴

The third phase is that of "reaggregation or reincorporation" into the society. The candidates are supposed to have achieved altered state of consciousness. They are "expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions".⁴⁵

One of the initiations currently documented is the "Isa Aka" (washing of hands).⁴⁶ The initiation is exclusive for adolescent boys of fifteen to eighteen years. As determined by the kindred elder of the village, the affected boys are isolated for four days under a hierophant of the village. Within this period, the boys are mentally conditioned for the ordeal that awaits them. On the eve of the fourth day, the neophytes are tattooed by the hierophant using a sharp knife. Each boy receives a straight line cut along the right hand starting from the shoulder to the tip of the second finger. On the chest, "two parallel lines running from one end of the chest to the other crossed by four to eight vertical lines" are incised. The same pattern as on the chest is duplicated on the back of the candidate. The

candidate is not expected to flinch from the resulting excruciation. Severe restrictions are then "imposed on them for four days (Igbo week) in preparation for the public event in the village square where they undergo arduous tests.

When the prospective initiates emerge in the public square, each is made to stand at a designated spot in a demarcated circle. Each is given an animal horn which he holds for hours in the outstretched right hand. Palm wine is spat into their eyes to obscure their vision and initiation music played to bolster them. Each remains in the erect position with the right hand/arm horizontal to the ground until a "tremor of the right hand begins...and gradually, the entire right arm begins to shake violently". At this juncture the tremor forces him out of the circle and the right hand "directs his steps". With this occurrence he has symbolically broken away "from the circumscribed world of the children into the world of adults".

It has to be observed that up to this point in the process some boys who are unable to stand the test fall out. There are morning and evening sessions and the process may be spread over four weeks until complete eligibility is established.

The next phase after returning to their camp is to uproot the "Nwanyi Ure", the proud woman, under the prescribed conditions. The "Nwanyi Ure" is a shrub that

grows in a thick forest. It has to be located by psychic means since neo-initiates have never seen it before, and has to be uprooted intact and carried to the camp. The root radiates its force that impels the carrier to stagger. The carrier, however, draws inspiration from the initiation songs from other supportive initiates.

The "Nwanyi Ure" is used in preparing the new initiates "Odu-Aka, the Eduma or the Ebi" (untranslatable) - the insignia of initiation which he is made to test by locating a hidden buried white cock. On passing this final test, the initiate is assumed to possess "a permanent ability to interpret events and phenomena". The major feature of this process is that the initiate is enabled to develop an inner eye as well as benevolent powers that are used to help the society especially in locating missing articles.⁴⁷

Another variant of Isa-aka is "Itu-Anyia" (conditioning the eye). This type focuses on the development of the "inner eye" implying that graduation from the rite confers on the initiate the faculty of prevision.⁴⁸

While Isa-Aka stretches over a period of three to four weeks, another specialist initiation covers a period of two to three months. This initiation is associated with "agwu" (divination force/emanation). There are two distinct beneficent types.⁴⁹ One is "agwu nka" (carver's or artist's divination force). This initiation links the artist (carver) to the "creative fount". The other "agwu

isi" (divination force of the head) applies to diviners and "dibia" (medicine man/shaman). Unlike Isa-Aka, it is not an age set initiation. It is rather individual and the period of confinement inside a room is about two to three months during which a "team of medicine men set to work purifying and vitalizing the spirit/body of the novice".⁵⁰

The importance of "Agwu Nka" is highlighted by the descriptive word "nka". Nka gives some insight into the realm traversed by the initiate. "Nka" is generally used for an expert/adept and especially for one who has manifested a high level of creativity. "Nka" is the noun while the adjective is "Oka". "Onya oka okwu" is one who is a very inspiring and fiery speaker. Such a speaker literally moves people with words. "Nka" as shown in the initiation process is of divine origin. The meaning of "Nka" is clearly shown in the translation of the New Testament Book of Revelation in Igbo: "Nkpughe Ekpughere Jon onye-oka n'ihe Chineke" (That which was uncovered/unveiled to John [onye-oka] the artist/the adept in matters concerning God).

John the divine was not an ordinary man. He was an initiate (onye-oka). An Igbo initiate can easily relate to the Book of Revelation. The content of the Book of Revelation is not only illuminating, it also places initiation as the structural apex on the path of evolution.

Any discussion of initiation in Igbo land is incomplete without a reference to the "ozo" title. The "ozo" initiates command a high social status and social respectability. They have precedence over others at social gatherings and are hedged in by taboos. The taboos are instruments that enable them specifically to maintain the level of sanctity and "enlightenment" achieved through the structured path of initiation. After initiation they assume symbolic title names. Most of the names are prefaced by the word "eze" meaning king.⁵¹

The significant point to be stressed is that initiation is the mode by which the eye of intellect/mind and, above all, the eye of contemplation are developed. Each eye is sensitive to light, and light, whether exoteric or subjective and inner, reveals. For the initiate what is revealed is predominantly subjective and very real. The initiate is, therefore able to see the objective, tangible and physical world and the inner, invisible world all at once. The power of insight varies from initiate to initiate and the Igbo people make this recognition when they say "Ona afu uzo" (he sees clearly). This statement is usually in reference to an initiate especially a "dibia" (shaman/medicine man) who has developed the power of prevision to the extent that his prediction or the diagnosis he makes is marked by pinpoint accuracy.

The powers and faculties developed by the initiates are not only diverse but also tremendous. Some initiates demonstrate the powers of intuition. "Initiation is the source or the bestower of revelation. Through the intuition, progressive understanding of the ways of God in the world, and on behalf of humanity are revealed".⁵²

As a result of initiation the individual aura acquires refinement (as it is the case with saints). The aura can then be used as an "antenna" to sense the environment. Increased rarification of the aura and its consequent power correlate with the point of evolution of the initiate. The expression "arum anataro ifea" (My body does not accept this thing) is an indicator of negative vibration which is incongruous with the high energy level set up through initiation.⁵³

All in all, initiation is the mode per excellence by which the mature Igbo man gains mastery of his personality and subordinates it to his chi. Initiation also opens the way to soul-infusion or the attainment of psychosomatic unity as evidenced in the calm of the initiate. When the Chi is in control as a result of initiation, those attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence embodied in Igbo names begin to manifest in varying proportions.

5.4. UME - BREATH

One major activity that links the Igbo man with his universe (as is the case with all human beings), is the act of breathing. It is through the knowledge of the Igbo initiates that the inner meaning, and therefore, the implications of the act of breathing is preserved in Igbo language.

The permeation of nature with consciousness of varying degrees as a function of relative density has been postulated in the foregoing. A parallel penetration of all planes and levels in nature by ume-breath is posited by the Igbo people. Iku-ume is to breathe. "Ona eku ume?" (Is he/she breathing?), when posed specifically addresses the question as to whether the referee is alive. Iku-ume becomes a prepositional expression denoting being alive. Granting the proof that one is alive it is common to ask "inwere ume?" (Do you have strength or energy?). On a more metaphysical level, when the strength to accomplish a task of a herculean nature is lacking, the expression of "Igba ume" is heard. This literally means "joining or adding strength". It is a type of mental or esoteric mathematics by which extra energy sufficient to achieve a specific task is generated.

These references to Ume are, not surprisingly, anthropocentric. Knowledge of oneself and human interaction, forms the basis of approaching the knowledge of other entities and forms in nature, and is in keeping with

another Hermetic injunction "know thyself".⁵⁴ The Igbo man, therefore extrapolates the familiar knowledge to the realm apparently unknown. The general and universal principle of working from the known to the unknown is embodied in an Igbo proverb which states that "uzu amaro akpu ogene ya ne anya n'odu egbe". (The smith that does not know how to construct a gong should look closely at the tail of a hawk).⁵⁵

Using human experience as a referent, the animal kingdom is next to the human kingdom in an order of descent, and the application of the idea of breath - ume to that kingdom is proper and even objectively demonstrable. The plant kingdom on a lower scale shares in the process of respiration. Modern science has taught beyond doubt the exchange of "ume" between plants on one hand and animals and humans on the other. The involvement of the lowest, the mineral kingdom, in this interchange and exchange of ume is clearly illustrated in the nitrogen, carbon and oxygen cycles within the context of nature.⁵⁶ Modern science, again has demonstrated that oxidation takes place in the mineral kingdom. The knowledge of exchange of "ume" within this kingdom in Igbo land is kept and preserved within the initiate circle. The uninitiated can only infer from the uses into which that kingdom is put and what is said about it and the prohibitions about the object.⁵⁷

Surrounding the entire four kingdoms in nature is a vast envelope of air which leads to the presupposition of one universal breath. This envelope of air is the source of "ume", the distinguishing mark of life in nature. The ubiquity of air in nature conjures up the idea of the Great Breath. The Great Breath being the initial activity of the Prime Mover is the fountainhead of force and of all individual consciousness. In the Nnewi creation myth, it is the breath of God that gave life to the four sons of Edo.

The created order in nature resembles modern appliances that carry out various functions when plugged into electrical outlets. The Great Breath in this analogy is mirrored by electricity. As electricity provides the energy for work so also does ume in a human being.

"The breath not only serves as a link between a person's body and mind, but is also the most direct channel of interchange between the person and the surrounding medium. Through breathing we take in oxygen, tying ourselves into the larger ecological system which connects plants and animals in an overall cycle of energy exchange. The act of breathing unites us with this larger energy pool and integrates us into the greater context of nature."⁵⁸

The four kingdoms in nature through which the Great Breath continues to flow presuppose a type of "preprogramming" as in the case of a man-made CRT of a computer system. In other words, forms in nature are so made that they are not only sensitive, but also responsive,

to the Great Breath. The Igbo people in their daily speech talk of "igba ume" - joining or adding energy. In other words, one is encouraged to become energized. In the Igbo world, this process does not involve any formalized and conscious breathing exercise. It is a kind of self-interaction at the end of which the affected individual is energized. The person is usually psyched up and ready to act swiftly based on the specific situation. The resultant behaviour is an expression of increased energy within the body system. It is beyond the scope of the present work to postulate the interior mechanism by which the energy is generated.⁵⁹

The end product of "Igba ume" is the energization of the physical body as registered by the Igbo man. In other words the registrant of the said energy is inspired.

The fundamental relationship between breath and 'spirit' is reflected in most languages. viz: our 'expiration' and 'inspiration', the latter meaning not only to inhale, but to become filled with creative energy or spirit (inspired).⁶⁰

Again, the relationship between ume-breath/inspiration and spirit is articulated in the Eucharistic Collect for Purity when God is invoked to "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit".⁶¹ On the issue of breath, the modern scientist, the Christian and the Igbo traditionalist make reference to one indivisible source and expect the same effect in daily living. The Igbo standpoint

when fully decoded refers to a metaphysical mathematics and a type of chemicalization process that leads to a transformation and conversion of energy.

This internal process by which breath is transformed into energy is experienced throughout nature. The equation of breath with spirit calls for a rethinking of animism and the consequent identification of animism with spiritual ubiquity. This identification facilitates the appreciation of the fact that "all is energy", an appreciation that opens the window into the "archaic" world. In this archaic world, which the Igbo world participates in vivifying, the breath energy is grounded in varied forms in nature. In human forms it correlates with the degree of purity and level of consciousness attained by the individual and manifests as a type of radiance or aura called Ibubo in Igbo. It is the source of charisma, a distinguishing mark of true Igbo initiate.⁶² "The Chinese called the energy Chi; the Hindus, Prana...; the Polynesians, Mana; and Amerindians, Orenda. In modern times it has been called Orgone (Wilhelm Reich)...and bioplasma."⁶³ Paracelsus, credited to be the father of Western medicine describing the same energy phenomenon stated; "The vital force in man...radiates within and around him like a luminous sphere".⁶⁴

The discovery by a contemporary neuropsychiatrist of "a 'vital energy body or field' which substands the dense physical body, interpenetrating it like a sparkling web of

light beams",⁶⁵ parallels the same discovery in plants and other forms in nature.⁶⁶ The more recent postulation of the Gaia hypothesis is another vindication of this energy deriving from the Great Breath. The age-long witness by the Igbo people as well as other small societies of the pervasiveness of energy in forms in Nature again accounts for the sacramentality of all things. It is this sacramentality that translates into what Mircea Eliade has termed hierophany, the manifestation of something of a wholly other, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural 'profane' world.⁶⁷

Mircea Eliade further confirms the standpoint of the Igbo religious traditionalist when he observes that:

"The man of archaic societies tends to live as much as possible in the sacred or in close proximity to consecrated objects. The tendency is perfectly understandable, because for primitives as for the man of all pre-modern societies, the sacred is equivalent to a power, and in the last analysis, to reality. The sacred is saturated with being. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy."⁶⁸

Mircea Eliade's works vibrate with the sensed reality of divine manifestation and revelation in Nature. He strove to disabuse the Western mind from regarding this reality as aberrations.

Talbot on his part is amazed at the persistence of the "beliefs and ways" of the Igbo and Ibibio religious

traditionalists. He thinks that these beliefs and practices had hardly changed "since, the childhood of the world." He maintains that:

"For such the commonplace does not exist, each object is tinged with wonder and mystery, while forces beneficent or malignant are to be felt on every hand...Before their mental vision the path stretches broad and clear; familiar as that which leads to farm or homestead... To (them), everything, from the smallest stone or humblest plant to the mightiest rock, river or tree, has an indwelling soul or 'Mana', which is capable of projecting itself in a multitude of ways in order to influence the lives of those with whom it comes in contact."⁶⁹

Dr. David Tansley, after extensive researches in traditional societies has come to a conclusion that is similar to Talbot's observation. Tansley observes that:

"All forms, be they human, animal, plant, or even the apparently inert mineral, radiate a surrounding field of energy into the environment. This field or aura expresses the quality and nature of the form which it interpenetrates and surrounds."⁷⁰

A review of the contemporary scientific discoveries relative to nature can only draw forth from an Igbo religious traditionalist a fitting proverb: "Aku fecha odalu ani", (the winged termite after all its elegant flight must fall to the earth). It implies that, in the final analysis, one has to face the reality of that which has been in operation since creation. The Bible also offers an

appropriate expression which a contemporary exponent of the ITR could easily cite as the present standpoint of the Igbo world:

The stone which the builders
rejected has become the head of
the corner.⁷¹

5.5. EXPRESSION

In a classroom setting, at the conclusion of each episode of planned interaction by the teacher, the term "expression" is specifically designated as activities which the pupils engage in as proof of their comprehension of the lesson delivered. In nature this same process holds. For the purpose of this investigation therefore, "expression" is taken to be the reproduction by the Igbo people of that which they have learned from Nature. Expression as a result is predicated on experience. In Igbo, the statement "Imalu ife imulu igba" or "gba ife imulu" (dance out what you have learned) is an excellent symbolic mode of depicting expression. In other words, one (within a specific context) is asked to show what one knows. Expression as conceptualized is integral to the experience of Nature.

The Igbo experience of Nature is holistic in spite of the divisions into earth, water, space and sky. This wholeness or unity is based on the Great Breath that impulsed all there is into existence. There is one dominant energy source that points to the interrelationship and

interdependence of all apparent aggregations of energy or force. The visible sun is only a symbol of this divine energy source. Man, on his part and as part of Nature, is equipped with diverse mechanisms for experiencing Nature. The development of these apparatuses of learning from Nature is influenced by progressive growth and accelerated by structured initiations. Like spiritous liquor that ages and acquires greater potency with time, the Igbo man cultivates more faculties of apprehending nature with the passage of time. At a very old age the Igbo man/elder is said to act as a link between the living and the spirit world of the ancestors.

Beyond the physical and visible aspects of manifestation only the initiate and elders have the apparatus for gaining experience and consequently for building up the corpus of knowledge available to the average and ordinary Igbo person. This phenomenon is not the peculiarity of the Igbo people alone. Berger and Luckmann state that only a very limited group in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of

ideas and the construction of *Weltanschauungen*. But everyone in society participates in its 'knowledge' in one way or another. Put differently, only a few are concerned with theoretical interpretation of the world, but everybody lives in a world of some sort.⁷²

It is also a common phenomenon that initiates are forbidden to disclose what they have contacted or experienced in the

supersensible and subjective world. St. Paul who is a Christian initiate, makes this clear:

I know a man in Christ...who was caught up to the third heaven - whether in the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise... and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.⁷³

Following this age-old tradition Christ taught His disciples privately and secretly things that can only be seen with eye of the mind and the eye of contemplation.⁷⁴ This universal preservation of the confidentiality of the things known and seen in the supersensible world is symbolically embodied in Igbo proverb: "Di ochi ada ekwusi ife ofulu n'enu nkwu", (the palm wine tapper does not disclose all he sees high up on the palm tree). While this Igbo thesis is exoterically true it is equally valid when applied to the high altitude subjectively attained during the process of initiation. In other words, physical locomotion that lands one at the top of the palm tree broadens one's horizon of vision. In the same way, a controlled altered state of consciousness brings one closer to God or Source of all energy manifestations. In each situation the perceiver has to guard his integrity by keeping his lips sealed.

The silence which the "Way" of initiation imposes on the graduates raises a very important question. If silence is mandatory following initiation experience, how then can expression be coupled to experience? There is also the

added problem of verifying and affirming the content of experience. Perhaps the best answer to the question of reflection of experience in expression is provided again by St. Paul.

"For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the spirit... So with yourselves; if you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?...Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret...I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue."⁷⁵

In this brief instruction, St. Paul summarizes the whole story of revelation as "a shared experience" and at the same time discloses the mode of communicating and expressing experience. A careful study of St. Paul implies that the initiate holds a position of responsibility. Moreover he is under obligation to communicate what he experiences with the ultimate objective of fulfilling the old Hermetic injunction of "as above so below". In Christian terminology, this amounts to "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". In sociological terms it is "the Social Construction of Reality".

While not ignoring some paradox which is evident in "silence" of the initiate and the responsibility of the initiate/elder to communicate the content of experience, the

focus of attention is on the mode of communication of that which is contacted. This noted paradox exists in Igbo system and it is stated in strong redolent terms. "Afu n'ekwughi n'egbu okenye" (seeing and not communicating kills an elder). There is really no contradiction in "silence" and the injunction to communicate. In Igbo land what is stressed is the obligation of the initiate/elder to lead, and point direction in the light of subjective experience. The apparent paradox resolves itself in the caution which must be exercised in not teaching calculus and mechanics to a nursery child. St. Paul has the same instruction when he teaches that revelation must be reduced in a meaningful way to the level of understanding of the auditors.

The issue of verification of experience triggered by the paradox inherent in the confidentiality of that which is experienced is resolved in the Igbo structure of experience and expression. It is only sufficient to observe at this juncture that Igbo methodology calls for individual experimentation and validation. What is more critical is the content of experience from the Igbo standpoint.

Although the experience is individual and private its presence within the initiate radiates and is recognizable by one in close contact with the initiate.⁷⁶ Freud is indeed writing about all creative writers and artists when he observes that:

"They are apt to know a host of things
between heaven and earth of which our

philosophy has not yet let us dream...
(They are) far in advance of us every
day people, for they draw upon sources
which we have not yet opened up for
science."⁷⁷

Freud, by this statement, acknowledges the reality of the experience which finds expression in creative work. It is significant that Freud sees the sources from which those artists draw as located between heaven and earth. Freud however, does not acknowledge the sources as divine. That gap is easily covered in the Igbo experience and practice. The "agwu isi" form of initiation, as has been indicated, is a process by which the initiate establishes connection with the "Creative fount". And finally there is an implied apparatus or mechanism for drawing from those subjective forces which the "everyday" man has not developed. Moreover, a modicum of subjective light is imperative for sight in the domain of those "sources".

Writing in the same vein, but in a much more explicit fashion, Will Durant comments on "great men".

We too have had the experiences they had, but we did not suck these experiences dry of their secret and subtle meanings: we were not sensitive to the overtones of the reality that hummed about us. Genius hears the overtones, and the music of the spheres; genius knows what Pythagoras meant when he said that philosophy is the highest music.⁷⁸

There is no doubt that Durant is lamenting the decadent state of philosophy in the Western World. This posture indeed acts as a foil that highlights the Igbo philosophical

system. The lamentation indicates the limitation of a "narrow" vision with only the eye of the flesh. The genius/the initiate employs the three eyes. In his note "To The Reader", Durant "hopes for the time when the study of the knowledge-process will be recognized as the business of the science of psychology, and when philosophy will again be understood as the synthetic interpretation of all experience rather than the analytic description of the mode and process of experience itself".⁷⁹

Besides the apparent criticism of philosophy as practised in his time, Durant gives in a nutshell an aspect of the content of "mystical" experience. The "genius hears the overtones, and the music of the spheres", and according to Pythagoras, "philosophy is the highest music". Further elucidation of this content of experience is furnished by Burt. Burt recalls that early in the Middle Ages, "the synthesis of Christian theology and Greek philosophy was accomplished with the latter in a predominantly Platonic, or rather Neo-Platonic cast". He goes on to say that:

"All the important thinkers of the school liked to express their favourite doctrines of emanation and evolution in terms of the number theory, following Plato's suggestion in the Parmenides that Plurality unfolded itself from unity by a necessary mathematical process."⁸⁰

The synthetic act of expressing that which is experienced originates in the mental laboratory of the Igbo

man as it is the case with other human beings. Affirming the same thinking, Catherine Marshall states that "one of the most provocative facts I know is that every man-made object, as well as every event in anyone's life, starts with an idea or a picture in the mind".⁸¹ The mind in Igbo land is generally described by its activities which are by themselves very instructive. They point to the metaphysical dimension of the Igbo mind and also simplify the philosophical puzzles that have baffled thinkers for ages.

The key activity of the mind is said to be "ogugu isi" (counting in the head). This means thinking in western terminology. Thinking as used in the West is abstruse and does not clearly bring out the extent of this mental activity. "Ogugu isi" is mental calculation, or mental mathematics. Another word for this activity is meditation. A variant of "ogugu isi" is "isikwu ife" (adding or joining something). The person engaged in "isikwu ife" is usually silent, motionless and lost in thought. He is not really adding "1 + 2" but adding "ideas". He is planning and organizing mentally. A type of chemicalization process is initiated by which various multivalent, mental elements are forged together, recast and reforged in readiness for visible expression when the need arises. The recasting and reforging process is called "itughari uche" (turning/changing the mind). Again, "changing mind" woefully fails to bring out the meaning of "itughari uche"

which is a mental process that involves recasting and reforging of ideas.

This phase of mental activity is what has been called "internalization", a process by which the objectified social world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization. Internalization as defined by Berger and Luckmann is a form of mental activity. This activity involves the reappropriation by human beings of the meaning and essence of the objective world and the subsequent transformation of the meanings into the structures of their subjective consciousness.⁸² Internalization as a mental activity is partially descriptive of the Igbo situation. Berger and Luckmann are equally concerned with the transcendent; their stated task is to determine the "empirical genesis" of knowledge in society, and how that knowledge comes to be socially established as "reality". Their model provides a good theoretical frame for the social dimension of Igbo religious expression.

The internalization process, from the Igbo standpoint, involves the abstraction of the meaning together with the divine emanation embodied by the physical, tangible, natural object in his world. The animal, the tree or whatever the phenomenon is viewed as a whole and the essence in addition to its "colour", behaviour and qualitative reality, in other words the idea that is objectified becomes part of the element for "ogugu isi". "Ogugu isi" or "isikwu ife" is a

symbolization of the mental process of separating into component parts (analysis); joining and eliminating to make a coherent, meaningful, mental whole. In difficult situations, the mental exercise sets up a tension that magnetically attracts or draws chi/soul. This phenomenon is explained by the concept of "uche ebiro ebi" (thought is not resident in the mind), and the idea of "understanding" (ighota ife) which in Igbo is descriptive of plucking something from "above". In the case of the initiate, this tension opens the faculty of intuition or pure knowledge.

For "ogugu isi" to be pure thought, the subjective light resulting from initiation must be taken into account meaning that the eye of contemplation is fully functioning. It is then that the Igbo initiate/elder, depending on the degree of his initiation and age, draws from the order, beauty, harmony and "music of the spheres". In some cases rapport is established with the "spirit world" of the ancestors. Practically, these initiates, as a result of this penetration into the subjective world, are of this physical world "and yet not of it". They see the dark side, the disorder, chaos and the instability of the concrete world. The natural impulse for them is to work at the creation of order. In other words, they have to "externalize" the experience of the subjective world. "Ogugu isi" by extension becomes a mental, creative activity which has to be grounded on the objective world.

This creative work is imperative. It is not only an adjunct of the process of self-actualization which is implicit in initiation, but also a means of avoiding psychic congestion. "What goes in has to come out" appears to be a natural law. Moreover failure to practise what one has learned or achieved causes frustration. Revelation contingent on initiation is a shared experience and to keep to oneself the knowledge acquired is to travesty the very principles of initiation and it therefore, leads to declension in status and even instant death. The initiate holds his status as a trust. He is under the watchful eye of the ancestors, and his subordinate members of the village depend on his "light". If he fails the living, he is in jeopardy of not joining the rank of the ancestors.

Under the impress of the evolutionary urge or the "Directive Principle" the initiate has to "serve" his community through his leadership which involves creativity. The Directive Principle which is symbolized externally by the physical sun and subjectively by his own chi/soul propels him into action. It is here that the Second Law of Thermodynamics becomes actively operative. This law is triggered by a multitude of ambivalences and dichotomies. The initiate is not yet perfect; he is only a divine spark in a world/society striving for order in the midst of disorder. He has to reincarnate and seeks to create a better environment for his next life. Thus, the initiate is

entangled in a dialectic in which he is a medium for creating in the physical word that order and experience that prevail in the higher levels of the subjective world.

The lot of the initiate is, therefore, not an easy one. He is surrounded by taboos that protect his sanctity. On the other hand, he has to interact with the ordinary, average and unpurified persons. The younger ones around him have not developed the eye of contemplation. He is under obligation to teach and lead them and yet, he is to be "silent" on the precious knowledge or "pearls" that should not be trampled upon by the uninitiated. The knowledge he possesses is abstract, powerful and of high voltage. Of necessity, the formless and the unconditioned, has to be clothed, veiled, insulated and given form and density in order to appeal to the senses of the ordinary person. In other words, ideas which are spiritual are stepped down. Through this mode, experience is externalized and given expression.

5.5.1.SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

The product of "ogugu isi" is usually targeted for externalization. What was synthesized in the inner recesses of the mind becomes public property through symbols. As intimated by St. Paul and as universally applicable, the communication of the subjective experiences and the outcome of mental activity is through symbols that are intelligible

to the auditors within the particular environment. Without this element of intelligibility through conventionally shared symbols, the experience becomes sterile and therefore, useless.⁸³ It is instructive that Christ used this symbolic mode - parables and allegories - to get across to his audience.

A symbol veils or imprisons the incarnating idea and has the potency to appeal to all states of consciousness. Its objective aspect that is in direct touch with the human physical senses is an aspect of truth. Tracing the symbol back to its source where it was synthesized and integrated through "ogugu isi" and "isikwu ife", the realization comes that the symbolized truth was a fusion of "light". When the symbol is understood for what it represents it brings illumination because it has been "clarified". In Igbo the ability to understand is "inwe mmuo nghoto" (to possess the spirit that plucks). If this mmuo (spirit) plucks the idea, the idea is appropriated and leads to the enlightenment of the individual. This process, were it to be given appropriate reflection in the West, could be couched in the characteristic western jargon of "the interpersonal transfer of illumination through the process of mentation".⁸⁴

To the Igbo person, "symbols are the outer and visible forms of the inner spiritual realities".⁸⁵ In Paul Tillich's analysis of symbols, the great function of symbols is:

"To point beyond themselves, in the power of that to which they point, to open up levels of reality which otherwise are closed, and to open up levels of the human mind of which we otherwise are not aware."⁸⁶

It is important to note that Tillich and Freud are emphasizing the lack of awareness of some other levels of reality and other levels of the mind in the West and at the same time admit the existence of such higher levels. The point that is being stressed in this investigation is that a structure of "knowing" of the higher levels in question is available especially to the initiates, saints, masters of spiritual life and thinkers of renown; and as a result of the persistence of the traditional man's religion such as the ITR, much attention has shifted to the traditional man's "psychomental life and his cultural creations". The essential observation is that man has "symbol-forming power" and all that he produces is "symbolic".⁸⁷

Eliade on his part confirms that "religious symbols are capable of revealing a modality of the real or a structure of the world that is not evident on the level of immediate experience".⁸⁸ He then makes this all-important remark:

For the primitive, symbols are always religious because they point to something real or to a structure of the world. For on the archaic levels of culture, the real - that is, the powerful, the meaningful, the living - is equivalent to the sacred.⁸⁹

On balance, Tillich, Eliade and Long among other "certain philosophers, epistemologists, and linguists"⁹⁰ have taken a position which amounts to the view that all activities of the human spirit, "from rite and myth to art and science" including language are of symbolic character.⁹¹ Generically, they have noted that man has "symbol-forming power". For the primitive man, his symbols are "always religious and as a result his cultural creations are, as a totality, sacred". These are accurate observations that are fully relevant in the Igbo World. It is very significant that the persistence of the ITR Traditional Religion as well as other traditional religions has contributed to what Long calls the "new hermeneutical situation". And by hermeneutical he means "that attempt to understand the human reality in history" in the light of the challenges posed to the Western World traditions by exotic thought forms and behaviors. One of the outstanding benefits of the probe into ITR and other similar religions is that the West has come now to "understand the profound expressions of human existence as symbols".⁹²

In the light of this growing awareness in the West, the Igbo man would add that mere understanding of human outpourings into the world as symbols is not sufficient even though it is a necessary step in the right direction. He would go on to assert that in the Igbo World, these symbols are sucked "dry of their secret and subtle meanings", and

that they open up other levels of consciousness that lead into the world of meaning, a world that is not separable from the world of symbols. In the Igbo world, any human activity that upsets the equilibrium in the visible, tangible world of symbols, sets up vibrations that threaten the known order of the subjective world especially the domain of the ancestors. Of necessity, there is a constant struggle for order in the world of symbols and the constant effort to redress any known destabilizing variables.

Moreover, in the Igbo world view, the outer, objective symbols partake of the sanctity of the inner world. When the Igbo man creates anything, he utilizes existent forms/symbols that already have natural, sacred qualities, colour and specific energy level. Creation resulting from "ogugu isi" and "isikwu ife" can then be posited as the product of thoughts abstracted from natural symbols plus "uche" (thought/ideas) coming from other higher levels of consciousness mediated by chi (soul) and brought into synthesis by the manipulation of the subjective light.⁹³ The newly created symbol becomes a qualitative alteration on a higher turn of the spiral of the original material utilized and, therefore, acquires its own sanctity. On the other hand, the innate or inherent energy of a natural object of man-made/man-"recycled" symbol can be devitalized in the same way a magnet can be demagnetized through abuse and improper handling. In the tangible world of daily

living and human interactions, such a devitalization is the function of pollution and therefore, requires specific prescribed rituals for the restoration of balance.

If the words "superstition" and "magic" and the more perjorative ones - "primitive" and "pagan" are revisited with the eye of contemplation (which embraces the two eyes of the mind and of the flesh), the act of creation or recycling by the Igbo man who like other men is part of nature as well as a "mini god", being made in the image of God, is seen in its right perspective as a sacred function. All those activities of the Igbo man's spirit in their various symbolized gradations serve the purpose of fostering man's harmonious existence on earth and as a result they are sacramental. This goal-directed existence is regulated by Omenani.

5.6.CULTURAL HERITAGE

In the context of Igbo man's environment, culture can be conceptualized as a mental framework on which to hang all the Igbo man's symbolic creations. These creations are such that they have their distinctiveness that makes them typically Igbo even though the creations result from the utilization or recycling of pre-existent and natural symbols that are universally available. These cultural creations constitute the Igbo man's ongoing struggle in the externalization of what is "above" here "below". In other

words it is the Igbo man's contribution to the social construction and grounding of Reality.

This grounding of reality or divinity involves constant mutation and the dialectics of symbolic interaction at all levels of consciousness open to man. While it is geared toward human existence and survival, there is the underlying impulse of progression toward perfection which is embodied in the evolutionary process. The knowledge gained from the totality of nature is applied in this process of "becoming". Implicit in that growth process is the recognition of deterrents or forces of disorder. Inevitably, the Igbo man's cultural creations embody tools for the construction of Reality as well as tools for the protection of that which is constructed.

The Igbo understanding of the goal of evolution can be equated with "omenenu" (that which occurs in heaven/above). The superlative quality and superiority of Omenenu is articulated in "Igwe ka ala" (heaven/sky is mightier than earth). Since what occurs in heaven is unknown to everybody with the possible exceptions of some intuitive initiates, Igbo pragmatic approach prescribes working from "known to the unknown". The approach is embodied in the proverb which states that "Uzu amaro akpu ogene ya nee anya nodu egbe" (the blacksmith that does not know how to construct a gong should look closely at the tail of a hawk for a model). In the struggle to construct Reality in the Igbo social

context, Omenani constitutes that which is known and proven. Guided by the balanced and ordered structure of Omenani, the Igbo man engages in the ongoing construction of Reality.

Inna Corrine Brown gives an insight into the conditioning effect of a cultural heritage such as omenani:

"The simple fact is that people usually think, feel, and act as they do because they were brought up in a culture in which these ways were accepted, not only as good and right, but natural."⁹⁴

She further observes that the ways of life of peoples - "customs, or folkways" cannot be judged as right or wrong. Because such social patterns are known and observed by everybody, large areas of life can become predictable. To her, "such patterns of life are like traffic laws... it becomes a matter of life and death that all drivers in any given place follow the same rules".⁹⁵

Based on Brown's observation, the inference is that culture is a function of cognition. Cognition in this sense embraces the three inseparable aspects of experience (cognition, affect and conation) identified by Heim.⁹⁶ This observation is nothing new in the Igbo world where it is rather taken for granted. The observation can only serve to reinforce the already known fact that among the Igbo people culture is inextricably bound with the totality of knowledge.

The discovery of the bond between cognition and culture in traditional societies such as the Igbo world has

heightened the dynamics of the new hermeneutical situation referred to by Long. Keesing suggests that "anthropologists must view culture both as a cognitive system organized in individual minds and as a system shared within a community, a system of public and collective meanings".⁹⁷ Eliade recognises the spuriousness and the artificiality of a world dichotomized between the sacred and the profane. He has come to discover that every known human activity of psychological, economic, spiritual and social dimensions "began as something holy, or has, over the years, been invested with religious value". Dances, games, hunting, agriculture and even "words of the language" derive from religious impulse.⁹⁸

When the content of the inner consciousness of the Igbo man is fully appreciated through its expression in Igbo culture as a facticity, then will light come into the Western phenomenological debate. In the meantime, it is sensible to agree that "the man of culture relates the world of meaning to the world of appearances and regards them in his mind...as constituting one world with two aspects".⁹⁹

5.6.1.IGBO CULTURAL CONTINUITY

The symbology of the seed clearly illustrates the potentiality of the Igbo culture which is rooted in omenani. The Igbo proverb which states that omenani has to be fulfilled before Omenenu sums up the current geotropism of the Igbo culture. As the seed at the time of germination first sends its root down into the soil for anchorage and basic nutrition, the Igbo have similarly, in a geotropic way anchored themselves and therefore, are earth-affirming.

The Igbo society as a seed with its radicle firmly secured in the soil is a good description the Igbo situation. Although it appears embryonic it has in full seminality all the factors of healthy growth and development. The basic infrastructure is holistic and with rudiments of the three eyes in place, the society is poised for progressive evolution.

As sons of nature, the Igbo people express "accepted relatedness" with other kingdoms in nature. The four kingdoms in nature make up their four day week cycle, and four in numerology is "the number of the matter aspect of man, the quaternary".¹⁰⁰ The persistence of this quaternary - the number 4 - in Igbo culture veils some meanings which no one has successfully decoded. This continued mystery is closely related to their attachment and identification with mother earth.

Mother-Earth is the matter symbology as incarnated and personified in Cassiopeia, the Enthroned Queen, in the Virgin Mary and in Andromeda.¹⁰¹ It is stated that Mother-Earth symbology "concerns the whole goal of the evolutionary process, which is to shield, nurture and finally reveal the spiritual reality".¹⁰²

Mother-Earth, Ani has never ceased to loom large in the consciousness of the Igbo people. As the key enunciator through the intermediaries of the ancestors, Ndichie, of Igbo peoples' "system of prescriptive ethics, which defines what the Igbo ought to do and what they ought to avoid",¹⁰³ her hold is quite strong on the Igbo people. Moreover, the triangular relationship between Ani, the ancestors/Ndichie and the Igbo people remains unbroken and is constantly lubricated.¹⁰⁴

One of the obligations imposed by the Ani-Ndichie/ancestor relationship translates into ceaseless endeavour, struggle and labour. This has become institutionalized into the dignity of labour and the recognition of achievement. A form of salutation is "Dalu Olu" (Thank you for working). This form, as Basden notes, is used "when one meets a person at work". The salutation is "repeated as often and used as vigorously as the work appears to warrant".¹⁰⁵ This salutation is another mode of "Igba ume" (joining breath). Metaphysically it is a form of inspiration. Persistent labour, and ceaseless endeavour and

doing sets up progressive rhythm that leads to graded "perfection". This process is inherently initiatory. It leads to mastery and domination of lethargy and converts the person to a real man, whose effort is crowned by the taking of the Ozo title when other requirements are met. This is the fulfilling of nature with elegance.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps in this fulfilment lies the secret of the number five. Five is said to be the number of completeness or perfection. In Igbo five is "ise". Ise is the word sounded in chorus by the elders after the consecration of a kola nut¹⁰⁷ or at the conclusion of a powerful ritual involving verbal oblations for the corporate good. Five is "the number of man, because man is a divine son of God, plus the quaternary which consists of the lower fourfold nature".¹⁰⁸ The implication here is that through evolution, the ordinary man has come to the stage where the soul (chi) is in control. This evolutionary process holds the key to the dramatized father-son-mother relationship in Igbo land.¹⁰⁹

The peak of the evolutionary process in a life cycle of the Igbo man, therefore, correlates perfectly with the seed symbology. The Igbo society, if it emerges from the geotropism of Omenani will go through the whole cycle of thinking, flowering and fruitage.

5.6.1.1. THE GOLDEN THREAD ENDURES

The seed symbology in its ongoing life cycle transmits

its life essence (genetic code). That invisible quality that continues to give the seed its distinctive denotation as a specific seed can be equated with the golden thread. In the context of the Igbo society, this golden thread symbolizes the Ancient, Ageless Wisdom. Natalie Banks sees this thread as a "spiritual life-line waxing or waning in clarity and intensity from century to century".¹¹⁰ To the rationalist this golden thread can be likened to the mathematical propositions which constitute the archetype of truth, because "mathematical propositions do not change in content from age to age and from country to country".¹¹¹

To the Igbo people this golden thread is grounded and anchored in Aní. This position gives a deeper meaning to "Ođinani" (that which inheres in earth) which has been popularized as customs of the Land or Omenani. A possible clue to the potency of Ođinani is the reference to "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world".¹¹² It is, however, impossible to assert categorically that this reference is the genesis of Igbo creation myth and subsequent, special sacrifices offered at cross-roads. Be that as it may, the Igbo belief in Ođinani persists and Edgar Cayce's thinking lends weight to Ođinani:

Everything without is within;
everything that resides in the
heavens resides in the earth;
that the planets and stars, as
well as our bodies, are corpuscles
in the body of God; that it is all

one.¹¹³

What is interesting, however, is that the Igbo people have a tradition of this golden thread. Aldous Huxley calls this thread "The Perennial Philosophy" which is:

the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being - the thing is immemorial and Universal.¹¹⁴

Huxley indicates that "rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditional lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world".¹¹⁵ In the mind of the Igbo person, the golden thread is a whole and that holistic conception embraces the designated strands of "spiritual life-line", "mathematical propositions" and the unalterable facts of nature whether metaphysically or psychologically conceived.

In the Igbo World, this golden thread derives from the Monad, already defined. The Monad has variously been called the Universal Mind, the Supreme Intelligence and the Energy Source. The branching out of the thread, therefore pervades the created order, pervading space and the heavens and yet "remains". In the final analysis the golden thread is the substratum of holism and the Igbo conception of spiritual ubiquity.

Under the esoteric name of "Eriri ji ndu" (the thread that holds life) a whole world of philosophy is opened up. It is significant to recall that in the Igbo environment everything is said to be living. This "eriri" (thread), therefore holds together what is regarded in the West as animate and inanimate objects. And as long as there is the created order, this thread persists.

Knowledge of this "eriri ji ndu" presents endless possibilities. Knowledge is power and the Igbo people are not lacking in the exercise of this power. It needs to be stated, however, that this knowledge remains esoteric and is in the custody of the initiates. It enables them to manipulate life in both inanimate and animate objects. It is sufficient to posit that this knowledge is also the source of magic in the Igbo world.¹¹⁶

5.6.1.2. IGBO LANGUAGE

One of the most tangible expressions of the golden thread is the Igbo language. The Igbo language, like any other language, is sacred because it is the vehicle for conveying the inner subjective realities for mutual sharing and interaction. It is a symbol that enables the Igbo men to understand each other and the world of meaning surrounding them.

The Igbo language as an aspect of the Igbo heritage is the greatest treasure of the Igbo people. It is the one singular thing that distinguishes the Igbo man from any other man and is, therefore the encyclopedic repository of the Igbo culture. In everyday life, the language is so taken for granted that its pivotal place as a vehicle for the acquisition of knowledge is hardly given attention because of habitualization. Berger and Luckmann clearly point out that the dialectical process between man and society is mediated through the instrumentality of language. Language is constitutive of reality and it is through language and on the foundation of language that what passes for knowledge in any given society is built up. The sum total of "what everybody knows" about a social world, "an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth" is mediated through language. Thus "language provides the fundamental superimposition of logic on the objectivated social world".¹¹⁷

On a more metaphysical level, the Igbo language as a language that has been in use since the dawn of creation,¹¹⁸ in all probability, has its root from the one universal language.¹¹⁹ Consequently, it is a fragmented and conditioned point of the Logos, the Word. It is indicated that the Greek noun Logos, derived from the root found in the verb Lego, "I say". Thus,

word, speech, argument, explanation,
doctrine, esteem, numerical computation,
measure, proportion, plea, principle,
and reason (whether human or divine) -
all represent standard meanings of
the one Greek word.¹²⁰

It is noteworthy that all these meanings of Logos, in the Igbo world, are the products of "Ogugu isi" (mental mathematics/cogitation) and "isikwu ife" (abstract calculation, adding, weighing and subtraction), a process which is creative as well as spiritual in the sense that it is a human extension of the initial act of God.

Further illumination comes from the mystery revealed by St. John when he asserts that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".¹²¹ The personification of the Word, categorically states that He is the "way, and the truth, and the life".¹²² The Igbo people traditionally have preserved this metaphysical knowledge and made it current in their own words. First, there is "eriri ji ndu" (golden thread, the thread that holds life, or life line). Another important recognition which is a name given to people is "Ndu bu isi" (life is prime). Then, the revealer of the mystery is "ezi okwu by ndu" (right word is life or truth is life). In these three sentences we find a perfect correlation between Christian mysticism and Igbo metaphysics.

In addition, in the Igbo world words have specific energy, colour, vibration, and power. Benjamin Ray cites a

similar recognition of vitalism in words among the Dogon of Mali in West Africa. He narrates that Amma, the Supreme God, in his activities on earth dispersed a sacred life force-nyama. This nyama or life force permeates all things both animate and inanimate as the power back of their existence. This life force "is manipulated and controlled by the ritual Word", especially during the periodic "renewal of life" symbolized in local sacrifices. "This Word has the same properties as the Word originally spoken by Amma which fertilized the Cosmic Seed at the beginning of creation".¹²³ The Dogon experience is a parallel to the Igbo recognitions.

Every day speech in Igbo land evidently points to the mystical power of words. In "Onu okenye bu afa" (the mouth/word of an elder is divination), a classic is presented. The expression indicates that the words of an elder are magical and efficacious. When an elder sounds a note of danger, if precautionary measures are not taken, the prediction materializes. Another variant is "Onu nne/okenye bu mmuo" and it means that the word of a mother or an elder is "spirit". It is also strongly believed that "okwu/onu okenye ada eme ntana", (the mouth/word of an elder never dries up". His words not only survive him after death, but remain powerful and inspirational. The general belief is that the elders are close to the spirit world of the ancestors and as a result, are in communion with them.

Another current belief is the idea of "Chukwu igbanye mmadu afa n'obi" (God putting insight into a man's heart through direct intervention). Literally, God is playing the role of a shaman and through the familiar process of divination reveals to the individual that which would not have been known in the normal state of consciousness. Words are the usual means of communicating such experiences to others.

Freud is noted to have paid attention to the power of words. In his General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis, according to Duncan, "he points out that psychoanalytic technique is dependent on symbolic analysis...Freud believed that words and magic were in the beginning one and the same thing, and even today words retain much of their power". Freud points out that words spoken by one person to another can cause greatest happiness or has the capability of bringing about utter despair. "This is because words evoke emotions and are universally the means by which we influence each other."¹²⁴ Dr. Azikiwe, an Igbo man, adds another dimension to the power of words (printed words). Writing home from Pennsylvania in 1930, he described his extensive researches in the library as "communing with the ghosts of literateurs of antiquity".¹²⁵

Dr. Azikiwe's observation is typically Igbo. Ideas contained in a book are supposed to vibrate as they contain some force.¹²⁶ This belief revealed in the idea that domestic animals - dogs, cats, sheep and chickens - are able

to tap into the unexpressed thoughts of their owners especially when plans are afoot to sell them. The popular belief in Igbo land is that words carry energy with them. The saying "Ike okwu adirom" (I have not the strength/energy to talk), is a reflection of the idea of energy utilization in talking. Also the exhaustion or the depletion that accompanies a long speech is an indication that the energy has been transferred from the speaker to the auditors. This can be validated by the law of conservation of matter which states "that matter can be neither created nor destroyed, but can only be changed from one form into another".¹²⁷ This transferred energy is symbolized by the expression "mkpuru okwu" (seed of word, or seed-word) which of course is expected to germinate in the individual. The noted depletion of energy on the part of the speaker, especially "onye oka okwu" (an adept at the effective and productive manipulation of words), creates a "low pressure" which is balanced and replenished through the process of spiritual infusion or spiritual impression. Here the rhythm of input and output that is set up guarantees the "onye oka okwu" ascent on the ladder of evolution while the group/segment of the Igbo society he is interacting with is equally "uplifted".

5.6.1.2.1. VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE

Igbo language, the principal heritage of the Igbo

people, has many forms as a means of communication. The usage of any forms or combination of forms is situation determined. The popular expression: "to teach somebody in the language he can understand" opens up a wide variety of forms:

A clearer aspect of this broad form of language is indicated in the root of the Greek verb *Lego* "I say" which has been pointed out in the foregoing. This form then has to be said or verbalized using words that are conventionally shared by the Igbo people. It is constitutive of everyday speech and is intelligible to one who is adequately socialized in the Igbo environment.

PROVERBS

Proverbs constitute the pinnacle of Igbo verbal mode of expression. In proverbs verbal communication is brought to its highest elevation. The Igbo people are proud of this heritage because it is the cornerstone of their intellectual baggage as well as the dominant furniture in their mental archives. For the Igbo people, materials of greatest antiquity are lodged in proverbs. Indeed as Berger and Luckmann observe proverbs are "nuggets of wisdom".

Scattered throughout the Bible, proverbs are identified with Wisdom. Wisdom in some sense antedates the foundation of the world. God is sometimes seen as Infinite Wisdom and

Christ is also the personification of Wisdom and in the Book of Proverbs, he speaks as wisdom and as the Lamb that was slain at the foundation of the earth; he brought wisdom down to earth. A deep reflection will, therefore, reveal that at the centre of every created object or thing is wisdom.

Commenting on Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Carolyn Nance notes that "Throughout the novel, one is struck by the innate wisdom of the Igbo elders who use proverbs to teach their kinsmen the sanctioned paths". The paths, of course, derived from a cosmology of "unity within a tight, little universe of moral and material balance".¹²⁸ It should be added to this observation that there is no human situation that does not have an appropriate Igbo proverb to reflect it. The entire Igbo philosophy which branches out in science, natural laws, the mystery of time and number is embodied in proverbs.

Proverbs preserve in the Igbo world, the ancient structure of cognition. A proverb is not a milk for babies; it is a nut one has to crack to get at the meat veiled within it. Like the initiation process it weeds out the weak, the foolish and the unintelligent. The proverb is usually presented in a speech or ordinary conversations in the same manner that Christ taught in parables. No explanation is usually offered and the individual has to wrestle with it; decode it and decipher the meaning. This process is usually an individual activity which entails

self-interaction - talking to oneself. The Igbo way of stating the process again centres on mental, numerical calculation. The idiomatic expression is "iji ire we gua eze onu" (counting the teeth with the tongue) and this means the use of one's imagination - a process which is reminiscent of "ogugu isi" (counting in the head), and other associated phenomena such as "itughari uche" and "isi kwu ife".

The art of decoding a proverb is a necessary prelude to a major initiation and is, therefore a spiritual process. The Igbo man wrestles with a proverb until the meaning dawns on him, and once the meaning is gained, it becomes a permanent feature in his consciousness ready for use in interaction with others. Moreover, through this symbolic interaction with words, the individual achieves a personal "transformation".

The importance and value of proverbs can be appreciated when it is recognized how they are formulated and who formulates them. In Igbo land it is clear that proverbs are the preserve of adults being the formulations of initiates of antiquity and to some degree, of adepts and men with the faculty to penetrate the world of meaning. Sharp witted children can of course use proverbs, but this is a rarity.

Proverbs are formulated by initiates who have developed the inner sight that enables them to suck the meaning back of any presented situation, event or interaction. These

initiates, because of the high mental altitude they have attained, become "the spring, and soul and centre of revealed religion" in the Igbo world. At that high altitude, they contact "things to enlighten our understandings, to acquaint us more and more with the things of God". The proverbs, like the biblical proverbs, leave "a monument of primitive theology - the first and great principles of the light of nature, on which natural religion is founded".¹²⁹

It is on the basis of their high spiritual content, didactic structure and above all the element of impersonality embodied in them, that proverbs remain the apotheosis of Igbo means of communication. Proverbs are still used in schools to teach students and to stimulate them to engage in abstract reasoning. Ogbalu testifies to this fact: "I was fortunate to have come under the influence of a headmaster who delighted so much in proverbs and who greatly stimulated my interest. He is no other than the Rev. J. C. Nwankwo".¹³⁰ The present writer recalls his grade teacher who always started the school year by invoking the law of reciprocity as a means of setting ground rules for the year. He always said "Oke amana ama ata akpa dibia ma dibia amana ama ahu oke onu n'oku"; (Let the mouse not deliberately chew up the medicine man's bag and let the medicine man not purposely singe the mouse's mouth). In fact, there is no meaningful gathering of Igbo people that

does not call for the use of proverbs. Sermons in Christian churches embody proverbs. Where ever the Igbo people interact the world over, the use of proverbs makes their conversations spicy, and cherishable.

SOUNDS

The use of sounds and the interpretations attached to sounds cut across the artificial boundary of verbal and non-verbal language. In a sense, all voiced, verbal forms of communication are based on sounds. On the other hand, non-guttural sounds made by man are all significant and do convey specific meaning. A hollow wooden gong (ekwe/ikoro) when sounded, according to set patterns, either summons the community to a meeting or alerts people to all kinds of public announcements.¹³¹ Also the firing of canons as part of funerary rites is said to assist the spirit/soul of the deceased in making a smooth but speedy passage into the world of the ancestors/Ndichie.

One of the most intriguing and wide-spread use of sound is the response to "Igbo kwenu". In any assembly of adults, the main speaker raises his voice and sounds "Igbo kwenu" (Igbo people, agree/sound, respond or reverberate) and a loud chorus of "Iya...!" follows. The call goes out three times and after each call the loud response is sounded. A careful observation of the manipulation of this sound

technique reveals its magical/mystical effect on the audience. Soon after the sounding, a remarkable calm settles over the assembly/gathering. A sense of peace and harmony prevails while the audience becomes more receptive.

"Igbo kwenu" is the traditional form used in large gatherings. While that form remains in current use, many versions have surfaced which are either variants or adaptations that meet the needs of smaller organizations, but in the main, the effect is invariably the same.¹³²

Music by itself is a form of synchronized sounds. Music is said to be divine and sacred. It is a stepped down version of the "music of the spheres". It becomes indigenous as a result of its expression in locally available symbols. Igbo music is as old as the Igbo people. Basden, from his eye-witness account, points out that "they (the Igbo people) certainly have inherited a fair share of the art originated by the 'Father of Music' (Jubal-Cain)". Arguing that the people, prior to contact, never had any intercourse "with the civilized world", he concludes that "their musical proclivities, their instruments and their songs, remain practically as they existed in primitive times, or at any rate that they have developed spontaneously".¹³³ The instruments in use then included "ugene" - a kind of whistle made of clay, "Awja" - Oja which is another wind instrument that produces sound like a piccolo. The more complicated ones were percussion and

string instruments - native xylophones, "ubo-akwala" - native guitar. The playing of each instrument calls for specific skills.

What is important is what the Igbo people make of the sounds that constitute music. Basden, writing about "Ufie" - the native xylophones, says

the beating of the instrument is always significant; something is conveyed to the native mind which is utterly incomprehensible to the European, and our inability to grasp that meaning in no way detracts from the importance of the drum in every Ibo function.¹³⁴

Basden further comments on the value of the wind instruments. "It is supposed to instil energy into the labourers and help them to forget the burden of their task, and the effect makes a difference, and natives work much better when inspired by its sounds."¹³⁵

Singing is an aspect of music. In Basden's estimation, "the native singing is more fascinating than the instrumental music". He notes that the leader of a chorus is held in great esteem as was the case with "the minstrel in ancient days in England". The description he gives of the leadership qualities and methods of the song leader is insightful:

"He must possess not only the musical gift but the poetical instinct also. He creates his theme as the song proceeds, and great ingenuity is displayed in fitting words to time and tune

on the spur of the moment. Any unusual incident is seized upon and utilized as material by the leader, and when this fails he has recourse to the retelling, in song, the exploits of old."¹³⁶

As to what the people sing, "couplets appear to be the most in favour with the Ibos, the leader chanting two lines as a solo, and the full company joining in with a double-lined chorus". Sometimes a four-lined song without a solo or chorus features. Also some songs are intended to be sung as solos.¹³⁷ He further adds that "it is fascinating listening to such a party (of singers) and the foreigner is astonished at the precision with which the men sing".

Songs have the same effect on the Igbo people as the playing of musical instruments.

"When canoeing it is extremely helpful, and paddles which have been inclined to lag quickly liven up to the strains of music. It is amusing to watch the effect of a song upon a crew. At first it makes no apparent change in the situation, then gradually chatting ceases, and one here and there begins to hum the tune. Within a short time the song grips the men, and at once the paddles begin to strike in tune with the rhythm, and a good stretch of water will be covered without conscious effort on the part of the men."¹³⁸

Basden is very accurate in his observation of the Igbo music experience. In spite of his effort to convert the Igbo people to Christianity, he does not fail to see that the native songs engendered a "living soul-stirring effect"

on the people. "European music, as they interpret it, has not yet succeeded in gaining access to the inner being of the Ibo; it may have the form of music, but it lacks the essence." His assessment is indicated in these words:

The more one listens to native music, the more one is conscious of its vital power. It touches the chords of man's inmost being, and stirs his primal instincts... It is intensely passionate, and no great effort of the imagination is required to realise that such music could only have originated with the son of Cain!¹³⁹

The conclusion that can be drawn from Basden's account is that in the Igbo world, the ancient art of music is preserved with all its power. It is sufficient to say the leader of the chorus in each group/community, like other artists, is an initiate of some degree. Again such artists draw from sources not revealed and known to the average person. The same universal structure of cognition is mandatory for the leader to be able to effect a bridge between the objective world and the invisible world. What is contacted is part of the Logos and it behooves the contactee to step it down and make it intelligible through symbols - words and instruments. In this regard it should not be forgotten that Matthew Henry, has noted that "such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom seen fit to take in conveying the light of divine revelation to the children of men". Any such expressions are divine and music is no exception:

"They have a poetic force and flame, without poetic fury and fiction, and strongly command and move the affections without corrupting the imagination or putting a cheat upon it, and while they gratify the ear, they edify the mind and profit the more by pleasing."¹⁴⁰

On the basis of Henry's insight, it is possible to posit a relativity of the Word. This relativity is strengthened by the fact that Jeremiah says that "the word of the Lord was a fire in my bones".¹⁴¹ Here, we are moved into the realm of metaphysics where heat, light and sound are interchangeable. The impact of music as a form of "inflamed" word (energy), therefore, should not be surprising.

Under its influence, and that of the accompanying dance, one has seen men and women pass into a completely dazed condition, oblivious and apparently unconscious of the world around them...It lifts men and women out of themselves; it may leave them almost prostrated with exhaustion; it may bring into activity all the baser instincts.¹⁴²

In spite of rare cases of over-stimulation caused by music referred to by Basden, Igbo form of music - instrumental and vocal continue to be used to lift the human spirit. The music is heard in most churches and in Christian wake-keeping. In various forms it is still used in public assemblies. During the Nigerian civil war, many insightful songs were composed by the victims, the Igbo people, and these were not only inspiring, they were indeed

"energy-boosters" that made the Igbo soldiers fight with self-sacrificing heroism.

A song formulated by an unknown prisoner in the colonial era deserves some comment. The song is "Onye gbube achara onye gbugbe, Onye akpona ibe ya onye ikoli (Let each person keep on cutting the grass, Let no one call the other prisoner). The meaning behind this song is very powerful and could constitute the theme of a sermon. The prisoners are all in the same boat; it is a waste of time to call names and denigrate the other as a prisoner. In other words "why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"¹⁴³ In addition, each is egged on to do his duty without complaining. The simplicity of the song is amazing. It is sung solo by one of the prisoners who, at the same time, keeps the rhythm by knocking a piece of metal on his knife. It sounds like a syncopated running waltz. The prisoners synchronize the cutting of grass by allowing each slash of the knife to fall on the heavy beat. The sound from the synchronization and the solo produce such an energizing rhythm that the assigned portion of grass is cut with speed.¹⁴⁴

In all probability, this practice of deriving energy from music must have inspired the contemporary vogue of "music while you work". Whether this adaptation is effective or not is not the concern.

5.6.1.2.2. NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE

Non-verbal language is predicated on the fact that some of the experiences of the initiates cannot be disclosed in their nakedness to the ordinary person. Were they not forbidden to make disclosures of such identity altering experiences, there would be the problem of adequate vocabulary to articulate the experiences for easy communication. There is the added problem of the credibility of the disclosure. All these factors in combination, necessitate the use of symbols for the expression of subjective experiences.

The non-verbal symbolizations are externalizations and, therefore add to the Igbo cultural creations. They are veiled, subjective, non-discursive outpourings that engage each individual either privately or publicly as part of a collectivity in the process of "symbolic transformation". Each engagement contributes to the social construction of Reality. The constitutive symbols come under the subheadings of art, and ritual. In some of these subcategories some overlapping occurs.

ART

Art, as expressed in the Igbo world, includes dancing, music, painting and carving.

Dancing: There are many forms of dancing for boys, for girls, for men, for women and for mixed companies. Although

some dancing appears to be for recreation, behind it all is the religious factor. Basden paints an accurate picture of a typical Igbo dance:

"the instrumentalists squat on the ground...with neither programme nor conductor. Presently one of the musicians sounds a few desultory notes, which gradually evolve into a recognized melody, the others join in, and time and tune are thus established. The dancers range themselves and begin slow rhythmic movements, unconsciously swaying their heads in time with the music. As the dance proceeds they appear intoxicated with the motion and the music, the speed increases, and the movements become more and more intricate and bewildering. The dancers work themselves into a veritable frenzy and the spectators keep silence from sheer excitement. The twistings, turnings, contortions and spring movements, executed in perfect time, are wonderful to behold. Movement succeeds movements in rapid succession, speed and force increasing until the grand finale is reached...Then, in a flash, music and dance cease abruptly, the performers remaining rigid in their last post."¹⁴⁵

Full of admiration for the dances he observed he leaves the impression that "the physical strength required is tremendous. The body movements are extremely difficult and would probably kill a European...As one watches the swaying figures, and listens to the rhythm of the music, one naturally responds. It is doubtful whether any native could resist the spell inwardly, whatever outward aspect he might assume".¹⁴⁶

This form of dancing that is graphically described by Basden is still executed in Igbo land. Intra regional competitions at the Festival of Arts have heightened interest in these dances. Women groups in various church denominations organize dances that entertain during church festive occasions and at Christian funerary rites. Some civil servants secure membership into some dance groups for ready support should the need arise to fulfill funeral obligations at the residence of an inlaw or within the extended family system. In the event of the civil servant's death, a performance by the group is guaranteed at his funeral as long as his membership remains in good standing at the time of death.

In all the various dance forms that are currently established in the Igbo environment, the religious theme remains the underlying factor. Consciously or unconsciously, the participants are engaged in symbolic transformation. The multisensory nature of the dances affects the spectators whose overt reflex behavior is an indicator that an agreeable chord has been struck in their hearts. The dancers and the spectators usually internalize the songs. Very often the songs well up from within and the individuals burst out singing or whistling the songs privately. As Richard Foster points out, such repetitions lead to "mind renewal" and Carl Jung on his part indicates

that such engagements lead to the generation of psychic energy.¹⁴⁷

Contact with the West, rather than diminish the intensity and frequency of these dances, not surprisingly enhanced their vitality. The introduction of gramophones and the use of gramophone records popularized the dances. The songs and music, as a result, became available in most homes. With the availability of band instruments some of the Igbo rhythms and songs feature in most dance halls. The late Celestine Ukwu, as a band leader, rose so high in popularity that he was styled "the philosopher king" for the reason that his songs were filled with significant Igbo proverbs. Stephen Osadebe is another top musician who, with his band, has kept Igbo wisdom alive in records and cassette tapes. Bands have proliferated and so also have radio stations and television studios that carry the Igbo songs and dances to every part of Igbo land. Moreover, an improved transportation system has made it possible for musicians and dancers to cover wide areas to meet individual and community needs.

CARVINGS AND PAINTINGS

Traditional carvings and sculptures have continued to the present. Each item carved embodies a meaning which is always spiritual. The most widespread, sacred object in this category is the "ofò". Ofò is a short stick carved

from the wood of a special tree, *Detarium Senegalense*. It is used as the "physical medium for the invocation of the powers of Ala, (ani, the earth goddess) and the ancestors".¹⁴⁸ The ofo symbolizes truth, purity and uprightness. Ofo remains the key ritual element in the obi, the ancestral temple of the Diokpara. The nature of its power is expressed in a proverb which states that "ofoka idide ji awa ani" (the earthworm penetrates the soil by the virtue of the power of ofo). This means that no one should underrate the power of ofo which is imperceptible and still quite efficacious. To take an oath and swear by an "ofo" is a clear assertion of one's freedom from guilt or complicity in a crime. The belief is so strong that an offender or a criminal who swears by it will not live long. Only titled men, the priest, medicine men and clan heads, possess ofo.

IKENGA

In the same category as the ofo is the ikenga. The ikenga is a decorated art piece carved from trees that are believed to have ritual powers such as Ogirisi, Oha and Okwe. Some are carved to have the form of animal figures. The standard version is the ram-headed type which significantly symbolizes ram-power and ram's symbolic mode of interaction. Other variants include the carving of a "seated male figure holding a machet in one hand and a

severed head in the other and crowned with a pair of horns".¹⁴⁹

The Ikenga has a broader use than the ofo and can be possessed by an individual who is not of the initiate class. Its acquisition is a mark of demonstrated power, strength and achievement. Sometimes it symbolizes the fruit of enduring persistence, doggedness and determination; therefore, its possession is a constant reminder that nothing succeeds like success. In other words, ikenga is a powerful motivator. As Dr. Afigbo observes, ikenga is usually commissioned to celebrate "individual achievement" or even "group achievement...success of a man, or a lineage or clan".¹⁵⁰

In another sense, ikenga is a type of prophylaxis. Resident in it is a type of "psychic force that could be mobilized to promote success",¹⁵¹ and ward off danger or any deterrent to progress. It can be reconsecrated and consulted before "embarking on a major enterprise".¹⁵² In the words of Dr. Afigbo:

"All the existing literature on ikenga describe it as a religious or cult object...(it) is portrayed to have been an object of religious veneration and worship. Prayers, or perhaps more correctly, incantations were said over it...either to make it more powerful and active in its role as a support for the physical thrusts of its devotee, or to thank it for a supportive role it had already played."¹⁵³

The symbolism of ikenga apart from its physical anchorage in a carving is very alive in Igbo land. It is often embodied in speech. In emergency one could be heard invoking his "ikenga" - "ikenga muo!" (my ikenga). This invocation is an instinctive call for an immediate intervention by the "psychic force". In some healing rituals or rituals for the restoration of balance in the corporate affairs of a community or that of an individual, it is common to hear the officiating priest/elder invoke the ikenga of the ancestors. In this case, the force that led the ancestors to succeed in their era is invoked to come to the aid of the individual or group.

But above all, ikenga has been revitalized at the ideational level at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. In response to "a noticeable resurgence of interest in Ikenga, not so much as a cult object but as an evocative symbol with an appeal that is many-sided", Dr. Afigbo was very much instrumental "to the decision (in 1972) of the Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to name its main research journal Ikenga and to adopt the symbol as its logo".¹⁵⁴ The importance of this adoption is made vivid by Barzun and Graff in a similar situation. They state that:

"we live and are moved by historical ideas and images, and our national existence goes on by reproducing them. We put the faces of our great men and women on our stamps or coins, we make symbols of historic places and objects... and we take pains every year to relive historical events and translate them

into visual forms...(This) is a sign that a set of ideas still has living force, and their embodiment in institutions continuous existence."¹⁵⁵

Jacques and Graff, indeed point out that such restorations are "valuable as a stimulus to the emotions of unity and pride".¹⁵⁶ This observation applies to the revitalization of the Ikenga because the Ikenga appears to be the canalization of the "vibrations which induce in the average Igbo man the will to make efforts of the kind that can magnetise success in life's different professions".¹⁵⁷

Other forms of visual arts exist in Igbo land. Each particular symbol remains "an instantaneous way of recalling shared beliefs". Many plaques and paintings can now be purchased in markets. The drawings on the plaques also carry some matching inscriptions which are proverbs. Examples include "Ochu okuko nwe ada" (he who pursues a chicken tends to fall down). The user of such a plaque implies that he is insulated from attack because of his righteousness or freedom from guilt. Another common inscription or engraving is "Asiri na ekposa obodo" (gossip breaks community solidarity). Vehicle (car, bus, truck) stickers displaying similar proverbs are sold by the ubiquitous peripatetic hawkers. Through these symbolic forms the ancient wisdom of the Igbo people is not only popularized but also perpetuated. For the purchaser of the plaque or sticker, the article serves as ever-present

reminder of the meaning embodied so that daily conduct of life will put the specific meaning into consideration.

5.6.1.3. RITUALS

The Igbo people as sons of nature are very good at the performance and observance of rituals. Granting Susan Langer's view of ritual as "meticulously exact repetition" of formalized "overt behavior in the presence of the sacred objects",¹⁵⁸ it becomes logical, that in the light of spiritual ubiquity in the Igbo world, ritual in that environment is totally pervasive. Indeed no facet of life escapes the ritual process.

Ritual in the Igbo world can simply be posited as the function of human imitation of nature. In other words, it is the consequent response to Nature's exemplarism. Nature in the first place, sets the ritual paradigm and man as part of Nature falls in line. Ritual is "the imposition of a regular rhythm, for rhythm is what really designates a ritual". This imposition of rhythm on the lives of people engaged in ritual results in discipline.

No one on this earth can evade ritual or ceremonial, for the rising, and the setting of the sun imposes a ritual, the cyclic passing of the years...impose a rhythm upon humanity...There is no evading the process of ceremonial living. It is unconsciously recognized, blindly followed, and constitutes the great discipline of the rhythmic breathing of life itself".¹⁵⁹

It does not need to be stressed that the Igbo people consciously engage in the ritual process and are cognizant of the purpose back of their ritual activities. They recognize the duality inherent in night and day; the chi (soul) and the personality as an imperative requiring the ritual process as a means of establishing equilibrium. But they see in Omenani, the repository of the known and proven structure of maintaining balance and harmony; therefore, to them, to fulfil Omenani in its various facets, is to engage in constant performance of rituals.

There is no illusion in the mind of the Igbo as to the difficulty of ordering experience and the bringing of every day life under control in an attempt to fulfil Omenani. This striving for the maintenance of equilibrium in the physical, phenomenal world under the superintendence of the ancestors and other benevolent spiritual entities is very precarious. There are the unpredictables that occasionally intrude to upset the balance. "Evil spirits, some of whom were spirits of departed men and women who because of their wicked deeds on earth could not be permitted to dwell with others in the underworld" constitute part of the unpredictables.¹⁶⁰ Man, on his part, can spring a surprise. This surprise, which in most part occurs because of the man's inability to work out some harmony between his chi and personality, could make the individual resist conformity. Igbo society, then is engaged in the ongoing dialectic

essential to the construction and maintenance of its world. It becomes a struggle to impose order and keep chaos at bay. The Igbo people, perforce, not only respond when an order-threatening event occurs, they also work hard at prevention of such events thereby maintaining their world. Here again, the chief instrument at their disposal is the use of rituals.

Victor Turner sees ritual as connecting "the known world of sensorily perceptible phenomena with the unknown and invisible realm of the shade. It makes intelligible what is mysterious and dangerous".¹⁶¹ Susan Langer adds that "their (rituals') primary achievement is 'morale'. They are part of man's ceaseless quest for conception and orientation".¹⁶²

The rites of passage which are common in every culture and, therefore universal are observed among the Igbo people. Throughout the entire cycle of birth to death, each phase is marked by specific rituals depending on sex, age and social status. Each ritual is underlined by the quest for order and ultimate perfection. Thus, each activity is only a link in the evolutionary chain. The endeavour, then is to ensure that each link is strong and well constructed. On a broader stretch, each generation finds itself duty-bound to preserve and maintain the order it has inherited, and here the analogy of the relay race is most illustrative. In this

regard, it is easy to understand the series of rituals associated with marriage in Igbo land.

Fundamental to the marriage rituals is the strong belief in reincarnation. In the Igbo world view, ancestors reincarnate in their original families. This makes the institution of marriage mandatory so that vehicles could be provided for reincarnating ancestors. The living, on their part, seek to qualify for admission to the status of the ancestors and this gives marriage added importance.¹⁶³

Marriage itself as a ritual is underscored by the idea of order which is achieved through rigorous selection of compatible partners that would uphold not only family but also community tradition. Above all, it represents the "Externalization" stage in the "fundamental dialectic process of society", by which "the ongoing outpouring of human being into the world, both in the physical and mental activity of men" takes place.¹⁶⁴ Thus marriage, as an institution, is not just a matter of choice for the individual, but obligatory. It is not a matter of instinctual proclivity for procreation but a purposeful symbolic act in which care is taken to operate within prescribed and established procedures which are highly ritualized.¹⁶⁵

Following marriage, there are preconception and conception rituals which are claimed to attract the right child for the family. These rituals ward off reincarnating

spirits or ghosts that would bring disorder and instability to the family.¹⁶⁶ At birth, rituals are used to determine the identity of the baby with regard to its former life and measures are then taken to prescribe specialized training if warranted, and appropriate naming rituals are selected.¹⁶⁷

In Igbo world, the cycle from cradle to the grave is punctuated by many rituals. The infant is regarded as having limited horizon. To them, "nwata nawu aru n'afo n'afo" (the child concentrates his bathing around the belly). Also it is recognized that a child is dirty because he plays in the sand and in the mud. However, by washing his hands he can eat with an elder. (Nwata kwo aka nya na okenye eriko). In this proverb, the importance of rituals is stressed. By symbolic washing of hands (purification) an uninitiated person can be transformed. In other words, through rituals, especially the initiatory type, one can commune with saints. Then, the child whose vision was initially circumscribed, becomes the "diochi" who by ascent to the top of the palm tree acquires a wide range of vision.

The funerary rites mark the end of one life span and the beginning of another. Death resulting from suicide and abnormal causes do not call for elaborate rituals. Rituals become elaborate when the life cycle is fully completed and all the expectations of the average Igbo man are met.¹⁶⁸ These rituals are meant to accord the spirit of the dead becoming passage into the spirit world of the ancestors. As

it is common knowledge that the ancestors are integral members of the household, even though they inhabit the supersensible world, other ritual modes come into operation, to maintain and strengthen the relationship between them and the living.¹⁶⁹

Intervening rituals between the cradle and the grave act in the main as social "lubricants". Some are seasonal while some are annual, biannual or even septennial.¹⁷⁰ These rituals are calculated to maintain the balance and rhythm that is supposed to exist between the ancestors and Ani (earth goddess) on the one hand, and the living members on the other. The rituals include Ani rituals performed by the Ani priest, new yam festival and the new moon ritual. The new moon ritual indicates the celestial rhythmic pattern of order for corporate appropriation and consequent exteriorization in the affairs of men.¹⁷¹

Not all rituals are public. The initiates keep daily private rituals in their respective "obi" (ancestral temple). The ritual is a form of daily morning prayer that significantly binds the initiate to light. On the one hand, it revitalizes the linkage with the ancestors. It is called "itu nzu" (the heaping of pulverized white chalk).¹⁷²

Among the youth, the declaration of innocence is symbolically ritualized. Although the Christian churches see the ritual as a contravention of the injunction not to swear by earth or by heaven, the significance of the ritual

in the mind of the practitioner by far outweighs such an inexplicable prohibition. Therefore, in order to vindicate his non-liability for an offence or a charge against him, he quickly wets his third right hand finger in his stuck-out tongue, touches the ground and then raises and points the soiled finger to the sky. By this symbolic gesture the individual binds himself to earth and heaven calling both to witness.¹⁷³

Of all the numerous public rituals, the "Iloo mmuo" deserves attention. This is a yearly feast that is celebrated in the month of August in honour of all the ancestors. The celebration is a high water mark in the daily invocations and interactions with the ancestors. Children are assigned the task of cleaning the village paths in preparation for the feast. "Umu ada", the married daughters in company of their children and sometimes of their spouses return to their paternal homes with gifts. On the set day, the father of the family removes the previous year's sticks of ogilisi (*Newboldia laevis*), which represent the ancestors and plants new ones into the ground in the open air family shrine. He then kills four fowls, sprinkling their blood on the sticks. Next, he invokes the blessings of the ancestors and their continued guidance over himself, his immediate family and his extended family. While the children spread the chicken feathers along the family's main entrance path, ama, the mother cooks the fowls

with yam in the open yard near the shrine. General merriment follows. The next morning, the father goes to pay homage (nru) to the oldest man in the village with a chicken wing, leg and liver from the ritual.¹⁷⁴

From this description, it can be seen that a successful iloo mmuo ceremony furnishes emotional satisfaction to the participants. Psychologically it is difficult to evaluate the total effect. The well proven aphorism: "The thinking makes it so", holds good here and can be used as an adequate gauge of the transference or contagion of order that accompanies the ritual process. Rituals inherently represent and generate order and as Victor Turner remarks "rites are partially (designed) to effect a reconciliation between the visible and invisible parties concerned".

It is of interest to note that the Iloo mmuo festival in some villages has been rescheduled to coincide with the Christmas day celebration of the year to enhance the festive mood within the community.

The cult of Chi (Soul) and the rituals associated with it bear close resemblance to the Iloo mmuo festival. The same number and type of sticks, (four) is used. The cult of Chi is more of a private ritual than a public one. It is carried on within the immediate family circle and conducted by the mother of the girl who wants to institute and objectify her Chi. In the case of an adult male, the ritual is conducted

by an elder or a dibia, native doctor.¹⁷⁵ What deserves stressing is the prayer or invocation the elder uses:

Obu Chi...(name of the Candidate) Okeke
k'anyi n'ado. Doo, k'unu due ya n'ife na
nlo, eke, oye, afo na nkwo, n'ezi n'uzo.
K'oghalu ije kwulu m'obu nokwulu. K'obite ulu
na be yaa. K'aka loye n'ife...K'achotalia
onye ibuo (that is if unmarried) Iy'ewetalia
omumu nwoke n'omumu nwayi. Chekwalia ngwulu
ye na ndi be. Ajo muo aya afu ha nke ajo
mmadu n'aafuha...Isee.

(It is the Chi of Okeke... that we are enshrining. Please, we ask you to lead him in all things - in daylight or in dream - in all times (Eke, Oye, Afo, and Nkwo), in all roads and by ways, so that he does not encounter any dangers. May he live fruitfully in his house. May he prosper in life. Find him a wife (if he is unmarried). You will bring him male and female offsprings. Protect him...Amen.¹⁷⁶

It is obvious that this prayer could be offered by any Christian elder without the ritual elements and yet achieve the same effect. Moreover, its close similarity with St. Patrick's Breastplate is instructive.¹⁷⁷

Another form of ritual is the "Igba ndu" (joining life) ceremony. "Igba ndu" is a covenant designed to forestall any malicious act that might lead to the death of a community member or seriously threaten the life of any person in a small group in which indications of ill will have come into the open. All the affected individuals are brought together and the presiding "dibia" (medicine man) leads them through the process of oath - taking in which each makes a pledge not to harm any of the participants in the ritual. The blood of each is slightly drawn and added

to a common pool. A ritual feast is held and peace and harmony restored. Any breach of the oath leads to the instant death of the infractor.¹⁷⁸

In the face of convulsive crisis, the Ozo titled men, men who through initiation and passage through life's crucible have attained the status of holy men, call for calm. Their stoicism and philosophical standpoint is reflected in a proverb: "Onwero ife anya fulu gba obala" (no sight, no matter how horrible, would make the eye bleed). This will be taken as stating that no experience is totally shattering. It may be that they see in crisis a cycle of destruction, reconstruction and restoration. The society usually survives on a higher turn of the spiral after the ritual process of purification or reconciliation.

In the enterprise of world maintenance, a community council made up of elders could isolate a person who threatens the integrity of a group or any association within the community by committing an offence which is tabooed. Such a victim is shunned and all social interaction with him terminated until redress is made by him. This category of sanction is so stringent that reason would dictate sociable behaviour by group members. Should the victim die within the duration of the suspension of all forms of communication with the rest of community, it is certain that in the spirit world he would be disqualified from joining the ancestors.

The stark reality of the situation calls for post-mortem purificatory rites. In fact, relatives of the victim suffer humiliation and disgrace, even though they are not directly involved.¹⁷⁹ This type of ritual brings to the fore the need for "transparent living" by all members.

Refusal to live "transparently" in some situations attracts corrective satirical attacks as a means of social control. Satire is a powerful ritual especially when spoken words, songs, music and dancing are integral to it. The satire operates on the established premise that the Igbo have a shame culture. Dr. Nwoga makes the case "that the Igbo did attribute some preternatural powers to satire".¹⁸⁰ What is significant about the use of satire is its rootedness in language and the effective manipulation of words. In the words of Dr. Nwoga:

"The organization of words is dominated by the expected impact. It is, therefore possible, in certain situations to create the effect of satire by simply calling the name of the victim...Much (however) depends here on the derogatory nature of the affirmed attribute or action of the victim... It is possible for the clever practitioner to insert enough emotive expressions which have instant impact because of striking chords deep in the consciousness of the group so that the effect is immediately felt by the audience."¹⁸¹

Dr. Nwoga stresses the effectiveness of the satirical songs he observed in real life situations and confirms the

achievement of the desired impact because of the "homogeneity of the audience".

The recrudescence of Igbo cultural activity in the period following the Nigerian-"Biafran" war (1967-1970)¹⁸² presents an interesting picture that calls for an investigation. Suffice it to observe that the revitalization has unique phenomenal features. Revitalization is an attempt by some members of the society to renew "their lives, their belief systems and create more satisfactory culture"¹⁸³ as a result of various forms of deprivation.

The circumstances of the war forced virtually all Igbo people to their respective villages or other villages where Omenani is firmly anchored and fully alive.¹⁸⁴

The Igbo returnees/"refugees" from the cities were "rebaptised" and steeped into the customs of the land. For some who were semi-detribalized, there was no choice and no escape from the pervasive force of Omenani. They had to live with their kith and kin and all the affected gamut and network of consanguineous relationships. All social interactions which include greetings, meetings, social visits, eating, drinking and public recreation and entertainment were ritual-ridden. For them, there is the constant and endless encounter with nature and above all, only the Igbo language was spoken.

For the purposes of this investigation, what can be said is that the war situation served to "refertilize" the Igbo cultural heritage. Indeed there was an outburst of cultural revival in the sense that what had been in existence has been boosted and reenergised. This writer recalls a situation in which a Christian wedding was being conducted at St. Mary's (Anglican) pro-Cathedral, Uruagu, Nnewi and a troupe of masquerades and dancers went by drumming and chanting: Ozokwa anaro uka. (Ozokwankpo, 'name of the group' does not prevent one from going to church. In other words, membership into the Ozokwankpo group does not conflict with Christianity). Because of the persistence of the institution of the ozo title and on the basis of its significance, both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches have, in a surprising move, severally, reached agreement with their membership who have secured the Ozo title. This indeed is revolutionary. The titled men no longer face excommunication.

Another element of Igbo culture that is ongoing and that is taken for granted is the observation Leonard made. At the turn of this century, he was impressed by what he called Igbo people's "animal inspired animalism"¹⁸⁵ By this expression, he meant that the Igbo people drew inspiration and acquired some attributes and skills from animals which are constitutive of nature. Some instances of this experience will throw some light into the validity of the observation.

Whenever an animal such as a cow, goat, sheep, is killed for domestic consumption or for ritual purposes, the parts are distributed according to the meanings attached to them. The elder or the oldest man in the community is given the heart and the nti-n'ani, the animal's underside, that is the portion that is assumed to embrace the earth/ani while the animal is at rest - the chest - as his exclusive share in addition to what he gets as a group/community member. A woman or the women involved in the given circumstance receive(s) the loin. The rest of the meat is shared according to custom. This practice is still observed by all irrespective of religious affiliations.

What counts is the meaning that is attached to these symbolic gestures. Each animal that is part of the fauna has its special tone and quality. Symbolic interaction with them and the lessons they impart add to the corpus of knowledge available to the Igbo people. Through the symbol system of the Igbo language, this knowledge is passed on from generation to generation. These animals not only feature in proverbs and Igbo folklore that are used daily, but also are epithets applied to people or consciously assumed by people. When a person is called "mbe" (tortoise), there is an instantaneous transcendence from the mere physical, objective animal to the world of meaning and ideas to connote cleverness and sharp wit. If a person is called "agu", (leopard, lion), "enyi" (elephant), a whole world of

meaning is opened from which the situation or context informs the individual of other people's assessment of him/her.¹⁸⁶ This evaluation is inspired by the particular animal in question. On the other hand, if a man is referred to as "afo anu nmee/obala emetu", (an animal intestine that is not touched by blood), it is indicated that the person is standing on the fence. It means the person is detached and avoids group action and corporate responsibility. The reality of this form of inspiration accounts for the continued use of specific animals or animal parts by native doctors/dibia in preparation of therapeutic medication.

The ongoing inspiration from the animal world has assumed another form. Some car owners have some plastic/synthetic animals hanging in their cars. These animals take the form of spiders, scorpion and snake. In one instance, I observed the juxtaposition of the skin of a python and the crucifix on a dash board.¹⁸⁷

There is the proverb that states that "achuba aja ma afuro udene amaru na ife melu be ndi muo", (If a sacrifice is being offered and no vulture shows up, it is assumed that something is wrong in the spirit world). Vulture in this context is the accredited representative of "Ndichie", the ancestors. The appearance of a vulture(s) at a funeral ceremony is an index of the presence from the spirit world that is delegated to participate and sound approval of all transactions.¹⁸⁸

It is doubtful if there is any comparable translation of the Igbo animal experience into Christianity than this powerful Igbo Christian prayer: "Chebe anyi n'okpuru nku gi etu okuko si echebe umu ya n'okpuru nku ya". (God hide/protect us under your wings as a chicken/hen covers her chicks under her wings). For the Igbo people the power and inspiration from animals is also given expression in the song: "Kweke kweke ebulu ji isi eje ogu!" (Kweke which is untranslatable is descriptive of a back and forth motion. The meaning is that Ebulu, ram, goes to fight with his head).

"Ebulu ji isi eje ogu" serves as one of the classic illustrations of the Igbo people's ability to draw the essence from the animal world. Ebulu, ram, inspired the carving of ikenga in the form of a ram-head. The ram-headed ikenga, as noted, is the repository of a psychic force which, if mobilized, promotes success and is consulted on any major enterprise. By the rhythmic chanting of the words, there is a metaphysical appropriation of this psychic force which empowers the ram in its mode of fighting. Encapsulated in the war chant is not only the distilled essence of this psychic force that impels the ram to persist and achieve victory but also a combination of reasoned, goal-directed plan of action and a purpose-driven execution of strategy. A spin off of this ram exemplarism has also been carried into the Christian churches especially

in Mbaise area. Church competitions or other fund raising activities are called "iso mpi, (locking horns) following the example of rams and goats.¹⁸⁹

The universality of this animal inspired animalism is now being recognised and used in the West. In a television commercial produced by Chrysler, the manufacturer of Dodge, Ram-charger to illustrate the power of the truck, two rams are shown as locking horns. The commercial ends with the chanting of "Ram - Power!!!" The Igbo appreciation of the force of the animal world is equally vindicated in the experiences of the First Nations (Aboriginals) of Canada. Currently, the logo on their letter heads features various animals. Above all, the Chinese Zodiac is a classic illustration of man-animal relationship. The commentary on one of their charts states that

"The Chinese Zodiac centres around a 12 year cycle. Each year is named after different animal signs. These signs determine your personality, degree of success and other circumstances governing your life.¹⁹⁰

It should not be forgotten that animals are a part of nature. Nature in the consciousness of the Igbo people offers a variety of forms from earth to heaven which in their dense and concrete differentiations symbolise spirit in manifestation. Any interaction with any component of nature has the potential, as illustrated by the animal world, to inspire, "igba ume" (joining-breath, infusing

inherent spirit in) the Igbo man. In the Igbo holistic and totalistic environment, that act of inspiration which, when decoded means growth in consciousness and interaction with spirit mediated through breath, equips and strengthens the Igbo person in the daily and ongoing act of fulfilling Omenani.

All in all, the modern Igbo person lives in a world where ancient customs determine the way to live. These customs remain the basic socio-religious infrastructure that regulates what is acceptable and proscribes that which makes for disorder. So long as the Igbo people exist and the Igbo language is spoken, the Igbo cultural heritage will persist.

1. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. S. V. "Religion" by William P. Alston.
2. Psalm 19: 1-5.
3. Bailey, Labours of Hercules. p 204.
4. Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy. (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, Fontana Books, 1958), The Golden Threads is treated in the following.
5. Alice Bailey, The Light of the Soul, The Yoga Sutras of Pantanjali. (New York: Lucis Trust, 1955), p xiii.
6. Ibid., p 210.
7. Ibid., p 33.
8. Matthew Henry, 3:iii
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., See also Aelred Graham, Contemptive Chritianity, An Approach to the Realities of Religion. (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1975), pp 8 and 24, for a similar structure.
11. Wilber, pp 1-4.
12. Ibid.
13. E. A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, Inc., 1980), p 57.
14. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. p 546.
15. Alice Bailey, The Labours of Hercules. p 10.
16. Burtt, p 60.
17. Ibid., Underlining is mine.
18. Bailey, The Labours of Hercules. p 196.
19. One simple illustration is the fact that no human being can stop the apparent motion of the Sun and the resulting day and night.
20. Basden, p 60. One instance is when a "dibia" (medicine man) reincarnates as soon as this is detected, "ipso facto, he must be dedicated to the medical cult". Also

a reincarnated male head of a village or maximal lineage, if he is the "di okpara" (the first born) of the incumbent head, to ensure quick succession and effective execution of village responsibilities at the death of the incumbent head, the reincarnated child is given early exposure and accelerated socialization.

21. Burt, p 20.

22. Ibid., p 21

23. Alice Heim, Intelligence and Personality. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1971). pp 13-15.

24. Ibid.

25. Books on the Philosophy of Mind point this problem out. See: Jerome A. Shaffer, Philosophy of Mind. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968).

26. Ibid.

27. Lucien Levy-Bruhl, "Collective Representation in Primitives' Perceptions and the Mystical Character of Such" in The Making of Man, an Outline of Anthropology. ed. V. F. Claverton (New York: Modern Library Inc., 1931). pp 771-772.

28. Ibid., p 774.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., pp 774-779

31. Calvin Martin, Keepers of the Game, Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade. (Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd., 1978). p 150.

32. Christopher I. Ejizu, "Chi Symbolism as a Potent Mirror of Indigenous Worldview" in Anthropos 87. 1992: 379 - 389.

33. Ibid., p. 387.

34. There is usually a discrepancy between theory and practice. But in the case of the soul, the Igbo belief in free-will could be a factor that obstructs the full functioning of the soul. Generally, the soul does not interfere in the day-to-day activity of the individual. Feeble-mindedness, waywardness, errancy and emotional instability certainly do not conduce to soul effective operation.

35. The belief in reincarnation explains the distinctive characteristics of Children of one family. The behavior exhibited in one is claimed to be a hang-over from previous life.

36. Edmund Ilogu, Christianity and Igbo Culture. (Enugu: Nok Publishers, Ltd., 1974), p 36.

37. The Igbo people have a doctrine of the heart "Obi". A detailed study of the corpus of knowledge about the heart will indicate that the soul is resident in the heart.

38. Wilber, p 34. The progressive evolutionary implication of the statement is noteworthy.

39. This is a realm that is not amenable to the present day scientific proof but is valid on its own logic.

40. Initiation ceremony in Igbo land will demonstrate this. Aldous Huxley notes that "The doctrine of the Inner Light achieved a clearer formulation in the writings of the second generation of Quakers:.. Huxley, p 26.

41. Alice Bailey, From Intellect to Intuition. p 47.

42. Alice Bailey, From Bethlehem to Calvary.

43. Victor Turner, The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure. (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), p 94.

44. Ibid., 95

45. Ibid.

46. L. Ugwuanya Nwosu, "Isa Aka in Igbo land", in West African Religion. Vol. XIX (May 1980): pp 13-21. The entire material on "Isa Aka" is drawn from this article.

47. The writer has witnessed where an initiate, in conjunction with his associates, located in a dramatic way a missing item.

48. Chike Aniakor, "Ancestral Legitimation in Igbo Art" in West African Religion. 18 (May 1979): 13-30.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ilogu, pp 30-33. There is much literature on Ozo title. Both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches have now patched the differences with christians who took the Ozo title. See Ilogu pp 224-229 for the history of the struggle.

52. Ponder on this. pp 223. Initiation is further defined as "the synthetic understanding which is the prerogative of the soul, and it only becomes possible when the soul, and it only becomes possible when the soul, on its own level, is reaching in two directions...".

53. David Tansley, The Raiment of Light, A Study of the Human Aura. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984). In his research David Tansley identified a variation of this subjective apparatus which is termed "Dowsing". The employment of this instrument enables the initiate to know more than the ordinary, average person. Dowsing could be used to discern a higher order person. Dowsing could be used to discern a higher order of truth and reality. Like a sensor it could be focused and channelled to gather "sensitive data" which are kept secret but nevertheless are conditioning. See Tansley, pp 133-139.

54. Natalie N. Banks. The Golden Thread, (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1963), p. 13.

55. This is the Igbo application of the "Laws of correspondence and analogy"- Ibid. It also calls into play the faculty of imagination.

56. The World Book, s. v. "Ecology" by Richard S. Miller, and "Nitrogen Cycle" by Arthur Cronquist.

57. Stone is a typical example. Stone is used in grinding food and tobacco. It is also a major element in rain-making. Young children are asked not to sit on stone for the reason that sitting on it causes boils.

58. Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine, Swami Ajaya (Allan Weinstock), Yoga and Psychotherapy, the Evolution of Consciousness. (Glenview, Illinois: Himalayan Institute, 1976). pp. 34 - 35.

59. A reflection on the sources of inspiration will bring out the subjective processes and interaction and use. It will be of interest to determine how the transformation is effected.

60. Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine and Swami Ajaya, p. 33.

61. The Book of Common Prayer, (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1959), p. 67.

62. Charisma from the Igbo perspective is the magnetic quality that surrounds a highly evolved person such as an initiate. In a global sense, it is that quality that distinguishes a saint from an ordinary person. Charisma is usually acceptable as a natural attribute of kings so long as all the kingly ascriptions remain intact and not debased. It is also interesting to note that Max Weber saw it as a gift from God.

63. Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine and Swami Ajaya, p. 45

64. Ibid. p. 46.

65. Ibid.

66. See C. W. Leadbeater, Man Visible and Invisible (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1925); David Tansley, The Raiment of Light; Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, The Secret Life of Plants (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972); Roland Peterson, Everyone is Right.

67. Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 11.

68. Ibid. p. 12.

69. Talbot, Life in Southern Nigeria, p. 6.

70. Tansley, p. 2.

71. Psalm 118:22

72. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. (New York: Double Day and Company, Inc., 1966), pp 13-14.

73. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. St. Paul of course is referring to himself as the man.

74. Matthew 7:6. For the same reason Christ taught in parables.

75. 1 Corinthians 14:2-19.

76. Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion. (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1967), p 14.

77. Hugh Dalziel Duncan, Symbols in Society. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p 11.

78. Will Durant, p XXIX. Underlining is mine.

79. Ibid. p XXIII.

80. Burt, pp 52-53. Underlining is mine.

81. Catherine Marshall, Beyond Ourselves. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961), p 162.

82. Berger and Luckman, p 57.

83. 1 Corinthians 14:7.

84. Serious metaphysical consideration needs to be given to what transpires mentally in academic studies leading to the acquisition of knowledge and the consequent designation of the academic cream of a society as "illuminati" of the society.

85. Alice Bailey, Glamour: A World Problem. (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1950), p 6.

86. Mircea Eliade, "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism" in The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology. ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M, Kitagawa. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p 97.

87. Ibid., p 87.

88. Ibid., p 88.

89. Ibid., p 98.

90. Mircea Eliade, "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism", p 87.

91. Ibid.

92. Long, pp 2-6.

93. This is a natural and universal phenomenon and is a confirmed experience of all high grade artists and classical music composers. Saint John of the Cross and Saint Thomas made a distinction "between acquired wisdom, which is the fruit of man's own study and of his thought, and infused wisdom or contemplation". See Thomas Merton, The Ascent to Truth. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1951), p 75.

94. I. C. Brown, pp 1-2.

95. Ibid.

96. Heim, pp 13-14.

97. Roger M. Keesing, Cultural Anthropology, A Contemporary Perspective. (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc., 1981), p 98.

98. M. Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion. pp. 11 - 12.

99. Alice Bailey, Education in the New Age. (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1954), p 43.

100. Ibid. pp 137-138.

101. Alice Bailey, Labours of Hercules. p 35.

102. Ibid., p 100.

103. Victor C. Uchendu, p. 11.

104. Reference is made to the fact of libation. This is a daily ritual that reinforces the link between the ancestors/ndichie and the living. A man, depending on his status and means pours as many libations as he has visitors or guests. A titled man or Diokpara is under obligation to perform the daily morning ritual in his obi/ancestral temple prior to his daily round.

105. Basden, P 270.

106. It can be posited that Igbo assiduity and industry which earned them the name of Jews of Africa has a religious base. Their dispersal all over the world can be ascribed to the achievement motive entrenched in their culture. Here, we have the basis of Igbo pragmatism and individualism as there is virtually no block to social mobility. The sky is the limit as long as there is no act that compromises the socially shared ethos inspired by Ani. For scholars interested in the debate on "national characteristics", the Igbo situation is a test case especially in the light of the new hermeneutical situation.

107. "Kola (Cola, or Sterculia acuminata and macrocarpa),... Kola nuts enter into the daily life of all West [Africans]...and constitute almost a language...The first act of friendship and hospitality is a present of white nuts, and before commencing any discussion on any

subject the sharing (and eating) of the Kola nut as an act of friendship is a necessity". Basden, 267-268.

108. Alice Bailey, Labours of Hercules. p 100.

109. The initial attachment of the son is to the mother. The father remains in the background. With the growth of the son into adulthood, the shift of attention is on the father. The son eventually marries and thereafter holds the father and mother in balance according them equal status.

110. Natalie N. Banks, The Golden Thread. (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1963), p 9.

111. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. S. V. "Sociology of Knowledge", by Werner Stark.

112. A. Bailey, Labours of Hercules. p 31. See also Rev. 13:8.

113. Lin Cochran, Edgar Cayce on Secrets of the Universe and How to Use Them in Your Life. (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1989), p 5.

114. Aldous Huxley, p 9.

115. Ibid.

116. There is a strong indication that some of the initiates know the secret of longevity. Some are able to reincarnate prior to physical death. The art of rain making is part of the manipulation in question. Victor Turner drops a hint, when he made this observation about the Ndembu. "From the standpoint of twentieth century science, we may find it strange that Ndembu feel that by bringing certain objects and virtues they seem empirically to possess and that by manipulating them in prescribed ways they can arrange and concentrate these powers, rather like laser beams, to destroy malignant forces". Victor Turner, The Ritual Process. p 43.

117. Berger and Luckmann, pp 60-61.

118. This claim is based on the Igbo creation myth.

119. One universal language is predicated on Monism. The path of ascension - evolution leads to at-one-ment, a situation exemplified in the common expression that all roads leads to Rome. Consideration of the Biblical pentecostal experience indicates the possibility of one

universal language an indication which becomes a reversal of the tower of Babel symbolism.

120. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. S. V. "Logos", by G. B. Kerferd.

121. St. John 1:1.

122. Ibid., 14:6.

123. Benjamine Ray, pp 24-32; 89-90.

124. Duncan, p 45.

125. K. A. B. Jones-Quartey, A Life of Azikiwe. (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), p 252.

126. On this ground, The Bible because it is a sacred book is put under the pillow as a protection against bad dreams or harassment by malignant forces.

127. The World Book. S. V. "Lavoisier, Antoine Laurent", by Henry M. Leicester.

128. Carolyn Nance, "Cosmology in the Novels of Chinua Achebe", The Conch. Vol. III No. 2, September 1971.

129. Matthew Henry, 3:VI.

130. F. C. Ogbalu, Ilu Igbo (The Book of Igbo Proverbs). (Onitsh: University Publishing Company, 1965), p 2.

131. Basden, pp 186-187.

132. Some of the variants include - "Umunna Kwenu". "Umunna" literally means "sons of a father". It applies to people descending from one common ancestor. Another version is "Anedo Kwenu". Anedo is the name given to the people in Nnewi local government area, Ani-Edo.

133. Basden, p 185.

134. Ibid., p 188.

135. Ibid., p 190.
Underlining is mine. This conjures up the Igbo idea of breath and the phenomenon of igba ume (joining breath) meaning inspiration.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid., pp 190-191.
138. Ibid., p 191.
139. Ibid., p 192.
140. Matthew Henry, 3:VI.
141. Ibid., See Jeremiah 20:9.
142. Basden, p 192. See also rock concerts.
143. Matthew, 7:3.
144. The researcher took great delight in observing prisoners at work as a youngster. "Music while you work" releases energy.
145. Basden, pp 131-132.
146. Ibid., pp 132-134.
147. Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby, A Primer of Jungian Psychology. (New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1973), pp 59-60.
148. Elechukwu Njaka, Igbo Political Culture. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), P 33. See Ilogu, pp 18-19.
149. A. E. Afigbo, Ikenga: The State of Our Knowledge. (Owerri: RADA Publishing Company, 1986), p 3.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid., p 8.
154. Ibid., p 1.
155. Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, The Modern Researcher. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), p 9.
156. Ibid.
157. Afigbo, p 1. It is clearly evident that Igbo people are motivated by intangible forces. Ilogu notes that "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". Ilogu, pp 36-37.

158. Susan Langer, p 134.

159. Alice Bailey, Esoteric Psychology. 1:365.

160. F. C. Ogbalu, Igbo Institutions and Customs. (Onitsha: University Publishing Company n.d.), p 51.

161. Victor Turner, The Ritual Process Structure and Anti-Structure. (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969).

162. Susan Langer, p 138.
The underlining is mine. The ongoing nature of ritual is implied and goal of this orientation is religious, acceptable moral behaviour.

163. One of the eligibility criteria for ancestorhood is having a wife or wives and children. To remain unmarried at the age of maturity is considered abhorrent and family pressure is usually strong in persuading the man to marry. Should a man, for some reason, fail to marry, he is put under the category of "Akalogeri" which means a "foolish and useless person, a good-for-nothing". If such a person dies, his spirit joins the rank of "Akarogeri", a band of evil spirits that harass and torment the living. See Ogbalu, p 52, and Arinze pp 48-122.

164. Berger and Luckmann, p 4.

165. The marriage process involves elaborate rituals and ordered procedure. Ogbalu details six stages which include (1) initial inquiry by the man's parents and relatives; it involves a scrutiny of the girl's lineage; (2) Consultation through the process of divination to confirm compatibility and other psychological tests. Marriage is a village affair. "Their individual and collective opinions matter a great deal."

166. Talbot, Tribes of the Niger Delta. pp 161-168.

167. Basden, 99 60-61.

168. The expectations include going through all the rite of passage at the set time and to crown his life endeavors by taking the highest titles within the available resources. One would be expected to live a fruitful and productive life that enriches the society.

169. Dr. John Okonkwo Alutu Cited his own personal experience in which his ill-fortune and family mishaps abated after appeasement of his father who died when he, John, was a year old. Many rituals were prescribed to achieve the desired family reconciliation between 1980-1985. See John Okonkwo Alutu, Nnewi History, from the Earliest Times to 1980/82. (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1986), pp 255-259.

170. Nnewi "Ikwu aru" festival occurs every seven years for the women and every nine years for the men.

171. Some of the rituals have been revitalized. The new Yam Festival is now a state festival in Imo State. On October 22, 1988 the "Iriji Ndi Igbo Festival and Agricultural Show" took place at the Owerri Sports Stadium. The Igbo elements in the U.S.A. now celebrate the Iriji Festival in Washington and some other states.

172. Itu nzu ritual is the first thing done by the initiate on waking. It is preceded by washing of hands which is symbolic purification. The association of this ritual with Lights raises many questions. Significantly is there any connection between the light in question and the "Light to the Gentiles?"

173. This swearing ritual is another indication of the unity of Nature - Man, earth, space and heaven.

174. Arinze, p 20.

175. Christopher I. Ejizu, Ibid.
Further explanation and investigation is required in the cult of Chi as documented by Ejizu. The purpose of the symbolic externalisation of one's Chi needs to be addressed. The other problem raised by the ritual is the residence of the Chi. Is there an assumption that Chi is not resident in the individual? If Chi is resident in the person, the necessity for the cult requires further probing.

176. Ibid., p. 382.
The translation of the prayer said by the mother who is presiding over the establishment of her married daughter's Chi is: "I hand over to you your Chi, that it may join you to live in your husband's house. May it protect you from whatever harm, and bring you male and female children. You, your husband, and children shall through its help enjoy good health and long life. May your Chi lead you and may your children honour you as you have honoured me...Amen"! Ibid., p. 383

177. See Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised #162.

178. Some restraint is exercised in the description of the Igba-ndu ritual. Details are eliminated to avoid a breach of confidentiality.

179. It can be assumed that the reason behind shunning is to create a wilderness type of experience and to enforce deprivation so the conversion could be accelerated. The same effect is back of the excommunication ritual in the Christian churches.

180. D. Nwoga, "The Concept and Practice of Satire among the Igbo", The Conch. Vol. 111. No. 2. September 1971.

181. Ibid., p 17.

182. The war is now known as the Nigerian civil war. The Igbo people were the Biafrans at that time.

183. Joan B. Townsend, "Anthropological Perspectives on New Religious Movements", In Return of the Millennium, ed. Joseph Bettis and S. K. Johannesen. (New York: NEW ERA BOOKS, Publisher International Religious Foundation Inc., 1984), p. 138.

184. It has to be noted that at no time in the history of the Igbo people did the villages experience any discontinuity in their socio-religious and political infrastructure. The office of the Diokpara, the obi - the ancestral temple, the concept of the village council were fully operative during the contact era and are still fully functioning. Rather than destroy the structure, the British colonial administration, through the expedient of the system of "Indirect Rule" refined them and in most cases accorded them powers and recognition.

185. Major Leonard, Ibid., p.13.

186. Modern psychology is realising the importance of animal paradigm in assessing human behaviour and feeling. The writer observed and monitored a training program for Welfare Administrators in 1985-86 in Gimli, Manitoba, which was conducted by New Careers Program, Dept. of Employment Services and Economic Security, Winnipeg. In one of the exercises, the trainees were asked to choose any animal that they could identify with that sums up their overall individual behaviour. In the same token, the expression, the Lion of Judah has deep religious significance and its adoption by the Late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia is an illustration of this animal inspired animalism.

187. This admixture or apparent syncretism is not uncommon. In the world of meaning there is no contradiction. The case in point was not a surprise. The young man is a budding native doctor/dibia, who is undergoing apprenticeship from the father who was the Patron of the association of native doctors in Nnewi in 1987. The young man is also a Christian and sings in the village church choir.

A visit to the administrative offices of the Aboriginal Canadians will reveal similar and even more complex, syncretic structures. A good example is St. Theresa Point, in Manitoba. In the Board Room is a prominent display of the crucifix against a background of a large oval shaped, raw hide, decorated with eagle feathers, peace pipe and other traditionally valued artifacts.

188. The reality of the role of vultures dawned on the writer in September 1989, at the belated funerary rite of his younger brother who was a victim of the Nigerian Civil War. The ceremony was a Christian ritual even though the call to perform it was traditionally inspired. As is the practice, the congregation sat in the open yard of the family and sang. The writer being the Diokpara, having lost his father the year before, was in charge and responsible for smooth organisation and coordination of the ceremony. In the course of the ceremony, a vulture swooped and perched on the palm tree in the yard. On making an enquiry from his uncle, a traditionalist, as to why a vulture would come and perch on the palm tree in spite of the crowd that was around, the response was that "ndichie bialu akwa" (the ancestors are attending the funeral ceremony). Surprised at this statement, the writer was asked: Did you not see one at your father's funeral a year ago? The response was "no" and then he was told that a vulture was at that funeral. The significance did not dawn on him until three years later after further research. (The vulture in question defied every attempt at being photographed).

189. The most common type of iso mpi, competition, takes the form of competitive donations. Several church announcements are usually made weeks before the event. After matins/morning service on the set Sunday, the congregation stays and a big plate or tray is positioned in the chancel and the iso mpi begins. One by one people get up to announce the amount to be entered against their name. The most generous donor in each category (that reflects the traditional age set) is declared the winner. The other form is the annual singing competition for churches within a District. This is called "iso mpi ukwe" (locking horns in singing, singing competition).

190. See Appendix.

CONCLUSION

In Igbo traditional society, the behaviour of the people reveals deep-seated spirituality that colours and continues to form the basis of thought, word and deed. In the Igbo existential structure, the physical, tangible world fades imperceptibly into the subjective world without any demarcating line delimiting what in the West has been separated into the secular and the sacred worlds.

The Igbo world is an organism with differentiated components which are fully interactive and interdependent. Ani-Earth is the most concrete aspect of the Igbo world. Because of the immediacy of Ani, the protection, nourishment, nurture and sustenance it provides to the Igbo people, it looms large in their consciousness. As the creation of the Divine emissary of Chineke (God), and created in full knowledge and superintendence of God, Ani is not only a witness of the momentous act of creation but embodies the impulse and the idea back of the creative process. For these reasons, Ani, in the cosmology of the Igbo has the status of a deity and is generally called Mother Earth.

Mmiri (water), Ikuku (air/space) and Enu Igwe (sky/heaven) make up the balance of the Igbo world. Water sustains life and is regarded as a purifier. In addition, water harbours some animals that accord temporary tenancy to

the souls of some of the dead. Moreover some of the benevolent spirits dwell in springs, rivers and lakes. It is, therefore, not surprising that certain water bodies are specially protected from contamination and pollution by prohibitions. Space because of its lack of concreteness is the link between Ani, and water on the one hand and Enu Igwe, skyey heaven, on the other. Space is important because it contains air which is the life and energy source in man. Space above all acts as the medium or vehicle in which ideas and thought (uche) reside. Spirits of various classifications and degrees move in and inhabit space. It is through space that thunder, amadioha, passes to carry out its divinely assigned mission of rooting out evil and bad medicine. Enu Igwe remains remote as the abode of Chineke. The sun and moon as the creations of Chineke testify to his power and might. The Igbo people acknowledge the supremacy and superiority of Enu Igwe, skyey heaven, over earth and embody this recognition in speech "Igwe ka ani" (heaven is greater than ani) and actualize it in the powerful oracle by that name at Umunneoha.

In its visible form that appeals to man's sense organs, the Igbo world in its totality constitutes what is known as nature in the West. Nature in the Igbo context is Chineke or God in manifestation. No aspect of nature is devoid of divine imprint, force and immanence. This ubiquitous substratum in nature makes everything "living" in the eyes of

the Igbo people. Everything in nature, therefore, has a modicum of consciousness which varies from object to object. Consciousness is only a strand of the divine immanence. In various contexts and situations, the divine presence assumes the form of "amam ihe" (wisdom/knowledge), ume breath) and uche (thought or idea). This divine immanence is the root of divine animism which has been denigrated as the name for Igbo religion.

Be that as it may, animism as a designation for the Igbo people's awareness of an underlying spiritual force that pervades the whole of created order is valid and equates perfectly with the Western conception of spiritual ubiquity. The Igbo articulation of animism is gaining ground in the West in various guises. Holism which stands for inclusiveness, making whole, oneness in spite of apparent diversity, has as its underlying, motive force, that dynamic and energizing power which is animism. In the Gaia hypothesis, the earth together with the created order is seen as a living organism. Some "New Age" thinking has at last come to the conclusion that matter has consciousness, a conclusion that posits consciousness of the atom. But this thinking knowledge does not contradict the postulates of religion. In the Igbo creation myth and in the Christian account of creation, the active role of the breath of God is responsible for the animation of the whole creation. Ume (breath) fills space, water and ani (earth).

This breath, ume is the same as "spiritus" from which spirit, the vital or animating principle is derived in the world.

Nature as a manifestation of God, embodies wisdom. Wisdom was imparted to the earth, ani, at the time of creation as it is clearly stated: "I wisdom, came out of the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth as a cloud." Wisdom is the same as the Logos. When the Igbo man makes reference to "nto ani", the foundation of the earth, metaphysically he is talking about the primary fecundation of the earth/matter with wisdom/spirit or pre-cosmic ideation.

Nature by virtue of its inherent wisdom and vitalizing principle is the primary teacher of the Igbo people. Also nature is their mother. The immediate preoccupation of the people is with the mother, thus justifying their designation as "sons of nature". The closeness with nature does not imply the total absence of the "Father". In the natural order of things, the mother's responsibility is to bring up the child through nourishment and education. The Igbo people like the rest of mankind are in the kindergarten class, learning and preparing for eventual identification with the father.

The lessons taught by Nature are of great magnitude. Each component of nature has its lessons. The animals, plants and even "danda" ants and "idide" earthworm have

teachings for man. These teachings while embodying wisdom and ideas which are spiritual, are underlined by the goal of evolution which is perfection. Chiefly, the sun and moon by interacting with the earth set the evolutionary pattern for man as well as the idea of time, number and natural laws. "Oge ada akwu eche mmadu" (time does not stand and wait for man) is indeed a lesson taught by Nature. Everything is moving and evolving to the extent that it is beyond man to arrest the march onwards. The laws of nature are, therefore, found to be inexorable.

Man being part of Nature is engulfed in the endless movement inherent in Nature. Possessing a mechanism or a faculty called the "three eyes" - the eye of the flesh, the eye of the mind and the eye of contemplation he is able to evolve a level of consciousness that puts in his hands some of the secrets of nature. It is through initiation by an Igbo that a high level of consciousness is attained, and this process involves struggle and wrestling with oneself to gain mastery of not only one's lower nature but also the lower aspect of manifested nature. This goal-driven interaction with nature progressively reveals zones of knowledge for both existential survival and evolution.

In Igboland, the accumulated knowledge and nuggets of wisdom have been translated into and anchored into what is known as Omenani - the customs of the Land. Omenani is constitutive of the lessons learned from nature and

preserved for the perpetuation of the Igbo people. Omenani is essentially an ordered and structured way of daily living and interaction with both the living and the ancestors. By its nomenclature, omenani, (that which occurs on earth) is geotropic. It is therefore a grounding on earth of all the knowledge, wisdom and revelations of the ordered subjective world known to the Igbo initiates since "nto ani" (the foundation of the earth). Because it is highly ritualized, it is a form of insulation from excessive abstraction of the high voltage of extreme, positive pole of the Igbo world spectrum. This grounding or insulating effect of omenani accounts for the significant statements such as "Anya iru ani' - (eye close to the ground) "obi ume ani". Through Omenani, the invisible and formless are objectified in the world of conditionality. By providing routinized structure, the Igbo man is progressively and symbolically transformed.

On the other hand, Omenani insulates the pole of chaos, disorder, pollution and disequilibrium. By the institution of social control measures, the society is protected from contamination. Should pollution threaten on account of an indecent or prohibited act, the priest/Dibia or an initiate uses appropriate rituals which may include sacrifice, penance or shunning to restore equilibrium, in full knowledge that one single stain if not decontaminated will affect all.

Omenani, therefore holds the balance and orders the

Igbo world of daily existence. By fulfilling omenani everyday, the concept of "doing" and "learning" is totally implicated. Persistent doing like "practise makes perfect". The morning ritualized meditation of the initiate/titled man and the conscious endeavour to conform to the sun-imposed rhythm of the day and night, seasons and annual cycles, progressively lift the individual to a higher state of consciousness.

The Igbo man because of his ability to think and the resultant opportunity to develop higher state of consciousness, remains the principal actor in his environment. When he acts, he acts holistically in response to the perceived unity in his natural and dynamic environment. His actions embody the meanings he drew from his environment which is sacramental. His primary socialization mediated through the Igbo language and rituals indicates to him what is conventionally acceptable and what is prohibited within the parameters of Omenani.

It is not surprising that the Igbo man lives and moves and grows in an environment in which every facet of life is regulated and ordered by Omenani. The inescapable, sacramental rites of passage he undergoes are ordained by Omenani. Submission to these rites means progressive expansion of consciousness and the acquisition of skills necessary for entrance into the manhood stage where he gets married in order to provide the appropriate vehicle for

reincarnating souls and ancestors. Continued labour, struggle, diligence and self-application lead him to the stage of higher initiations where he establishes rapport with his own chi (soul) and the fount of knowledge.

Initiation is a momentous event that launches the initiate on to the path of the highest level of achievement in life. It opens the way for the manifestation of the powers of chi (soul) which is the divine element or spark in man. Superhuman powers and faculties are expressed through the initiate; consequently, he becomes either a seer, healer, diviner, priest, king or a prophet (onye amuma) with powers of prognostication. Thus it is through initiation that "we may become Gods walking about in the flesh".

The Igbo initiates are under obligation to improve the Igbo environment and thereby foster evolution. Together with the elders, they are the leaders of thought. Their mental outpourings/creations are the products of abstracted wisdom from nature, the fruit of experience and the inner subjective wisdom attracted by their soul and synthesized by a chemicalisation process in their mental laboratory. These externalizations whether in the form of music, arts, ritual elements, proverbs and philosophy are intensely spiritual and constitute various instruments of socialization in the Igbo world. Through this dialectical, creative process, the golden thread, which is the ageless wisdom anchored on earth since the dawn of time, is renewed and transmitted from

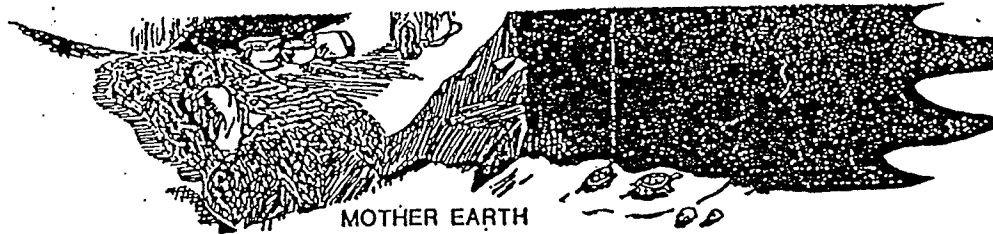
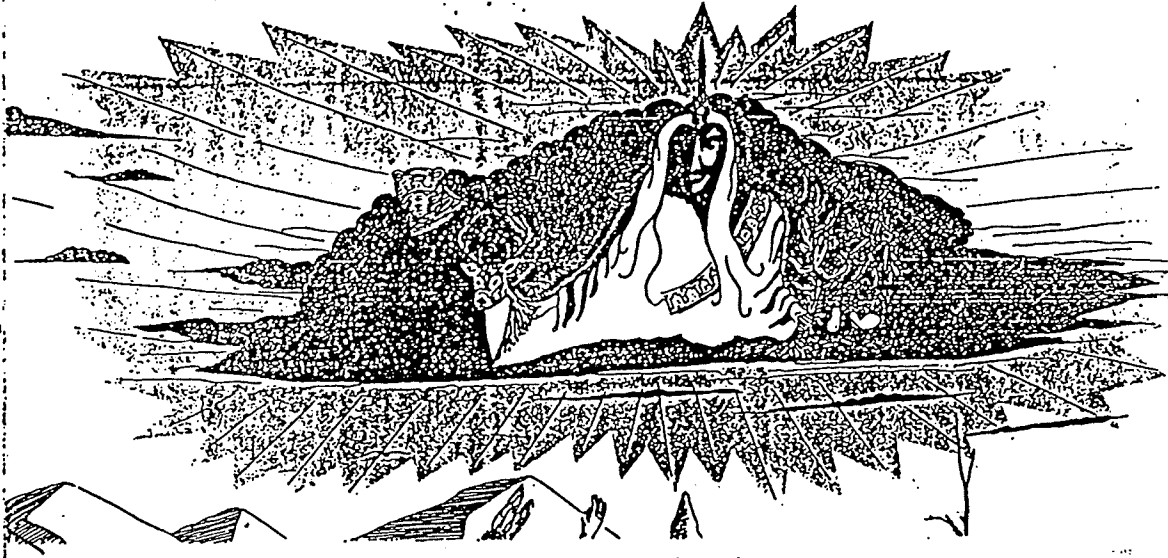
generation to generation in the Igbo world.

Response to this golden thread progressively involves the whole individual as he struggles to give it daily expression in thought, word and deed. The pool of individual responses whether private or corporate, to an outside observer constitutes the definitions of religion, but to the Igbo people, it is a part of Omenani structured to lead them to eventual perfection.

APPENDIX I

THE CREATOR

The Creator has given you the knowledge. Listen to the trees, the streams, the birds, the animals. Listen! Look!



MOTHER EARTH

The earth is our mother because she loves us;
from her love, our life is born.

We are her color, her flesh, and her roots.

She is giving us that which makes us strong and healthy. She supports our feet as we walk upon her. We are grateful that she continues to perform her instruction that she possesses. The woman and Mother Earth are one, givers of life.

"No matter where we are, our Mother Earth is there. We, her children, are brothers and sisters to one another. we all have different ways, but through one spirit. We are the same."

THE NAME INDIAN IS A MISCONCEPTION STARTED BY COLUMBUS.
THE SHOSHONEANS ARE CALLED ISKQUOIS.
NISHNABE ARE CALLED OJIBWAY.
ANENHO ARE CALLED CARO.
ALL THE NAMES ARE ONE MEANING THE "ORIGINAL OR
NATURAL HUMAN BEINGS."



NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN TRAVELLING CO.



Rabbit

1929 1951 1983 1975 1987
The Rabbit is talented, ambitious & quite lucky. Having
virtuous qualities, you tend to have very good taste
& are somewhat reserved. You are admired, trusted
& are loving to those very close to you. Business wise
& conscientious you never back out of a contract.
Seldom do you lose your temper. Most compatible
Sheep, Pig, Dog.



Dragon

1940 1962 1994 1976 1988
You are healthy, full of energy & accessible with a
tendency toward a short temper & stubbornness. Honest,
sensitive & brave you also create trust & confidence
in others. At times, you tend to be too self-reliant
which may cause others to temporarily take advantage
of you. But this is short-lived for you are nobody's fool.
Most compatible: Rat, Snake, Monkey, Rooster.



Snake

1941 1963 1995 1977 1989
Something little you have great wisdom. You are finan-
cially lucky & seldom worry about money. Tendencies
are toward vanity, selfishness & stinginess yet you have
great sympathy & a compassion to help others who are
less fortunate. You show a calm surface but underneath
are intense & passionate. Most compatible: Buffalo,
Rooster.



Horse

1942 1964 1996 1978 1990
The Horse is popular, cheerful & smart with the use of
money. Wise & talented, you are also good with your
hands. You may be too showy at times & although
perceptive, sometimes saying too much. Large crowds
are enjoyable for you. The Horse is known to be impa-
tient & hot-blooded in all regards but your duty won't
most compatible: Tiger, Dog, Sheep.



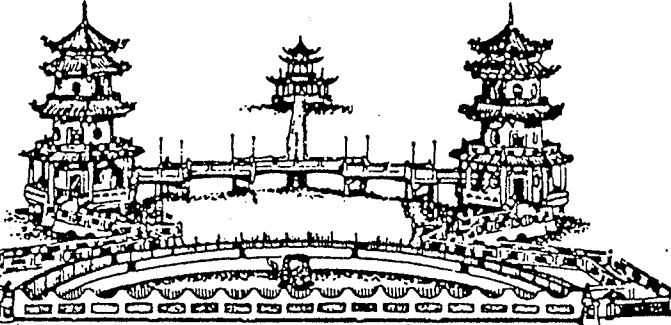
Sheep

1943 1965 1997 1979 1991
Wise, gentle & compassionate the Sheep show
elegance & are accomplished in the arts. While being
shy you are also perseverant & puzzled about the. Hav-
ing strong beliefs & a passion for what you do. Sheep
are usually very religious yet timid, rarely a word leader
& sometimes awkward in speech. Your abilities make
money for you. Most compatible: Rabbit, Pig, Horse.



Monkey

1944 1966 1998 1980 1992
You are clever, skillful, flexible & unusually inventive
& able to solve very difficult problems easily. Guard
against impatience & being too aggressive at times, yet
you could gain success in almost any field there is a
strong desire for knowledge with a sharp memory. You
are passionate & strong willed but your anger leaves
quickly. Most compatible: Dragon, Rat.



CHINESE ZODIAC

The Chinese Zodiac centers around a 12 year cycle. Each year is named after different
animal signs. These signs determine your personality, degree of success and other
circumstances governing your life. To learn about yourself find the year of your birth
from the 12 signs. If you were born before 1924, add 12 years from the year you were
born. If born after 1971, subtract 12 years from the year you were born.



Rooster

1945 1967 1999 1981 1993
The Rooster is deep thinking, capable, talented & a hard
worker. You always think you're right & you usually are
which makes some relationships difficult. The Rooster
has an outward appearance of being adventurous but
is actually timid & quite often a loner. You can be patient
& too cautious but are interesting & quite brave. Most
compatible: Buffalo, Snake, Dragon.



Dog

1946 1968 1970 1982 1994
Loyal, honest & a good leader the Dog gains the trust
of others, is able to keep secrets & is always a cham-
pion of justice. Although there are tendencies to be
setback, stubborn & eccentric you do not place great
value in wealth. You don't pursue foolish goals & usually
finish anything that is started. Most compatible: Horse,
Tiger, Rabbit.



Pig

1947 1969 1971 1983 1995
Cheerful & spirited you go at everything with all your
strength with no restraint. You possess fortitude, honesty
& are loyal. The few friends you make, you make for
life. You desire knowledge & are well-informed.
Although quick tempered you take arguments & are af-
fectionate to loved ones. Most compatible: Rabbit,
Sheep.



Rat

1948 1960 1972 1984 1996
You are charming & attractive to the opposite sex,
honest, basically thrifty but easily angered while able
to show an outward calm. You are hard working to
reach your goals & attain possessions. Once you start
something, you're not happy until it is finished. Most
compatible: Dragon, Monkey, Buffalo.



Buffalo

1949 1961 1973 1985 1997
The Buffalo is patient & speaking little. However, when
you do speak it may be of great meaning. You inspire
others to gain confidence. Although you are easy go-
ing & alert mentally & physically, you can anger easily
& are somewhat stubborn. The Buffalo despises failure
& being opposed. Guard against treating love as a kind
of game. Most compatible: Snake, Rooster, Rat.



Tiger

1950 1962 1974 1986 1998
Deep thinking & sensitive, the Tiger is able to give great
sympathy. You are very short-tempered but gain much
respect from others. You usually get credit when credit
is due you but tend to have trouble making decisions.
While a bit selfish & suspicious of others, you are
courageous & powerful. Most compatible: Horse,
Dragon, Dog.

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Glossary of Some Igbo Expressions

A

- Ada ebu ani ebu:** Earth can never be carried.
- Afu n'ekwughi n'egbu okenye:** Seeing and communicating kills an elder
- Agwu:** Divination force/emanation.
- Agwu isi:** Divination force of the " head" which fosters altered state of consciousness
- Agwu nka:** Divination force affecting artists and carvers
- Akonuche:** Wisdom, Intelligence
- Aku fecha odalu ani:** Lit. The winged termite after its exuberant and acrobatic flights eventually falls to ani. Indication of the force of laws.
- Anu ohia;** Wildlife, also uncultured, wild and not socialized.
- Ani naru oku;** Lit. Portion of earth/ground that is hot. Earth's reaction as a result of pollution which is evidenced in frequent incidence of dead in the affected area.
- Anya ilu ani:** Lit. Eye is oriented to Earth, well-mannered and adequately socialized.
- Anya oku:** Lit. Hot eye. Covetousness
- Anyanwu:** The sun
- Anya ukwu:** Lit. Large eye. Envy.
- Arum anataro ifea:** My body does not accept this thing, I disagree with this idea, It is revolting
- Asokata eze ekpuru nkata we gwa ya okwu:** The king is accorded due respect but an occasion does arise when one veils one's self with a basket and talk to him. Strained relation or misdemeanour on the part of the king could lead to conflict or confrontation
- Aya (aga) emechasigodu omenani bia me omenenu:** The custom of the land has to be fulfilled prior to compliance with requirements in the skyey heaven.

C

- Chi:** Soul. Divine spark
- Chibuike:** The Soul is strength
- Chibundu:** The soul is life
- Chi ya mu anya** (His soul is wide awake)
- Chidube:** Let the soul lead/guide
- Chigozie:** (Let the soul bless)
- Chikezie:** (Let the soul rightly create)
- Chilaka:** the soul ordains/ rules.
- Chim egbuem:** my soul has ruined/killed me
- Chinazo:** the soul saves or rescues from danger.

Chinedu: The soul leads/guides

Chinelo: the soul thinks through and plans or meditates.

Chukwu igbanye mmadu afa n'obi. God putting insight into a man's heart.

D

Dalu olu:. Thank you for working

Di ochi ada ekwesi ife ofulu n'eni nkwu:. The palm wine tapper does not disclose all that he sees on the palm tree.

Dibia: Medicine man/shaman.

Diopkala, Okpala or Opara: The first male child

E.

Efi enwero odu chi ya na egburu ya ijiji: Any cow that has no tail, its soul kills the flies that harass her.

Ekwe/Ikoro: Wooden gong.

Esi be gi eje bonye?: Lit. To whose house does yours lead? Cynical question indicating Igbo individualism

Ezi na ulo: Family

Eziokwu bu ndu: Right word/truth is life

G

Gba ife imulu: Dance out what you have learnt

I

Ife ana acho n'uko enu ka afulu n'uko ani: That which is sought in the upper rack/bin is right here below

Ife nti nata agwuro oda ezu ike: Lit. There should be no rest until that which the cheek/jaw is chewing is exhausted. There is no rest until the work is done.

Igbo ama eze: The Igbo do not have kings/do not recognise kings

Igbo kwenu: Igbo people agree/sound/respond

Iji ire we gua eze onu:. Counting the teeth with the tongue. Use of the imagination

Ike okwu adirom: I have not the strength/energy to talk

Ikpere arusi: Idol worship

Imalu ife imulu igba: Dance out what you have learnt
Ino n'oku uguru ewe puta: Lit. Sitting by the fireside
before the onset of the harmattan. A worsening
situation

Inwere ume? Do you have breath/energy/strength?

Isa Aka: Washing of hands, initiations

Isikwu ife: adding or joining something, mental
mathematics

Isim di ka abubu: Lit. My head is fibrous, My head
is foggy. I am confused.

Itu Anya: Conditioning the Eye (an initiation).

Itua onwegi mbo imalu ka onadi: if you pinch yourself
you know how it feels. (Do unto others as you
would do to yourself)

Iwe or Onuma: Anger or violent anger

K

Kwuba aka gi oto: Keep your hands straight, Be
righteous

M

Mkpuru okwu: Seed of word or seed word.

Mmanu: Palm oil

Mmiri: Water

N

Ndichie: Ancestors

Ndu bu isi: Life is prime

Nka: Expert, adept.

Nkechinyere: That which is given by the soul.

Nkpugbe: (Revelation)

Nna: Father

Nna, nna anyi ha kwuru: Our great, great ancestor said.

(Usually a prefix to a proverb or a statement of
an aspect of the custom to indicate its force.

Nwa eze ada ato/efe na mbe: The king's son is never lost in
another town.

Nwachimere: The child whose path is smoothened by
the soul.

Nwam puta nka aburo uzo: Lit. My child turn around, this
not the way/path. A transgression or an unacceptable
social behaviour.

Nwanyi Ure: Lit. The proud woman. A shrub that has a
psychic force.

Nwata chua nna ya oso ibubo akwatue ya: If a child or
young man pursues his father, the father's aura
overpowers the child

O

- Obi: Heart
 Obi: mind
 Obi: Palace, Ancestor temple
 Obi ume ani: humble mind
 Odu Aka, the Eduma or the Ebi: the insignia of initiation
 Ofo: A sacred short stick that features in most rituals.
 It is a symbol of justice and uprightness
 Ofu nne n'amu ma ofu chi ada eke: Although one mother
 gives birth to many children each child is the
 product of one specific chi/soul)
 Ogugu Isi: Mental calculation/mathematics
 Ohia/Ofia: Bush or jungle
 Oke amana uma ata akpa dibia ma dibia amana uma ahu oke
 onu n'oku: Let the medicine man not purposely
 singe the mouse's mouth, but let the mouse not
 deliberately chew up the medicine man's bag.
 The Law of Reciprocity.
 Okochi: Dry season.
 Okwu okenye ada eme ntana. The word of an elder never
 dries up. The words continue to inspire others
 long after he is gone.
 Omenani: Custom
 Omenenu:. That which occurs in heaven.
 Ona afu uzo: He sees closely. He sees clearly beyond
 the physical and objective plain. His shamanic
 predictions can be trusted.
 One nne/okenye bu mmuo. The word of a mother is spirit
 Onu okenye bu afa: The word/mouth of an elder is divination

 Onye ajuju ada efu uzo: He who inquires of the way never
 gets lost.
 Onye gbube achara onye gbugbe onye akpona ibe ya
 onye ikoli. Let each person cut his own portion of
 the grass and let no one call the other a prisoner
 (We are all prisoners why disparage each when
 should all be about our common task)
 Onye kwe chi ya ekwe: If one resigns to a situation
 one's soul equally resigns to the situation.
 Onye oka: An artist,
 Onye oka okwu: Adept/skilled in speech.
 Ozo: Title holder, an initiate.

U

- Uboakwala: Native guitar
 Uche: Thought
 Uche ebiro ebi: Thought is not resident in the mind
 Uche onye adiya njo: Each person likes his/her thought
 Uchechi: The thought/plan of the soul
 Udu Mmiri Rainy season

Ufie: Native xylophone
Ugani: (January to March) A period when local major food items are hard to come by.
Uguru: Harmattan
Umunna Sons of a common ancestor
Usoro: Order or method/procedure
Uzo: Path/way
Uzo chiri echi: A trail/path/way that has fallen into disuse.
Uzo esi eme ihe; A way of doing something.
Uzo nke Christ; The Way of Christ, Christ's Way
Christ's injunction.
Uzoamaka: The way is good.
Uzodimma: The way is nice/safe/appreciable.
Uzoechina: Let the path never close.
Uzu amaro akpu ogene ya ne anya n'odu egbe: The smith that does not know how to construct a gong should look closely at the tail of a hawk. Law of Analogy.