

Traditional Deliverance Ministries & Their Relevance among Contemporary Igbo Christians in Nise Community

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Abstract

The thrust of this study is to portray the relevance of traditional deliverance ministries in contemporary Igbo societies with Nise Community as a case study. The advent of the Europeans and their missionaries brought a lot of light and progress to Igbo race; at the same time, they tended to destroy a lot of credible and valuable things to the Igbo especially the Igbo traditional deliverance ministries which is part and parcel of Igbo trado-medical architecture. Against this background, there have been a lot of misconceptions, misinterpretations and condemnations of the phenomenon in the contemporary Igbo society. This study applied the use of both primary and secondary sources as means of data collection for the execution of the research work. Sacrifice theory has been adopted as its theoretical framework. The cultural area approach was adopted as analytical procedure. Findings revealed that the Igbo as an ethnic group is highly religious and they are highly endowed with those trado-medical and deliverance practices/mechanism which serve as cultural heritage and remain one of the bedrocks of prevailing health and deliverance system to the Igbo people. The study recommends the adoption of this practice in Nise community because of its relevance in saving lives among the people. It is believed that the adoption of this practice in Igbo communities will help in casting off western subservience and recover the Igbo cultural heritage.

Keywords: Traditional; Igbo Society, Deliverance Ministry

Introduction

It is no longer news that, the coming of the Europeans and their missionaries to Igbo land brought a lot of light and progress to Igbo people; at the same time, they tended to destroy a lot of credible and valuable things known to the Igbo. This affected their religious and cultural values, including trado-medical system and deliverance practices. In the recent times, people are debating and doubting the existence of traditional deliverance ministries. Nise is just a typical Igbo community where such doubt and debates are going on now. Among the issues on board is its relevance in the Igbo society. The thrust of this work therefore is to portray the existence of traditional deliverance ministries and its relevance

especially in the contemporary Igbo societies with particular reference to Nise community. St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians says for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places, (Ephesians 6:12). The above existential human challenge among the Igbo is part of the problem that the traditional practitioners of deliverance ministries have come to solve.

By traditional deliverance, it refers to those mechanisms or techniques bestowed unto those specialists (Dibia) or the tradimedicalists by the Supernatural Being in order to maintain health equilibrium. Against this backdrop, Onunwa cited in Madu (2004) aptly says that:

A comprehensive understanding of human health includes the greatest possible of all man's forces and energies, the greatest possible spiritualization of man's bodily aspect and the finest embodiment in the spiritual. True health is revealed in the self-actualization of the person who had attained that freedom which marshals all available energies for the fulfillment of his total vocation. (p. 25).

The above picture as observed by Madu is very relevant in the understanding of the mechanics or techniques in Igbo traditional healing and deliverance practices. Health for the Igbo means a harmonious existence between the different spheres of the cosmic order in which man is a member. For man to say that he is healthy or alive therefore means that man should tune himself with the other forces of the cosmic order. Disease in Igbo worldview is mystical in nature, and on this backdrop disease treatment would warrant some mystical treatments of ailments. Under Igbo trado-medical architecture, Life (Ndu) and health (Aru ike) are therefore synonymous, and they include the harmony of both the spiritual and physical aspects of man in a harmonious relationship with the other spheres of the cosmic order. Health is for the Igbo the normalization of forces both seen and unseen in accordance with the natural laws (Madu, 2004). This is what traditional healing and deliverance ministries have come to achieve in the contemporary Igbo society and this is the duty of the traditionalists whom the Igbo refer to as the dibia.

Igbo society, particularly in the study area, resort to traditional deliverance ministries instead of embarking on Euro-Christian type of deliverance ministries. Many problems are usually defined in relation to the prevailing belief system which etiologies are not recognized by Euro-Christian practice. Such problem or illnesses have specific causative, diagnostic, preventive and healing and deliverance practices which cannot be treated ordinarily by Christian practitioners due to cultural background. Under Igbo traditional deliverance, everything concerning curing or healing deliverance, liberating or setting people free from spiritual problem revolves around the dibia. The following agents of

deliverance exist; dealing with mermaid or mammy spirit is Ezenwanyi. (They are called Ndi Olummiri); others are Ndi na-agwo ndi ara, (those in charge of solving or healing psychiatric problem of madness), ndi ichu Ajo mmuo (those in charge of change of placating the evil spirit (demon possession).and so on; Ndi na akpu-alu are responsible for cleansing abominations (for connecting with spiritual cleansing like committing Ibene, ritual cleansing of an adulterous woman in order to save the life of woman caught in committing the acts). Ikpu nkpu (ritual cleansing connecting with atonement or covering of one's sin) (Nkpuchi Mmechie), Inu iyi ritual (swearing of oath). In the contemporary Igbo society generally the agents of deliverance ministries are the dibia and the ezemmuo (traditional priest of such community). Some people do not believe in the existence and practice of traditional deliverance ministry due to misconception of the phenomenon. Howbeit Okeke, (2019) admits the existence of traditional deliverance ministries which deal with family deliverance, (Oluezinaulo), personal and community deliverance or national deliverance which involves ritual activities as regards spiritual cleansing/spiritual deliverance among the Igbo. This ritual has two dimensions: the trado-medicalists of Igbo specialization and Christian specialists.

Sacrifice Theory and its Application in Traditional Deliverance

Sacrifice is the heartbeat of every religious ritual. Many scholars of religion have seen sacrifice theories as dominant paradigm by which they analyze and evaluate religious rituals in all the religious activities including traditional deliverance ministries. It is therefore pertinent to note that sacrifice itself is part and parcel of the deliverance ministry both in traditional and Christian perspective. Tylor (1871) propounds that sacrifice was originally a gift to the deities to secure favours or minimize their hostility. He maintained that the primary aim was for offering sacrificial gifts developed into image in image in which the sacrifice no longer expressed any hope for the return and from homage into abnegation enunciation in which the sacrificer must offer himself. By this theory, it is held that the sacrifice was originally presented to the deity whom the offerer took for granted would be received with pleasure and even gratitude. During deliverance practices, it will be pertinent to note that greater number of sacrifices performed by the religious priest (Onyenchuaja/Ezemmuo) was done in a clear conscience for good. Against this backdrop, deliverance ministry which involves warding off spiritual problems has to do with spiritual cleansing or spiritual deliverance as regards dealing with molestation of deities or evil spirit is the key-point. In this case sacrifice has to be performed and through this ritual practice and according to the culture of the area, good relations would thus be established with the deity and favour would be secured. Today, there seem to be a merger of some biblical principle with their traditional value and custom (Gbenda, 2001).

Culture Area Approach

Culture area is contagious ethnographic area inhabited by people who share cultural traits to an extent that distinguish them significantly from other societies. Culture Area, culture-province, or ethno- geographic area remains one of the most widely used frame works for the description and analysis of cultures. It is alternatively referred to as cultural region or cultural sphere. Culture area reflects the theoretical position that each culture, on whatever levels it may be analyzed, must be examined with regard to its own history. It is essentially characterized by substantially uniform environment and culture. By this work, culture area refers to the ethnic group which have their own healing and deliverance system, their language, mode of dressing and so on. The Igbo inhabit east of the Niger River. Employing this approach opens up a new vista of reflections on deliverance and healing activities through the agency of *olu ezi na ulo* (family deliverance ministry). The researcher hopes to open that vantage point to convince readers of positive results of prayers and deliverance as a means of alleviation and religion – social aspect of survival amongst the Christians in the Igbo Community.

Levels of Traditional Deliverance

There are three levels of traditional deliverance which may be applied according to the nature of the problems in the society. These three levels include: Personal deliverance, Family deliverance (*Oluezinaulo*), Community (communal) deliverance. Apart from these levels of deliverance being practiced among the Igbo, below are the typologies of deliverance done traditionally by the agents of traditional deliverance according to the people's problem.

- a. Ndi *olu mmiri* (The practitioners specializing in dealing with mermaid spirit). This can be done by *Ezenwanyi* or *Ezenwoke* practitioners.
- b. *Ilo mmuo* (those practitioners specialized in dealing with placating or appeasing the evil spirit. (These can be done by either *Ezemmuo* (Traditional priest) or *Diba*)
- c. *Nkpu ndi Nwuru anwu* (the practitioners are specially involved in placating against the spirit of the dead.
- d. *Ikpu alu*. (The practitioner is in charge of cleansing of abomination/atonement of various sins up to communal level)
- e. *Ichu ajo mmuo* (the practitioners specialize in placating or warding off evil spirit (demons). This can be done by exorcist priest or *Dibia*.
- f. *Ikpocha ife*. (The practitioner generally involves in spirit casting)

- g. Ibo nsi, Ibibi nsi, imebi ekwuru ekwu ememe. (The practitioner specially engages in destruction of poison or excavation of poison buried on the ground)
- h. Ichu aja, imebi aja. (The practitioners generally specialize performing of sacrifice or destruction of sacrifice, ancestor covenant breaking, family spiritual cleansing or deliverance.
- i. Olu oria Umuaka (The specialist engages himself in curing and deliverance of children).

Other types of traditional deliverance may include, faulty foundation problem/ancestral curse (Ihe Ndi nna metaru, igwo, ajo ogwu (problem from occultic practices, practice of idolatry involving worship of Ngenoka, Ngene Onitsha and other local deities). Others include Nkpu ndi akanogholi (placating the spirit of useless people) ikapu ntutu (casting off pin), adultery cleansing, ancestral attack and so on. Each of the above-mentioned problems can warrant traditional deliverance.

Factors Responsible for Traditional Deliverance Ministries

In Igbo cosmology, there are problems or factors responsible for the traditional cleansing/deliverance ministries. Just as there are different types of tradimedicalists among the Igbo traditional society yet, there are areas of specializations of these tradimedicalists (dibia); just as we have different problems, both physical, social, spiritual emotional and psychological problems, there are different deliverance ministries. The factors that may lead to traditional deliverance may also include the misconducts of ancestors, wicked works of the enemies, wicked human being like occult men and women, sorcerers and magician activities and evil spirits possession. The effect of these evil spirits and wicked human beings are believed to be evident in poverty, inability to get husband or wife, childlessness, unfruitful business efforts, sickness, mysterious omen. Others include bewitchment, Ikechi mmadu syndrome, problem of witchcraft and sorcery in the society, activities of evil faulty foundations and the adulterous practices among men and women in the society. The fear and havoc being created through mystical forces, Ogbanje, Ndiotu, witches or aquatic spirit (mammy water spirit) can be seen as factor and these are the problems which need to be solved through traditional deliverance.

The Need for Traditional Deliverance in Igbo Land

M. Okoye (personal communication, January 25, 2023) posits that traditional deliverance ministries centred on the wholesome liberation of family, community or personal problems from physical, spiritual, psychological or emotional bondage as a result of ancestral curses, sin of the forefathers, sickness, untimely death, failures in the life pursuit and ignorance.

Though some Igbo families are besieged with problems from physical, spiritual, psychological or emotional bondage, yet some are having the problem of Ikechi mmadu syndrome, bewitchment and nsi phenomenon. While some have decided to follow their own pathways in Christian concept, others are inclined to traditional concept. There are also some families that are highly infested with idolatrous background which people normally called “faulty foundation” This faulty foundation is often infested with some ritual practices and occultism. Other factors according to Anunibe (2013), is their ancestors initiated and bonded them with the deities of the family. For instance, in some part of Igbo land, it is called- “Arusi Ezinulo” even their children yet unborn are inclusive. This is called lineal bondage. With the data collected across the constituted population of Nise community, members of such family undergo untold hardship, arduousness and anguish. In some cases, their daughters cannot marry and if they do eventually, they may not be able to bear children. These problems became a serious factors caused by the sins of the forefathers and are inherited by their children. This is what Olukoya called “evil powers of your father’s house”. Olukoya (2018) says; the power of your father’s house can make you suffer from the cradle to the grave, if you do not address them”. Those that practiced traditional deliverance follow that pathway due to their strong faith in the phenomenon and it works for them. Again, cross section of the respondents interviewed said that there are other ailments which traditional deliverance ministry can solve but in the contemporary society Christian type of deliverance could not solve them due to cultural undertone. Howbeit, there are Christian pastors who combine the traditional practices with the Christian model to achieve their objective. T.O Okeke (Personal Communication January 29, 2023) observed the move by some pastors to outwit their contemporaries which resulted in the use of some mystic elements in their practices which have left people with critical mindset in deep thought. In other words, it has been observed that some are using mystic materials (occultic powers) for manipulation during the ritual practices in the deliverance ministries.

Agents of Healing and Deliverance in Igbo Traditional Society

One may ask who the agents of traditional deliverance ministries are. The agents of traditional deliverance are those in charge of curing, delivering, librating and setting people free from their problem. Their main concern rested on maintenance of health equilibrium. The three human agents of healing and deliverance ministries in Igbo traditional society are the priests (Onyenchuaja/Ezemmuo) the diviners (Ndi Dibia Afa) and the medicine men (Dibia). Metuh (1985) opines that “priest, diviners and medicine men occupy different position and play different role in Igbo societies. They represent three different professions which however, could be combined by one person (p.153). Albeit. There are other agents

of healing and deliverance ministries in Igbo society apart from the one mentioned above. However, Parinder (1949) tries to make a distinction by referring to a priest as “isi – mmuo” (head of spirit cult), a diviner as “Onye n’agba afa” (person who cast afa divination) and medicine man as dibia (healer or tradimedicalist). In Nise community, traditional community is known as Ezemmuo. This specialist is in charge of performing sacrifice and worship. He is a person who holds a culturally recognized status and role in society as the official minister of a particular spirit, (mmuo) which has a shrine and on organized cult (Metuh, 1985).

1. Traditional Priest as Agent of Healing and Deliverance

Traditional priest can be categorized into four groups.

- a. According to Metuh (1985), they include Okpara – family heads who are priests of their ancestral shrine (Okwuani)
- b. The isi – mmuo – head of spirit cult who take charge of the village spirit shrines.
- c. The Ezeala – chief priest of the central shrines of ala of each village group.
- d. The Eze Nri, the priest king of Nri town, who is as it were the high priest of the cult of ala for a large part of the Igbo lands. According to many respondents when it is time of deliverance these categories of priests are consulted for traditional deliverance practices. At Nise the traditional priest can be referred to as Ezemmuo. These go a long way to demonstrate that the Igbo priestly institution is closely connected with the social structure. It is the duty of the traditional priest to minister to the people and approach the spirit force (Alusi) for some human problems ranging from child bearing, health, and property protection against mystical forces. When it is time to sacrifice to gods/God, these traditional priests may be consulted for sacrificial rites. They work hand in glove with dibia Afa (diviner) and dibia Aja (Spiritualist). According to Ezekoli (2010) it belongs also to the priest to administer the properties of the deities which include among other things the shrine house, the altar, and the cult object like images of the god. The traditional priest religiously is highly needed when it comes to spiritual deliverance especially in purification, cleansing and sacrificial rites.

2. The Diviner: (Dibia Afa)

In Igbo traditional setup, a diviner is a class of Dibia that specializes in divination. They are called Dibia Afa. The diviner in his area of specialty is Dibia, diagnostician and a healer as well. Though a diviner is not a traditional priest, but he can work together with a traditional priest. In other words, the traditional priesthood cannot function without a diviner. The Igbo traditional society will hardly survive without diviner. Divination is as much a skill as an

exercise of spiritual power by the individual diviner, who is a self-employed practitioner. Parinder (1949) pointed out that: “the diviner seats to interpret the mysteries of life to convey the message of the gods, give guidance in daily affairs and settles disputes, to uncover the past and look into the future” (p.152). They work hand in hand with the medicine men (tradimedicalist) medicine man (dibia ogwu) whom people regard as herbalist heals by medicine (ogwu) didia afa heals by divination. However, Metuh (1985) succinctly says:

The diviner sees the spiritual and materials factors involved in a given situation. The medicine man applies the remedies if they are within the scope of his medicine practice. In other words, the diviner is a diagnostician, while the medicine man is the physician, psychotherapist, spirit healer (p.162).

Based on the above backgrounds the mechanism and techniques adopted by the tradimidicalist (medicine men) are holistic for healing and deliverance ministries. This is because they are all involved in one way or the other preparing and administering medicine of all types. They provide cure for all sorts of bodily, spiritually, or mentally ailments. They prepare protective charms against witches, sorcerers, occultist men/women and evil forces.

3. The Spiritualist (Dibia Aja)

The spiritualist (Dibia Aja) has to do with the activities of deliverance practices and they can work currently with Onyenchuaja or Ezemmuo (traditional priest). In traditional Igbo, Igbokwe (2020) maintained that:

The ethic medical systems in Igbo culture were mainly oral, preserved and handed down from generation to generation as part of the oral history and culture of the people. In traditional medicine, they have the herbalist (Dibia Nkpurogwu na nkpa akwukwo,) the diviner (dibia afa) and the spiritualist (Dibia aja) as the major practitioners (p.136)

4. Tradimedicalist (Dibia Ogwu)

This is the one the Igbo people call dibia ogwu. As a physician the duty of the tradimadicalist of this nature is to prepare and administer medicine (Drugs) of all types. He knows quite well the ways of the spiritual force operates, and he can also offer medicine that can attract good wishes, and destroy the evil plans of sorcerers and evil forces.

Types of Igbo Tradomedical Healing / Deliverance Practices

The types of Igbo Tradomedical healing / Deliverance practices depend on Divination, Spiritualism and herbalism. The tradimedicalist make use of herbs and roots for treatments

of disease and misfortunes among the Igbo. It is not debatable that the introduction of Western medicine into the third world in the mid. 20th century with the Laudable goal of improving the health, and nutritional status of various populations was welcome by many. These programmed were however, instituted without much consideration for existing practices and Beliefs system of the local people for whom they were meant. The fact, however, that the traditional healers did not simply disappear with the advent of western medicine and their practitioners, but are rather gaining more prominence even among the urban populace is a glowing testimony to the inadequacies of modern medicine in these parts of the world. In spite of the rapid growth in the development and spread of modern medicine, traditional knowledge on the use of plants (herbs and roots) continues to be most popular alternatives to health problems in Nigeria especially on healing and deliverance purposes. Therefore, considering the importance of traditional medicine and the tradimedicalists among the Nise people, it then results that this Western medicine however can complement where the traditional medicine is lacking. There are areas which may require the attention of the spiritualist (Dibi Aja) and herbalist especially in the area of deliverance ministries.

Relevance of Tradimedicalist and Traditional Medicine in Nise

Apart from rainmakers, other categories of tradimeicalist (Ndi dibia) helped in one way or the other in physical healing and deliverance purpose. The relevance of these agents of deliverance ministry cannot be underrated because they help to restore health equilibrium in the society. Some of them are deeply involved in saving lives. They are highly endowed by supernatural being of those medical practices or medical mechanism which serves as a cultural heritage and remains one of the bedrocks of prevailing health system despite the incursion of orthodox medicine and their medical personnel's and the effect of globalization, western acculturation in Igbo society. At Nise, albeit, there are certain problems which the traditional deliverance personnel (Dibia) can easily solve which the western doctors cannot solve. There are other spiritual problems which they are gifted to solve but cannot be easily solved by other deliverance ministry.

Methods adopted in Traditional Deliverance Ministries

In Igbo traditional society, spirit base cases can be handled by Tradomedicalists (Dibia) whom we see as specialists in the spiritual realm. One can be delivered through the following methods.

Spiritual Protection: The diviner will diagnose the cause of the sickness. After diagnosing the cause of the sickness, if the cause of the sickness is perceived to be an attack from evil

spirit, the person may be referred to see the Dibia specialist who will provide charm, amulets and may also design body marks, and a spiritual cleansing to drive the evil spirit away may be recommended. There are those who up till today are applying this method even among Christians, because of its relevance.

Exorcism: The Tradomedicalists who are highly inclined in driving or casting out evil spirit can easily apply this method once discovered that it is something that is connected with malevolent spirits. So this is a practice of expelling or casting demon or evil spirits from places of abode. Exorcism can be performed by a religious leader (Ezemuo) as well, if the dibia can not achieved this properly Many Traditional communities believe that illness, especially mental illness is mostly caused by evil spirits. Among the Sabbath missions who have idea of applying traditional deliverance in their deliverance ministrations, exorcism may be accompanied by dancing to the beating of local instruments and singing. Sometimes, life animals like bird or fowls may be use to do certain rituals with some incantations. Ezekwesili and Okaka (2019) stated that “This practice is also performed for those who are mentally challenged. In their view, “until the possessed person is delivered from the power of that evil spirit, the person will not have his or her freedom” (p. 200). The practice of exorcism is considered necessary especially when one talks about deliverance in traditional Perspective.

Spiritual cleansing method: In traditional Deliverance ministration by dibia, spiritual cleansing may be adopted. Spiritual cleansing may be required of the person to bathe at specific time for a prescribed number of days just as prescribed during the healing of Neaman in the Bible. This practice may also involve water and animal blood poured from head to toe and is being practiced in some part of Igbo land.

Sacrificial Method: This kind of method involves sacrificing to gods or spirits as they requested through their traditional priest (Ezemuo). Among the Nise people, goats, fowls ram or sheep may be offered to the gods/evil spirits. Those animals may be slaughtered or buried alive and sacrifice to them in a bid to save and deliver the soul of someone at the point of death. The Ezemuo (traditional Priest) sometimes performed rituals in order to consecrate some herbs used for sacrificial rituals. This helps in medicine preparation by the dibia involved.

Appeasing the deities (Alusi): There are diseases which can be caused by gods, ancestors or spirit forces. Through the help of a diviner (Dibia Afa), he or the Traditional priest (Ezemuo) can appease the ancestors, spirits or the gods by sacrificing some items like fowl, goat, sheep, pigeon and so on.

Libation: Libation involves pouring of local wine or gins on the ground or any other food items followed by chanting or reciting of words. In the contemporary times, it could be whisky, schnapps or gin. At Nise, some traditionalists used palm wine and other things to invoke the presence of the Supernatural Being, mother earth and ancestor after invocation. In the study area, some traditionalists when performing certain rituals in deliverance ministrations use palm wine, gins and other things to invoke the presence of spirits and ancestors and it is a way of welcoming and communing with them. It is after the invocation during the worship that the request is made to the invoke spirit-deities or ancestors to intercede on their behalf for mercy and forgiveness and eventual healing and deliverance. G. Ukoeze (Personal communication, March 6, 2023) in an interview stated that after the libation rituals, the deliverance practitioners will thank the ancestors or the invoked spirits. During the healing and deliverance session, the practitioner will pour the drink or liquid on the ground as he/she recites prayers followed by responses to each prayer point by the person(s) involved. Among the ritual practices adopted for healing and deliverance ministration, traditional prayer serves as bedrock of traditional deliverance because without it, the other aspect of rituals embedded in the ritual ceremony may be useless. Ezenweke (2009) discovered that it is generally observed that when Africans pray, they invoke the Supreme Being (Gods), spirits, and sky god and ‘agbala’ divinities. Each is believed to be powerful and capable of protecting man and this traditional prayer is a very powerful ingredient in any ritual ceremony. Prayer in Igbo societies especially in Igbo traditional society usually take various forms and may differ from place to place but certain patterns may seem general in most cases.

The Proliferation of Healing Homes/Deliverance Ministries in Contemporary Igbo Society

In the contemporary times the regard some Igbo attach to the traditional healing and prayer houses is fast developing into deliverance ministries. The healing homes/deliverance ministries are the off match of Pentecostal evangelism ministries. This seems to be gaining more ground. That is the reason why you see many deliverance ministries springing up here and there. It is now within the scope of a pastor, man of God, prophet, seers, Evangelist, brother and the so-called men of God to perform or carry out prayers for deliverance ministration for various kinds of ailments in the prayer houses. During deliverance ministrations intensive fasting (dry fasting) may be applied where applicable. All-night vigil and fire brand prayers and anointing of olive oil, spiritual bathing (exorcism), lighting and burning of various kinds of candle and incense, hitting life pigeons on victim until the pigeons are dead; sacrifices of all kinds and so on may be applied. In the contemporary Igbo society, individuals believed to be possessed by the Agwu deity now practice their vocation

of healing and deliverance under the garbs of Christianity as pastors, men of God, women of God, seers and Evangelist. (Ajakor, 2016). This contributes to the increase number of deliverance ministries (prayer houses) as well as the increasing patronage by the individual who seek for deliverance from ailment attributed to poison like “okpa ure” (Bureli ulcer).

The Pentecostal movement also contributed to this increase of deliverance ministries. Pentecostal movement refers to a charismatic phenomenon which puts its emphasis on the visible gifts of the Holy spirit, especially, the gift of tongues and faith healing. It emphasizes on religious experience rather than orthodoxy or doctrine .D. Ezeobi (personal communication, February 1, 2023) observed clearly and pointed out that the issue of Pentecostalism, prayer houses/homes within the African/Igbo society has generated a lot of criticisms from the orthodox or mainline churches, no wonder the main line churches refer to them as mushroom churches because of the way and manner they spring up on daily basis and all their practices were almost borrowed from African/Igbo religious/cultural practices. From all indications it may not be wrong to say that all those religious and cultural practices among the Igbo people in the traditional concept have now turn to be visibly applied in the practice of tradomedical system and deliverance ministries in contemporary Igbo church. This is widely practiced in Nise Community.

Despite the misconception, misunderstanding and the condemnation that is currently going on against tradomedical architecture cum deliverance ministries, some African (Igbo) scholars are of the view that the phenomenon should be allowed to exist and serve the functions that Africans and Igbo in particular are yearning for. Hence the uses of word like inculturation, hybridization, continuity and discontinuity to justify the modus operandi of some of the deliverance ministries, since they practice some sort of mixture between the traditional religion and Christianity. This is true saying, because mixtures like believing in Jesus Christ (not minding that he has performed the greater sacrifice and performing traditional sacrifice as a remedy to restore harmony when confronted with some life crises situation. In sum, Igbo people believe in the efficiency of some of the prayer houses (deliverance ministries) in treating ailments of all kinds like nsi and deliverance from evil spirit. The philosophy behind this belief lies in the use of prayer to placate and possibly restore the needed harmony between the spiritual forces behind the manipulations of nsi phenomenon and other ailments hence, we can talk of spiritual diagnosis treatment of various ailment and which some of the Christian sect borrowed. Evangelist Mary Egwuonwu is my parishioner who is born as tradimedicalist. She work as a herbalist, seer/prophet and at the same time serving as a deliverance lay woman. She is currently serving as a nurse in Awka Police headquarters clinic.

The Place of Prayer in Traditional Deliverance Ministries in Nise

Traditional deliverance is one of the religious ritual practices among the Igbo people. In that traditional ritual practices, traditional prayer forms the bedrock of those rituals which helps to actualize what one aims when conducting the traditional deliverance practices. Without this traditional prayer, the other aspect of rituals embedded in the ritual ceremony may be used useless. It is generally observed that when African pray, they invoke the supreme being (God) spirit, and sky god and 'agbala' divinities. Each is believed to be powerful and capable of protecting man prayer in Igbo society especially in Igbo traditional society usually take various form. This may differ from place to place but certain pattern may seem general in most case (Okeke, 2019). Just like Igbo Mbiti (1969) encoded that:

African traditional prayers generally include praise thanksgiving, a declaration of state of affairs in which the prayers are offered and requested. Such prayers always have concrete intention and people do not beat about the bush when saying their prayers. They request such things as good health, healing protecting from danger, safety in travelling or some other undertaking security, prosperity preservation of life, peace and various benefits for individuals, for community at large, prayer may be able for rain, peace, cessation of epidemic and dangers to the nation, success in war or raids, the acceptance of scarifies and offering, fertility for people, animals and crops (pp.55-56).

In the contemporary Igbo society, one can observed that the type of prayer being offered in most of the deliverance ministries took their roots from Igbo traditional prayer and it from there that the prayer for healing and deliverance started developing. Today in Igbo society both traditional and the so-called Pentecostal churches are using prayer, magic, medicine and charm interchangeable in their healing and deliverance ministration. Madu (1997) opines that:

Prayer and magic are two basic techniques for dealing with the supernatural. Although Durkheim has said that magic results when religion is employed for anti-social means, it seems that this is not so since not all magic acts are anti-social. Magic in our view is the application of the inherent power in man to manipulate the supernatural forces, an indication that these forces are not immutable so to say magic therefore can be said to be within the realm of religion since their common denominator is the relations of man with the supernatural. Magic is the manipulation of spirit force by man while religion is manipulation of human affairs by the spiritual force. (p. 27).

Madu went further to explain that in the religious state of mind, man acknowledge the superiority of the supernatural powers; upon his actions, his well-being depends, thus his

action is that of submission and reverence, basement, petition, prayers sacrifice and offering. But in application of magic, magician believed that under certain condition he can control (the supernatural power. Therefore, he works with a kind of self-assurance and arrogance/pride. Against this background one can now agree that the Igbo man, especially the dibia before the advent of Christianity applied magic and prayer in their ministries/area of their specialist and this was copied from them by the contemporary practitioners in some of the traditional medical system and deliverance ministries.

Traditional Application of Trado Medical healing and Deliverance Before the advent of Christianity

Some wanted to know the application of the traditional medicine in healing and deliverance before the advent of Christianity. They questioned the relationship between the indigenous medicaments, its practices and application. Principally they based on their assumption that traditional healers rely almost exclusively on magic, witchcraft and necromancy. To the researcher, this is not always true. As the world health organization (1978) defines traditional medicine as the sum total of knowledge, skill and practices based on the theories, belief and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in prevention, diagnosis or treatment of physical and mental illness (Muanya, 2009). For Mume (1973) it is an art, science, philosophy and practice following the definite natural, biological, chemical, mental and spiritual laws". Research shows that not all the dibia (tradomedicalist use magic, charm, witchcraft activities and necromancy in the healing and deliverance practices, majority of traditional doctors who originated their callings from supernatural being work according to the direction of the patron spirit of healing (Agwu Spirit) This Agwu spirit according to the Igbo worldview believed that this spirit originated and emanated from the supreme being. The same spirit of healing is incharge of healing in every continent of the universe. Though Atando cited in Okonkwo (2012) opined that traditional medicine first began when man started to create and manipulate symbols as well as develop system of belief (p.70). The causes of disease and misfortune before the advent of Christianity in Igboland range from spasmodic contractions of muscles, germs, bad blood, malaria fever, abnormal growth in the throat swallon breast, Appollo (Eye Disease) snake bite, dog bite, swollen stomach (Afo otuto), convulsion. Other socio-cultural religious factor like magical powers, evil spirit, poison and so on. However, many research have been conducted on various aspects of traditional medicine by scholars and there is revelation that certain plants which serve as regular diet, are used in preparing medicine. Okonkwo (2012) emphatically stated thus:

It is therefore not only the organic properties of the plant that are beneficial in the healing process, but also the magical or spiritual forces embedded by nature in all living things and the contributions of ancestral spirit and God (p.71).

He maintained that proper hygiene and good feeding are vital for good and sound health. He succinctly pointed out that Igbo traditional doctors (dibia) are believed to be able to protect people's lives from accidents, witches and other supernatural powers or influences – all in the name of spiritual deliverance.

Conclusion

Traditional deliverance Ministries serves as matrix for modern deliverance ministries which are flourishing in different parts of Igbo land; this traditional deliverance ministry therefore is incorporated in Igbo tradomedical architecture. The ethnic indigenous Igbo are super abundantly blessed in all ramifications. In the area of traditional deliverance system, their versatility is so much beyond description that the potency guaranteed if religiously followed to the letter as orally handed down by the progenitors. The belief in a supernatural being by every nation is incontrovertible. The case of the Igbo and Nise community cannot be different. The same supernatural-being that gifted the people of the world with wisdom, knowledge and understanding also made roots herbs and leaves available for healing and deliverance purposes. The restless Igbo, endowed with the gift of traditional medicine and deliverance practices not content to stand still, continued their exploration and research into the field of faith healing. The supernatural being that created the entire planet earth knows what is good for his children in different parts of the world. He therefore gives the same thing to serve the purpose to different peoples of the world according to what is obtainable in their various geographical locations. Every nation has their own culture and tradition and our culture which determines our ways of life cannot be inferior to any other group culture because each one is indigenous and therefore tailored to suit the purpose of each group. This work extensively discussed on traditional deliverance ministries in contemporary Igbo society and its relevance, the role of dibia in the healing and deliverance system among other things. It dealt extensively on those mechanisms/techniques use by the Igbo for effective deliverance ministration in order to save life. Deliverance as we all know is an incisive demystification of satanic kingdom and may also applied to rescuing from physical sickness and diseases. (Anuniba 2013). These traditional ministries are characterized by understanding spiritual authority and applying this spiritual authority along with spiritual weapon to force the evil spirits to leave the person(s) family or community being oppressed, possessed or obsessed. Finally, Idowu (1973) strongly argues that, the African traditional healers and people believe essentially in improving their healing and people believe

essentially their unhealthy or pathological conditions and would go to any length to maintain a good healthy body. He maintains that. Africans are not only looking at medicine to cure disease alone but also for magical purposes. This is by obtaining material objects prepared to ward off any negative mystical powers or get favor from gods and ancestors and to neutralize any poisonous substance meant to harm someone (pp.241-242.) Analyzing critically Idowu's explanation, it means that the Igbo in their tradomedical architecture embrace both the treatment of physical healing/deliverance and spiritual aspect of healing/deliverance.

While discussing on the topic of this paper, one should note that Igbo tradomedical architecture serves as cradle to traditional deliverance ministries and this invariably serves as a matrix for deliverance ministries in contemporary Igbo society. As the topic suggest, it is all about those total traditional deliverance mechanism/techniques, knowledge or practices adopted by the Igbo in spiritual or social disease in order to achieve holistic healing and deliverance. The content/practices of traditional deliverance ministries in contemporary Igbo society should not be misconstrued and relegated to the background at all, because of its relevance and its efficiency in the area of health maintenance among the Igbo people and Nise community in particular.

Because of the importance and the role of indigenous medicine has played and continue to play in Igbo land and beyond especially as it concerns deliverance ministries (Nnaputa Ije Ozi Ga) some countries and institutions of higher learning have put research into plant medicine and training of traditional medical/deliverance practitioners and has ensured qualitative traditional herbal medicine/deliverance practices which help in health care delivery. In the light of the above the traditional deliverance ministries are intentioned with cultural and religious beliefs and are a holistic in nature. The Igbo ritual practices in healing and deliverance should not be relegated to the background because of the modern trend in the contemporary Igbo society. This therefore should serve as a blue print for Igbo tradocultural religious renaissance. This should be fully appreciated and utilized fully in Nise community and in contemporary Igbo society.

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