

PHILOSOPHICAL EXPOSITIONS OF IGWEBUIKE IDEOLOGY IN THE IGBO POLITICAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

This is a historical study that aims to explore the ethics supporting Igbo adoption of rule by the people. Rule by the people continue to be an acceptable, functional and non-abortive system where the people freely decide who controls the state affair. As a household political system, representatives are elected by the people, accountable to the people and can also be removed by the same people. This deepens the dignity of the people because the sovereign derives its legitimacy from the people whose rights are believed to be inalienable. As a system, rule by the people abrogates nepotism and tyranny and at the same time supports equality, rule of law, justice, and cooperation. As a feasible system of governance, several traditional groups of the world including the Igbo tribe of Eastern Nigeria acknowledge the value of this system. The Igbo call this system of government 'Igwebuike' (though a colloquial), translated as the sovereignty accorded by the people. Though the system ethically supports equality, the study analysis 'Igwebuike' from the Igbo political perspectives. The findings reveal that the Igbo recognition of rule by the people demonstrates that development is achievable through collaborative efforts.

Key words: Igbo, Identity, Politics, People, Sovereignty,

Introduction

From antiquity till present, the philosophical disposition that no particular aspect of reality is by itself self-sufficient remains practicable in the society. Hence, man is integrated into a comprehensive network of mutual dependencies, a part of a whole that lives in the community. Man is pronounced a human being through other people meaning that, every human being needs other people in order to be human. This feeling of existing together tames egoism to an extent while inclining that cooperative efforts of beings sustain and activate the whole of the group. It is

on this purported ideology that human society practically and politically gets its shine of the day. Njoku takes this position in his definition of the society as: -

An essential association which people enter into for their mutual complementation. And when such an association organizes itself for government and law, with the power of coercion, embracing a definite geographical territory of jurisdiction, standing as a juristic personality, one claims that it essentially qualifies to be called a 'perfect society' because it aims at fulfilling all aspects of the fundamental social functions in terms of the self-defense of the community, protecting the legal order, and the promotion of general welfare of its citizens.¹

Hence, human society is activated through the totality of different human efforts and ideologies. Societies may differ in people's attitudes in analyzing realities but common to every society is the attainment of common and universal good. Contract theorists who opine that the society came into action when individuals in order to escape the state of nature, an insecure state of unavoidable war, submitted all their inalienable rights to the whole (state) in order to facilitate common good understand the essence of living in a community despite the fact that, social contract bestows much power to the state. According to Tuck: - "natural right and the contract were used primarily to explain, and to justify, the increasingly extensive authority claimed by the emergent modern state over its citizens."² Though rule by the people didn't start originally from Greece nor was it imported from Greece to other parts of the world as some scholars would claim. Scholars like Mohammed assert that: - "the origins of democracy lie in ancient Greek political thought. Greek philosophers classified governments according to the number of citizens involved in the process."³ Actually, Greek philosophers may have the glory to have been the first set of scholars to may have formally bring the discuss of rule by the people unto academic stage because they have documented principles of a system of government classified according to the number of citizens involved in the process but this does not grant them as the originators.

Rule by the people is a cherished value in politics. It is has been with the people even before revolutions, colonization and every other form of enlightenment. It is not a passive recipient because the needs of the community are wider than the individual despite the fact that man by nature is an egoistic being. This might be one of the purported reasons of rejecting the Greeks to be the first to introduce rule by the people. In the face of these facts, human reason discerns that coming together complements the lacks of persons and groups; cooperation hence in socio-political existence becomes a demand rooted in human nature. As a subject of discussion in the field of political science, rule by the people finds its connotation in modern day democracy which according to Aguzie, Awu, Umunakwe & Okereke has: -

...governance based on majority rule and sovereignty derived from the consent of the governed, periodic, free and fair elections, minority and human rights. It also include: equality before the law, due process and political pluralism as well as strong institutions. Institutions central to a democratic polity include: constitution, laws, values, rules of the game and practices, formal accountability mechanisms and sanctions. These institutions rather than personal authority, produce codes and limitations on individuals and societal conduct, with no exception to the legislation across persons.⁴

Democracy beacons humanity because of its central objective of sustaining political power with the people. Its justification lies with mutual fellowship in society whereby humans gain protection more than they would have had if individuals or families wanted to protect themselves without the cooperation of others. Ideal governance is theorized primarily to promote equality of the people

irrespective of the status; in such a government, nobody is left out rather, every citizen participates in the societal politics. By this, every individual in the society is a stakeholder in the affair of the society and have their dignities without any form of constrictions while those who violate the accepted norms and values are punished proportionately. It is on this backdrop that the Igbo tribe of eastern Nigeria anchors their socio-political theory of 'Igwebuike'.

Igwebuike (though a colloquial) is not a philosophy limited to the Igbo world alone, it is a universal philosophy that confirms the universal relevance of inter-subjectivity, unity, harmony, community, complementarities and solidarity. Being captured in the Igbo word, 'Igwe-bu-ike' etymologically is a derivation of three words: - 'Igwe' - the people, 'Bu' - are (verb) and 'Ike' translated as the power/sovereignty recognized by the people. It is the political recognition to execute, implement and interpret laws by the people. Ontologically, Igwebuike captures every individual reality as part and completion of the whole. It significantly bifurcates the principles of egocentrism which are based on these Igbo factors: the concept of destiny, relationships in the community and the interactive nature to the universe. Human values are ensured by their worldviews and this makes the theory of Igwebuike a way of life. Ngonebu confirms this closeness when he asserts that: - "Every human being is born into a society with a worldview and identity. It is this worldview and identity that differentiates the person from someone from another social context or worldview. This worldview is the way an individual conceives of the universe and of events and actions around him or her."⁵ People's worldview forms an integral part in identifying them which is inclusive, integrative, complementary and holistic. This confers Igwebuike ideology ethical attachments since it considers human interaction and serves as a model for vital elements in revealing effective governance. Igwebuike's nearest equivalence in English language is communality which informs its nature. The study adopts hermeneutics and historical methods so as to drive home the philosophy of Igwebuike. Basically, this study aims at exploring philosophically Igwebuike ideology in the socio-political Igbo system. It submits that the driving force behind Igwebuike ideology lies in identity. The study concludes by suggesting that a complete application of Igwebuike principles in matters of socio-politics praxis will bear the existential flag of humanity, peace and conflict resolution.

Igwebuike Ideology and Igbo Identity

Many philosophical arguments establish that Igwebuike ideology is linked to Igbo identity. But trying to understand the concept of identity proves abortive because most available literature link it to related concepts. In daily discussions, some complement identity with such concepts like property, attributes, feature with the feeling that all are the same. Recent philosophical survey shows that identity is profound than those related concepts because they dwell in the physical quantities of their subject matters. For instance, physical sciences such as medicine, biology, chemistry, agriculture and mathematics use features, attributes, characteristics, property and functions to qualify their subject matters. Students are taught about the property of chemicals, characteristics of living things, features of sandy soil, attributes or function of that but none of these teachings refer to identity. Philosophically, identity refers only to group of human beings which derives its recognition from personality. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (eleventh edition), identity is the "sameness in all that constitutes character or personality of an individual: individuality." Identity is qualitative; it consists of the collective interpretations of ethical and aesthetical interpretations. Hence, in examining people's identity, one thinks of their personalities and values that conditioned their living together. It is on these backdrops that most thoughts about Igbo identity are bereft of clear philosophical analogies.

Previous researchers such as Okere, Okafor, Osuagwu, Nwabueze, Echeruo and others on Igbo identity fail to reconcile the philosophical principles of ‘To Become’ with ‘To Be’. They suspend their philosophical arguments on cosmological and geographical evidence leaving trivial search on Igbo identity. For example, the word, “Igbo land is a collective word for the towns that speak Igbo language ...they generally occupy the Southern Eastern part of Nigeria.”⁶ By expansion, all occupants of south-eastern region of Nigeria are all Igbo. Probably, all persons speaking Igbo language are Igbo. This means that by the virtue of geographical realities, one can point who is an Igbo person. Possibly, these make some Igbo to totally deny themselves of their ontology. To Agbogu: - “... the Igbo like other social groups in Nigeria do not have clear memorial about their origin. Most of the time, they claim of aboriginality echoes freely in surviving traditions. There is however a faint trace of their origin from Israel.”⁷ Most posited knowledge about Igbo identity suffers philosophical clarity and consensus, emptying in cosmological and geographical pit. Knowledge derived from them alone cannot guarantee the full logic of Igbo identity because they might be affected by exigencies of civilization. For instance, there are people of non-Igbo extraction who speak and understand Igbo language. Or, there are people who live in the south-eastern region of Nigeria but are of non-Igbo extractions. By this, it is arguable to point at someone that he/she is an Igbo person without going beyond his mere physical attributes. To philosophically access the logic of Igbo identity requires going beyond cosmological and geographical facts. Okafor asserts: - “... our cosmological and metaphysical ideas determine the basic notions underlying our cultural, religious and social activities that shape our behaviors and guide our actions.”⁸ Probably, looking into Igbo values may offer a leverage in understanding their identity because, through an integration of intrinsic values, people’s worldview is defined. Igbo worldview sees progress in the unity of things. To the Igbo, when this unity is in motion, actions such as justice, love are produced but when it is not in motion, actions such as injustice, hatred are produced. Hence, unity becomes the fundamental and active principle that sustains the continuation of beings. Njoku reiterates the significance of unity in philosophy when he affirms that “... of all these attributes, unity captures the first principle as to how being can be more than one, yet the many beings are different from one another.”⁹ This offers that unity is valued in midst of diversity.

The Igbo people have intrinsic regard for ‘togetherness’ in matters of common good. The phrases; ‘A nyūkọọ mmamiri ọnụ, ọ gbọọ ụfufụ’ - urinating on a particular point, produces foam, ‘Ụmụnna bụ ike’ – the people are the power, ‘Gidigidi bụ ugwu eze’ – populace is the legitimacy of the king, Egbe bere Ugo bere ‘Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch’ become the watchword for Igbo socio-political existence. These values connote that, the Igbo feel that doing things collectively produces positive and good results. This sense of ‘togetherness’ among beings upon examination by some Igbo scholars submits that, in the feeling of ‘togetherness’ lays Igbo identity. Among Igbo scholars, prominent in the discussion of unity as the driving force, is Njoku who in his two different texts: ‘Ibu anyị Danda’ and ‘A na-atụta – Igbo Philosophy: An African Perspective on the Problem of Identity and Conflict Resolution offers a socio-political and ontological approach in understanding the philosophy of Igbo feeling of ‘togetherness’. Earlier, Njoku agrees that, there is a kind of unity existing in human nature when he says: - “... nature has burdened humans with many needs with slender resources to satisfy them. Survival, therefore, becomes possible only by people uniting their individual forces; hence, the existence of social fellowship.”¹⁰ The quest to attend human needs according to Njoku, initiates the idea of people coming together for the sole purpose of cooperation. With cooperation that brings about division of labour among humans in the society, they begin to enjoy life and gain protection more than

when they exist as an entity. Thus, the "... heave together and no weight is too heavy to carry"¹¹ becomes the slogan of the entire humanity. This is why Njoku feels that Igbo identity despite our different "chi", is based on the spirit of togetherness. He infers: - "... the watchword is *ibu anyi danda*, which captures a communal spirit expressed among Igbo translated as 'no load is heavy for the ants' or 'heave together and no weight is too heavy to carry.' Without a second thought, one simply grasps that socio-communal strength is at its best when people unite their forces."¹² All Igbo people are connected to one another through a universal interaction of forces. Mozia asserts: - "... the awareness of the ontological dimension of their oneness fills the members of the African/Igbo family-group with the spirit of cooperation and co-responsibility in the various areas of their life. This explains why they feel that they have the moral obligation to participate in the joys and sorrows of one another."¹³ Hence, the spirit of solidarity among the Igbo inspires the strong sense of hospitality and cooperation known as 'Igwebuike' theory.

Principles of Igwebuike ideology in the Igbo political system

In Igwebuike principles lay the beauty of pre-colonial Igbo political system. Ugwu and Ozoemena note that: - "... the traditional African society has ever been known for its communalism and humanism even though, these two concepts are universal to everybody."¹⁴ Most researchers on Igbo politics argue that pre-colonial Igbo political system is structurally republican. But only few take the pre-colonial system as an "organized anarchy"¹⁵ because of the way decisions are made. Central in Igbo political system is the feeling of no absolutism. According to Nwabueze, while referring to Igbo pre-colonial politics says: "... this creature of life lives in an egalitarian society and freely expresses his opinion in the public square without inhibitions imposed by religion and traditional hierarchies."¹⁶ Hence, no individual had hereditary right to rule. There is as well principle of equality and egalitarianism in the Igbo political system. Agbogu notes that: -

What has baffled most scholars of Igbo history, is the rather absence of a centralized political system with their attendant institutions. Most people have mistaken this notion to mean that the Igbo had no government...there was no one with sovereign powers over all Igbo as was the case with Yorubas or Binis. Igbo society was fragmented and consequently so was authority. The Igbo operated what some writers have described as democracies. Political power was nowhere concentrated in the hands of groups or individuals within a settlement or a village.¹⁷

In Igbo political system, there is mass participation in the process of government as well as system of checks and balances. The political system is segmented and fragmented in size. The village/village group is the largest unit of the political system. There is no centralization of powers. Many political institutions share in the political authority of the system. No one person is recognized as a ruler of the political system. Even women play significant roles in the political process. There are no specific functions for the political institutions as a political institution can perform a different political function at different times. For example, the age grade can enforce laws, make laws and adjudicate laws at different occasions. Women can equally make rules, enforce their rules, and adjudicate cases. In Igbo political system, decisions are reached by consensus, no systematic mode of taxation, different institutions play different important roles in the administration and powers are shared by them. Igbo political system consists of the following structures and divisions: -

(i) **The extended family**

This is the lowest political division of the Igbo political system. The extended family is led by the oldest man (Okenye) in the family who is regarded as the embodiment of the family. He holds the 'ọfọ' (traditional staff of office/political authority) of the family and represents the family in Ụmụnna (kindred and village) meetings. He ensures that the decisions of the kindred and the village are implemented in the family. The conduct of affairs in the extended family is guided by the principles of democracy. Decisions are made through democratic processes and then pronounced by the family head.

(ii) **The kindred (Ụmụnna)**

An Igbo kindred consists of a group of related extended families. The size of kindred varies from place to place, but generally, a kindred numbers in tens of families. The kindred is headed by the eldest male who holds the 'ọfọ' of the kindred. The authority of the kindred is based on the 'ọfọ' which he holds for the kindred. Decisions are taken through democratic processes in kindred meetings. The kindred head ensures peace and order within the kindred.

(iii) **The village/village group (obodo)**

The village or village group is the largest and strongest political unit of the Igbo political system. In some places, the village is the largest political unit, while in other places, the largest unit is the village group. But the common name for the largest political unit is town – 'obodo' or 'ogbe' (obodo is an autonomous and sovereign political unit. It varies widely in size, but in any case, it is a very small political unit). The village is composed of a number of kindred whose members feel they belong to a distinct group. It is based on common kinship and common economic ties. The oldest man from the senior kindred base on descent from the founder holds the 'ọfọ' of the village. The meeting of the village is held in the compound of the 'ọfọ' holder who is generally called the 'ọkpara'. The obodo performs all the functions of a state; it makes laws for public security and welfare, executes the laws and adjudicates the laws. It equally defends the citizens from foreign attacks and wage wars.

Pre-colonial Igbo political institutions

The pre-colonial Igbo communities are known as extreme democratic, yet they have no centralized government. They subscribe to the principle of direct participation in government. Social and political structures revolve around the system of cross-cutting ties such as: -

(i) **Ndịichieor Ndị Nze na Ọzọ title society**

This is an association of titled, wealthy, honest and influenced men. Age and amass of wealth are advertently the requirements for this titled nobles. According to Agbogu: - "... to become a titled man, an individual did not have to inherit it from his father, but had to work to prove himself worthy by (a) being of good character and (b) working hard in his trade to make enough money to take the title."¹⁸ The title elevates members to a superior, social, ritual and political status within the Igbo society. Ndịichie or ndị nze na ọzọ have a code of conduct which they observe religiously and they are given the greatest honor and respect. It is abominable for an ichie or ọzọ title holder to neither tell lies, partake in any form of stealing nor commit a serious crime of any sort. Because of the honesty of its members, the ichie or ọzọ title society settles disputes. They as well exercise great political authority, make rules and regulations governing the holders.

(ii) **Age grades (otu ọgbọ)**

The age grades are groupings of power brokers young men/women selected based by the virtue of being born within a particular period. Some Igbo societies select members based on those were born in a particular year while some memberships span two years. Age grades serve as special structures for enforcement and implementation of policies and laws. They ensure that the directives and the orders of the ọkpara and council of elders are carried out. Age grades perform the functions of interest articulation and aggregation. They serve as very powerful pressure groups within the Igbo political system. The age grades sometimes take part in law making.

(iii) **Ọpara (lineage head)**

The Igbo village is made up of several compounds that is based on patrilineal relationships. Status is accorded to the male in order of seniority in spite of whether the family is polygamous or not. In the family, therefore, the first son is the head and is entrusted with the family heirlooms like Ọfọ na Ogu, Chi, and Obi. The first son (known as Ọpara) holds the symbol of the family authority. The political authority of the ọkpara or obi varies from place to place in Igbo land depending on the personality of the incumbent, the support of the people, and extent of powers exercised by predecessors, as well as his wealth and wisdom. The ọpara is a constitutional and democratic ruler without executive powers and does not make laws in his capacity. In some places, the ọkpara or obi performs religious functions. Ọpara participates in law making while sitting with the council of elders over which he presides. He also presides over the village or town people's assembly. When a decision is reached democratically by the council of elders or the village or town people's assembly, the ọpara gives his approval and announces it to the people. This pronouncement is believed to be done on behalf of the ancestors.

Council of elders

The council of elders consists of the eldest men from each of the kindred within the village. Its membership is on representative basis. Ọzọ title is as an important requirement for membership of the council. However, in some places, age is considered as the only factor. Matters affecting lineage members are discussed at the meetings of its elders with the assistance of the adult members of the lineage. In inter-lineage disputes, elders from the affected lineages meet to discuss the solutions, with the oldest man in the gathering presiding. The council of elders makes laws and ensures that its laws are carried out. The council makes decisions affecting the security of the town or village and the declaration of war against the aggressor. Council of elders settles disputes between kindred, especially in the matters of land disputes. In matters of decision, no action will be taken until an issue is fully argued at lineage meeting and some degrees of consensus achieved.

(iv) **The people's assembly (ọha)**

The people's assembly is a meeting of all adult males. This meeting usually takes place at the ọpara's place. In practice, the meeting is conducted by the experienced elderly men of the town. Any male within the community is free to attend and express his opinion. The meetings are irregular and the number of attendants depends on the degree of public interest in the matters to be discussed. The members of the age grades, council of elders and title men must be present at the meetings. The assembly makes laws and adjudicates laws for the community. Issues are thrown open for free discussion by all present. After the issues must have been fully addressed, the elders representing each of the kindred will move out to a corner where they will examine the matter more closely and arrive at a consensus. The decision is presented to the assembly for ratification.

(v) **Women association**

Women have their own associations separate from those of men. There are two types of women association, daughters of the kindred (Ụmụada/mgboto) and married women of the village (Otu ọmụ). Women associations participate in law making and the settlement of disputes. They also serve as very powerful pressure groups and articulated interests. Obi notes: -

The institution of Ụmụada (married daughters) is highly respected in Igbo land. They can hold a community to ransom for various moral reasons, they discipline erring women with various sanctions, support married women in any wise decision taken for the progress of the community, maintain peace between husband and wife, family and family, community and community. They checkmate and balance their dual role as married daughters and wives.¹⁹

Both Ụmụada and otu ọmụ channel their demands and wishes to the council of elders, ọkpara or the people's assembly. They socialize their young ones; inculcating in them desirable social, moral and political norms and values. They also serve as powerful agents of communication.

Channel of decision making and judicial process in Igbo political system

Decisions making in Igbo society lies majorly in the custody of these three groups of people. Minor disputes in the Igbo traditional society are settled by the Ọpara who makes decision in consultation with other elders but with due regard to the opinion of all. Those who disagreed with such decision can appeal to the council of consultation with other elders but with due regard to the opinion of all. Those who disagreed with such decision can also appeal to the council of titled men, who have the right to review every appeal and the right also to uphold or repeal the decision of the lineage head. Issues that involve the entire village are first pass on to the age grades to deliberate on. When all the age grades must have debated the issue extensively, a general meeting of all males is summoned in the village square. There, the most articulate of the titled men will conduct a 'congress of the people.' During this period, the issues at stake will be presented once again and representative of the different age grades will present the position of their group. Individuals who disagree with the age grade position are allowed to present their own. In the long last, when everybody has been heard, the Ndịichie retired into a private session known as 'igba-izu' or consultation. There, the pros and cons of the matter are once again reassessed. Options most beneficial to the village are carefully considered and resolution on the best option adapted. Thereafter, the most articulate member of the Ndịichie is chosen to make the presentation to the entire village. The Ndịichie will now re-emerge to join other members of the village and there the decision reached is announced. Once these decisions are made, they become immediately binding and there can be no other appeal.

As in political organization, the judicial process varies in all section of Igbo land even from village to village. But, generally, it begins with the ụmụnna or lineage group. Within the group, "there is an ọkpara (eldest son) who held the family Ọfọ insignia of authority usually handed over from the past generation."²⁰ As such, the Ọkpara is the visible link between the living and the dead in the family. It is generally brought to him for hearing and arbitration. In compliance of a serious nature, he summons the entire ụmụnna or lineage since his authority is derived from them. During serious cases like murder either of a member or member of another village, the Eze mmụọ (chief priest) of the ala (village) is represented. He does not participate in the deliberations but sit in to safeguard the morality and probity of the Ala. He usually comes to such meetings with the Ọfọ Ala, which is imbued with moral and religious power. As such, "before any proceedings, the ala

oracle is called upon to stay around to aid the elders in detecting falsehood.”²¹ When that is done, statements are then taken; witnesses are called and again swear an oath to give true evidence. The deliberations might last for an hour or so before a decision of guilt or innocence is passed. Such a decision is unanimous. In cases where there is division due to inadequate and doubtful evidence, the defendant is ordered to swear on juju that he is guiltless of the charge. The decision in every instance is that the accused should clear his guilt by taken an oath; he is allowed a week (4 days) to reappear before the council to swear the oath. Within this period, the accused relations question him thoroughly about his innocence. If he assures them of this, he is led by the eldest man in his immediate family to which ever shrine he will swear to. After a year from the date of the oath, provided nothing harmful had befallen the accused or any member of his family, he will be led in triumph by his entire family to the same juju with gifts for having been vindicated. In addition to this, there are standardized rules and regulations, dos and don'ts with commensurate punishment. All laws are debated and passed by the Oha (the people or congregation) of all adults in the village.

Philosophical value of Igwebuiké

The term ‘value’ has many coinciding interpretations which may include: - a guiding principle, such as honesty, a quality, such as persistence, a goal, such as happiness; or the artistic or monetary worth of something. Literally, value is the good or desirable or worth of something in terms of material goods or economic value for which it is exchanged. According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (eleventh edition), value is defined in so many ways but “a fair return or equivalent in goods, services or money for something exchanged” connotes the common sense of value. This ordinary definition of value engages in instrumental value; monetary or economic value, material value, aesthetic value, emotional value, educational, nuisance value. In the course of this study, the search is on intrinsic value particularly an end in itself. To Eneh: - “values are what the civilised and rational minds cherish, esteem, prize preciously and have an inclined attitude for... They are the principles or standards of a person or society for the good or benefit of the personal or societal judgment of what is valuable to life.”²² Philosophically, value is intrinsic because it is worth having for itself, not as a means to something else. Hence, whenever standards are set, criteria established, preferences expressed, or assessments of worth made, one or more values are stated.

Intrinsic value is all about what is right and wrong which is measurable through human interactions. By implication, for an intrinsic value to be set, it must be determined by human cooperation. Relationship with others in the community shows whether an act or a system is good or bad. In ethics, the value of an act or system lies with its consequences. Njoku notes that: - “...actions are judged good or bad in their propensity to increase or decrease pain.”²³ Practically, the society values any human action or system that brings greater happiness to the greater number of the people. By this, any human action or system that protects and promotes human dignity is a value. As a value, Igwebuiké ideology promotes Humanity Principles which follows the Kantian tradition. In the principles, Kant regards human person as an end and from there human dignity ensues. He observes: -

In the kingdom of ends, everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity... that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end-in-itself has not a merely a relative worth, that is, a price, but has an intrinsic worth, that is dignity.²⁴

Hence, man, and generally any rational being, exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will. Man must respect the autonomy of other persons by refraining from using them as mere means or instruments for his own purposes or to achieve his own goals. To respect their autonomy, men must recognize their ability to make their own decisions. Man must not treat others, or himself, as things or objects.

The intrinsic worth of Igwebuiké begins with the family which is the nucleus of Igbo society. According to Onyeocha,

The African family or family-group is not equivalent to the family in the strict senses of persons: the head of the family and children. It comprises a whole group of persons: the head of the family group (or family clan) with his wife or wives, his children, and grandchildren, and also his brothers and sisters with their wives and children, his nephews and nieces in a word, all those persons who descend from a common ancestor.²⁵

The Igbo community is made up of the assembly of ‘umunna’ where the spirit of respect and collaboration, which yield more positive results, prevails than the spirit of imposition and command. Igwebuiké shows that what brings people together is more than the physical body. Human beings are persons; and persons are social animals, and social animals at the specifically human level participate in fostering the true and the just, that is, a community of values. There is the sense of obligation towards each other no matter how extended they are. Reciprocity characterizes this commitment and love. Igwebuiké centrally emphasizes values such as collectivism – that is commitment to the needs of group/s (community, family) over individual needs and self-development.

Igwebuiké system through colonial and post-colonial lenses

The wave of post-colonialism has affected adversely the principles of Igwebuiké ideology. Prior to this wave, history ascertains that Igbo practice communalistic living and every political decision is by consent and consensus. But today, the touches of colonialism and post-colonialism have altered the thirst for Igwebuiké. The marginalizations of African thoughts and values have eaten the fabrics of Igwebuiké. Through the processes of assimilation, indoctrination and acculturation, the colonial masters were able to substitute traditional African worldviews to western. Hitherto, there is an excessive abuse towards the use and application of Igwebuiké principles. In moral matters, people apply ‘majority’ to sabotage the minority. Migration is another factor. Here, it does not simply necessitated not only by economic factors, but also by social, political, cultural, environmental, health and education factors. Recently, migration happens because of the push factor of fewer opportunities in the socio-economic situation and also because of pull factors that exist in more developed areas. By the virtue of migration, the Igbo are acculturated to new form of life. Currently, the Igbo’ way of life tends “to typical American and European values of independence, self-expression and individualism.”²⁶ By this, the 21st century Igbo no longer promote communalistic life rather every individual behave to please the self and immediate families. Further, the birth of civil society shifted political powers from the hands of Igbo traditional institutions to the various organs of government (executive, legislative and judiciary) which in turn rest powers in the hands of the few. These delegated few at times abuse political powers either for the satisfaction of their personal interests or use it to witch-haunt their opponents. Most of the traditional Igbo institutions have gone into extinction while the existing ones are no longer recognized politically like before. The existing ones are converted to mere social organizations with no attachments of political powers. For instance, some age grades are

currently seen as mere social organizations that have no political impacts in the society. The contemporary Igbo society does no longer respect the traditional institutions since the civil society has become an alternative to execution, interpretation and making of laws.

Conclusion

Igwebuike ideology is an Igbo ethic of reciprocity. It tenaciously upholds that the whole is greater than the corresponding parts. The ideology sustains that, by the coming together of the individual or parts, a viable and sustainable whole emerges. The Igbo form sociopolitical theory of 'Igwebuike' on unity which is identified as an enduring characteristic and inherent value. The division of Igbo political powers into various groups/classes accounts in such a way that every rational adult contributes in decision-making. Hence, every adult in Igbo land participates in the deliberations and as such all laws come from the people. With great interest in the ethical, social and political roles, each institution plays for greater harmony, peace and unity of the community. The good network system of Igwebuike in Igbo land plays a significant role in human development. The spirit of co-operation, respect and solidarity is a wonderful image of Igbo community. Hence, Igwebuike is all inclusive, integrative, complementary and holistic system of government because it puts into operation Igbo peculiarities and particularities. Unlike the social contract theorists with the common opinion that if a sovereign violates those transferred human rights, the social contract will be broken, and the people have the right to revolt and establish new government, but the system of Igwebuike does not support revolutions because it does not leave political power completely in the hands of an individual or group of people and this makes it ideal in matters of peace and conflict resolutions. The communality of Igwebuike encourages apprenticeship system of education whereby knowledge is transferred for the common good. The study therefore concludes that, Igwebuike philosophy is a value itself since it is a government by consent. Put in another way, it is a deductible value in such that, a society is the essence and rudiments of community-life whether good or bad and the respect for the sanctity and dignity of life. For the traditional Igbo therefore, anything virtuous or valuable or good that does not recognize the rudiments from these two concepts is morally questionable. Therefore, every society should encourage the practice of Igwebuike system. It is reputed to be the best form of government, which offers better opportunities and challenges especially in this patently globalised world.

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