

IKENGA ANARCHISM AND CORPORATE IGBO EXISTENCE: REDISCOVERING THE SYNCHRONIC DYNAMICS OF THE FORCES OF IKEỌHA AND IKEOTUONYE

C. Chibuzo Ezeani

Department of Philosophy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
cc.ezeani@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

Ọganihu Ndigbo remains a central concern for every 'Igbo bụ Igbo'. Thus, the existential forces that impact either negatively or positively on the corporate existence of Ndigbo must be carefully diagnosed and analyzed for the survival, development and flourishing of Ndigbo. The need for such diagnosis is made even more urgent given the Igbo entrapment in Nigeria which has dealt to Ndigbo various forms of marginalization, conspiracies, expulsion to the periphery of politics and power dynamics. The appalling situation makes it pertinent to continually fight for the soul of Ala-Igbo and Ndigbo. This work precisely focuses on the phenomenon of ikeotuonye and how it impacts on ọganihu ndigbo. Using the method of hermeneutics, the work while acknowledging the importance of the existential force of ikeotuonye, finds incorrect a reading of the notion of ikeotuonye that tend to neglect or undermine its insufficiency and limitation. It argues that while the force of ikeotuonye is a moment in the overall ọganihu Ndigbo, the excision in time from ikeọha has tended to its degeneration into ikenga anarchism and so portends danger to the very existence of Ndigbo as a people. Ikenga anarchism thrives on the exclusive canon of ultra-individualism and so derogates from ọganihu Ndigbo. The work calls for recapturing the expanded scope of the functional ontology of ikenga symbolism for the purposes of maintaining the forces of ikeọha and ikeotuonye in the light of Igbo holistic cosmology in a healthy, synchronic dynamism.

Introduction

Oganihu Ndigbo remains a central concern for every 'Igbo bụ Igbo'. Thus the existential forces that impact either negatively or positively on the corporate existence of Ndigbo must be carefully diagnosed and analyzed for the survival, development and flourishing of Ndigbo. The need for such diagnosis is made even more urgent given that Igbo cause is connected with the Nigerian reality which has dealt to Ndigbo various forms of marginalization, conspiracies, expulsion to the periphery of politics and power dynamics. The appalling situation makes it pertinent to continually fight for the soul of Ala-Igbo and Ndigbo. Unfortunately, there has been a fledgling commitment of Ndigbo to the corporate Igbo existence and this is for some factors. One of such is the phenomenon of ikenga anarchism which basically following the ethos of ultra-individualism is symptomatic in a selfish interest that refuses to surrender to the cause for the oganihu Ndigbo.

While many Igbos individually could pull socio-economic stunt, it does not seem that Ndigbo as a people have been able in the recent times to muster and project a united and formidable front. There have been staccato of voices that have failed to harmonize; there have been geniuses from all walks of life and of varied magnitude which do not translate into socio-economic and political bargaining power for the region. Many Igbo politicians are ready to betray the group and common interest, for a myopic and narrow selfish interest, or refuse to fight for the Igbo cause simply to remain even if at the mere periphery of power. While one cannot do away with self-interest, it becomes dangerous when it is made the sole canon of action to the detriment of communal ethos; yet both should remain always in a healthy dynamism to ensure the wholeness of both the individual and the group. Thus, the existential forces of *ikeqha* and *ikeotuonye* must be maintained in a synchronic dynamism. When the individual dynamo holds an unquestionable sway, *ikeqha* becomes dissipated and cooperate existence tend to

disintegrate. Yet without the individuality of individual, the ọha degenerates to collectivism and so the variety that spices and engineer life is lost. Beauty of life and existence is lost.

It is the view of the present researcher that there is a prevalence of ikeotuonye which is unhealthy for being in the main anchored on the ikenga anarchism that is ultra- individualistic and cares less about the communal ethos and corporate Igbo existence. This work while acknowledging the importance of the existential force of ikeotuonye, finds incorrect a reading of the notion of ikeotuonye that tend to neglect or undermine its insufficiency and limitation. It argues that while the force of ikeotuonye is a moment in the overall ọganihu Ndigbo, the excision in time from ikeọha has tended to its degeneration into ikenga anarchism and so portends danger to the cooperate existence of Ndigbo, Ikenga anarchism thriving as it were on the exclusive canon of ultra-individualism and so derogates from ọganihu Ndigbo.

The work is divided into sections. The first deals on a hermeneutics of ikenga cultural symbol which it shows to be an individual symbol of success. It then highlights in brief the phenomenon of ikenga anarchism. The next locates the roots of ikenga anarchism on the tripod of colonial experience, modernism and civil war experience. It further beams its prism on the phenomenon of ikeọha and ikeotuonye where it underscores the predominance of the latter that makes of it a disintegrating force and undoing of ọganihu Ndigbo. The last section dwells on the need to expand the scope of the functional ontology of ikenga symbolism for the purposes of ensuring a breadth of balance as concerns the forces of ikeọha and ikeotuonye in the light of Igbo holistic cosmology in a healthy synchronic dynamism.

Ikenga: A Hermeneutics of a Cultural Symbol

Symbols are replete in cultures and are fundamental elements for understanding reality and human existence. Man's understanding

of the world, himself and the environment is characterized and associated with symbols. In fact, man, a symbolic being cannot do without symbols. Dukor opines that “the evolution of human mind was simultaneously with the evolution of symbols and concepts.”ⁱ Symbols are expressions of deeper ideas and concepts. Meanings are codified in symbols. This is true of Igbo culture that have avalanche of symbols in its cultural matrix. In fact, Bona Umeogu appears to fall into some essentialism in his depiction of the Igbo man as *Homo Symbolicus*.ⁱⁱ I have argued elsewhere that while this is in tune with whom the Igbo man is, it is wrong to be couched in a form that is exclusive of other cultures. Symbols and symbolisms are cultural realities and so anthropological and not an ethnic phenomenon.ⁱⁱⁱ Ikenga symbolism is generative of meanings when a proper hermeneutics is done.

Ikenga sculpture is a human figure with a horned headdress or crown, holding a machete or other symbol of power and authority and often portrayed in a pose that emphasizes strength, resilience and courage. Much has been written on the concept and symbolism of Ikenga. Despite variations of interpretation among scholars, there is the consensus to the semantic interpretation of Ikenga symbolism as marked with individual-physiologico-religious meaning.

Etymologically, the word, “ikenga” is a derivative of two Igbo words: ‘ike’ meaning ‘power’ or ‘force’ and “nga” “prison” or “liberator” which of course are opposing. It also depicts “a place”. In this case it becomes a domesticated force. But “nga” could also be read in terms of root of the word “nga nga” which relates to prideful exuberance. In this sense it becomes force that brings forth exuberance. Being a domesticated force, it is individualistic, as a liberating force it denotes a spiritual animating force that lies behind the individual strength and self-realization. This is what defines an individual success in its entire ramification. Thus, when

one acquires such force it adds to one's pride and exuberance. Unfortunately, it can also enslave if we are not careful. It can liberate as it can cage.

It seems that this power is not as individualist as it sounds. Though individualist in origin, it is communal even if in a restricted sense, functionally. This is because it has a basic function for the family. This is the reason that it is also referred to as *ike ji ụlọ* (the power that holds or sustains the home). Here, the connection of Ikenga with the masculine power within the traditional Igbo emerges; the reason that it is identified with the thumb and by extension with the right hand; thus, the expression Ikenga *mkpụrụaka* and then *aka nri* Ikenga. Ikenga *mkpụrụaka* immediately highlights the symbolism of the thumb and its functional primacy in regard to other fingers. This underscores the primacy of masculine power within the family. In its functional physiognomic position, the thumb is distinguished from the rest as a position of prominence: “*anaghi ahapụ isi aka agba ụrịom.*” According to Ekwuru, the thumb has “a coordinative, functional, structural role; with its dynamic position.”^{iv} By this fact, it was considered as the head-finger that grips and coordinates the balance in the manipulation of others. Thus, the masculine power is the seat and symbol of human success and achievements. This is associated with “*aka nri*” for “the success and achievement orientation of the traditional Igbo was manifested through the exigencies of the functional ontology, the right hand, what was called *aka-nri* (literally, feeding, food hand), was considered as the seat of the “power” with which man hewed his success.” Ikenga becomes therefore masculine strength and ability to achieve success through one's own efforts. Onwuejeogwu refers to it as the cult of the right hand, representing the hand with which a man obtains his living.^v This is in tune with Nwala's phenomenological description to the effect that

Ikenga is the symbol of the cult of the right hand and the force that directs achievements.
The art object showing ikenga realistically

brings forth the strong right hand with which the individual (with knife in his hand) hacks his way through to success. The determination with which he must hack his way through and pursue his goal is reflected in the stubborn ram which he holds. The skull (isi) in his hand symbolizes the lead which an individual must daringly take in order to succeed.^{vi}

Ekwuru uses Amike anthropogony for the purposes of advancing the spiritual root of Ikenga which brings the character of symbols as *concordantiae oppositorum*. Here, Ikenga as the cult of right hand was shown to be given religious genealogy. In Amike myth, Ikenga became the ike of Chukwu infused into man at the moment of his creation. This tallies with the notion of domesticated force highlighted in the etymological above. It is the divine aspect of Chukwu left with man to guide, animate and lead him to success. This mythical origin brings in the concept of chi that implicates the Igbo concept of predestination-akalaka. The cult of right hand becomes also the cult of personal deity, the individual guardian god, the personal god of success etc and this connotes destiny.^{vii}

Ikenga Nwoga notes that personal chi of an individual represents “a rarefaction of the universal force, a personification of his allotted role in the universal motion towards the ultimate goal.”^{viii} This has been compared to the concept of election or the spirit of capitalism as extensively espoused by Max Weber in his study of Calvinist Protestantism. What this serves to show is not to say that personal chi is associated with the historical rise of capitalism, it is rather to show that the Igbo acknowledge the individual and its success and that the concept of personal chi has socio-economic ramifications. This is within the communal scheme that depicts the Igbo system. This personal chi, sociologically “enables the individual to engage

embrace and accommodate change and innovation in his or her personal capacity without losing the traits that determine his Igbo identity.”^{ix} Though it could be deterministic, it is not for it is devoid of the kind of fatalism that could be a roadblock to initiative and drive for economic success in the individual. This is the reason that the Igbo believe that it is the individual who must take the initiative while his or her chi acquiesces, hence the saying *onye kwe chi ya ekwe*, when an individual affirms, his personal chi reaffirms. This is only an instance of a culture grappling with the dynamics of the age-long problem of freedom and determinism which are not within the purview of this work.

A hermeneutics of Ikenga symbolism shows that Ikenga is specifically an individualistic symbol for success though it is associated with masculinity that is a predominant feature of Igbo culture. The Ikenga is a cult of individual success and progress. Ikenga means a place of strength and the figure symbolizes the man's power to accomplish his aims and make his way in the world and this reflects the Igbo's aggressive will to succeed. The danger however is to make this personal ikenga a canon of action and exclusive of success which turns into ultra-individualism where in the individual excludes the community and corporate existence of the Ndigbo from his world and feels that everything is ok once it is ok for him which is what is highlighted in the phenomenon of ikenga anarchism.

The Phenomenon of Ikenga Anarchism

Ikenga anarchism is the creation of Chinweizu's devising. Chinweizu writes that it is fair to say that Ndigbo are dying from the Ikenga spirit run amok.^x He observed a certain loss of the holistic cosmology and fostering ideology which has led to a dysfunctional Igbo temperament that has become “hyper-individualistic, hyper-competitive, hyper-materialistic and hyper-xenophile.”^{xi} It is individualistic to the extent that it cares just for itself and does not care about the other. It can also be individualistic

by making the self the canon of action in disregard to any value. The individual becomes the measure of all things. The person places himself always before and above others upholding the supremacy of his interest in disregard to corporate interest and common good, though he could incidentally care. The self-interest is unboundedly and undifferentiatedly pursued. In this, it becomes destructively competitive instead of complementary as he strives to be the most prominent and the first. It is materialistic because everything is reduced to material success to the neglect of metaphysical values and integrity. It is xenophile because it can be clannish where some clans and groups exclude and denigrate others within the Igbo fold. These are encapsulate in what Chinweizu refers to as the most dangerous problem the contemporary have had to face, namely, anarchist individualism or what he terms Ikenga anarchism, ultra-individualism. He observes that Ikenga was not as dangerous as it is today, though it is by nature “a totally self-centered and individualist spirit.” Yet as would be seen latter it had “countervailing forces that restrained and usefully tamed it.” For instance, the Igbo religious moral systems were taken seriously because the perception is that the repercussion was sure to come when not adhered to. Thus one’s dealing with another and the community must accord with the demands of “*ọfọ na ugu*.” The communal ethos held sway. There was taboo system that had the ‘*ani*’ as its chief source and so profoundly respected. It seems that these countervailing forces have in recent times been destroyed. Success is thus pursued devoid of values and consideration of the other. There is the enthronement of the canon of selfish interest as the exclusive principle of action. One acts without regard to communal value and ethos and with little or no regard to metaphysical referent. Chinweizu however, adds that the anarchism may not have been fostered by Ikengaism alone, he suspects that Christianity with its idea of individual salvation and personal relationship with God has helped to aggravate the society-obtuse individualism of Ikengaism.^{xii} This researcher decided to adopt the

concept of Ikenga anarchism not because he factors the contemporary anarchism on Ikenga but because Ikenga being a cultural symbol for personal success have been carried to extremity. Ikengaism becomes therefore, Igbo cultural expression of Individualism though like many traditional Igbo symbolisms, it has religio-spiritual roots and as well as moral and communal ethos that acted as restraining forces to avoid the absolutization of the canon of self-interest. Some of the historical factors that have pushed Ikengaism into anarchism, into ultra-individualism that seem to disregard or care little about the communal ethos and values are here below x-rayed.

Roots of Ikenga Anarchism: Modernism, Colonial Encounter and War Experience

Individualism became a burgeoning reality in the modern times especially with the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* in which he sublimated the subject, conferring him some kind of ontological solitude as it is transposed into an autonomous institution. Of course the Cartesian inversion already found its foundation in Aristotelian notion of substance that makes relation one of its accidents. The Aristotelian-Cartesian imposed conception of the subject as an independent reality made it a disengaged reality. Charles Taylor writing explains that disengagement and the idea that the nature of things is located inside both contributed to a new concept of individual independence. The disengaged subject is an independent being that is insulated from the dictates of any greater order as he/she locates his essence of being on him/herself. Such an ideology may have influenced the valorization of ordinary life more evident during the reformation in which life is made utterly a private affair. With colonialism, the sub-Saharan Africa became exposed to the canon of the individualism. According to William Abraham colonialism brought in new ideas concerning individual accountability and individual rewards, the spread of the sense of individual vision and the ascendancy of self-interest in contrast with community interest as a basis of action, the growing sense of

private power arising from self-action rather than clan direction all of these atomizing factors, acting in concert, have loosened the internal bonds and efficacy of lineage-based clans.”^{xiii}

In the more recent history, not a few have had to locate the second fracture in 1967. The Igbos of the pre-war was one characterized by strong backbone of community vision. This feature was unfortunately eroded with the civil war when strong community accountability became replaced by the spirit of greed and pomposity. The war was as Uwalaka described a “war against the people’s psyche, against the people’s self-identity and self-worth, a war against the people’s self-consciousness, a war against the people’s economic welfare.”^{xiv} The communal fracture has been blamed on the exigencies of the precarious times the Igbos found themselves during the war and pre-war era in which they had to struggle to survive in the face of the inhumanity of the war that dealt a blow to the essence of their existence, destroying the industry, cultivated development and civilization. Unfortunately, the hypocritical 3Rs of rehabilitation, reintegration and reconciliation became moribund even at the time of inauguration. The socio-economic weapon of tactical impoverishment such as the saga of abandoned property and handing over 20 pounds were unleashed on the Igbo.

The civil war enthroned a chaotic situation that damaged corporate existence and communal consciousness. Survival after the war was the driving factor, many a time in disregard for the moral precepts that had guided Igbo living. The time, according to Anumihe was an iconoclastic age driven by self-preservation instincts that was crassly materialistic and unedifying. Though one could rationalize any measures taken to survive given the hard reality of acute deprivation meted on the Igbo during and after the war, the problem is that a habit once formed becomes ingrained and in the case of a social group becomes a model of behavior, a bench mark for

actions, an antecedent upon which the future is built. Little wonder the contemporary Igbo society has become marred by mediocrity, corruption, violence, kidnapping, assassinations, apostasy and proliferating of fake churches and fake evangelists, community balkanization in the name of autonomous communities.^{xv} These are all instances of unbridled individualism and selfish interest which were not prevalent in the pre-war times when Ndigbo excelled in politics, commerce and industry, in education and grassroots development. The root of this excellence is traceable to the concept and reality of “onye aghala nwanne ya, the sense of unity and sacredness of our communal ties that constitutes the essence of our identity.”^{xvi} This was what fanned the fire of communal spirit and solidarity that led for instance to communities contributing funds to sponsor their brilliant children in schools in the country and abroad.

Ukaogu follows by noting that the feats achieved then were the result of collaborative enterprise as demonstrated by several age grades and communal activities aimed at elevating the welfare of the people. He argues that though the restless individual spirit has been operative in the Igbo cultural milieu, it did not eclipse the communal solidarity as in the war and post-war period when this solidarity was replaced by the defensive and self-destructive age old sermon of republicanism of the Igbo spirit, which unfortunately became interpreted to mean that everyone should pursue his own interests not the general interest.^{xvii} Violet Okoye complements by noting that after the 30 month civil war, ndigbo were decimated and were scattered, “there was hardly the ọha again in most fronts let alone ka, its supremacy accompaniment.”^{xviii} This led to the subversion of Igbo creative drive and emergence of extreme individualism and selfishness which has become the order of the day as it enthrones “ultimately rugged individualism, self-aggrandizement,, callous selfishness and materialism are now extolled as the new Igbo gods, with awful consequences.”^{xix} Thus once one of the most vibrant, cohesive, and progressive ethnic group became infested with grave moral decay which have come to

corruption of its integrity in which one witnesses “outright betrayal of community confidence often culminating in Igbo leaders negotiating away their birthright in return for peanuts, choosing to favour the interests of other groups at the detriment of theirs.”^{xx}

Here, the Igbo president question comes to the mind and with it the antics, treachery and bad blood ensuing from Igbos themselves, that have accompanied that history. Oḡhaneze Ndigbo had echoed and reechoed the agenda of Igbo presidency. Unfortunately, it has been marred by double speak of the leadership that in each scuttle the ambition showing connivance, compromise, sell out, selfish politicking. In 2000 for instance, there was a summit that was organized by Oḡhaneze Ndigbo. Rising from the summit, a political committee was set up headed by Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu. This committee had the mandate to see to the actualization of Igbo presidency in 2003. It was shocking that the said head abandoned the committee to campaign for the second term bid of the then President Olusegun Obasanjo. The whole project entered into oblivion. Ukaogu observes a repeat of the same in 2007 when the same Oḡhaneze led by the then President Professor Joe Irukwu made it crystal clear and globally that it was the turn of the Igbos for presidency. Again Irukwu himself abandoned the agenda at the last minute to campaign for Obasanjo’s third term bid in office.^{xxi} According to Ukaogu, Professor Irukwu in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state during the 2006 constitutional amendment told the members of the National Assembly constitutional review committee that over 50 million Igbos all over the world had endorsed Obasanjo for a third term in office.^{xxii}

In the recent times, during the 2019 election, Peter Obi’s selection as the Vice President was greeted with gloomy faces among many key politicians of Igbo extraction with the flimsy excuse in some quarters that they were not consulted; that they had to be begged and pacified but their eventual non-participation betrays that there

was much deeper cause. One can recall the events that led to the emergence of IPOB's Eastern Security Network which formation led to untold terror in Igbo land. The crops of Governors of Igbo extraction at the time of formation showed themselves weak in challenging the killings by the Fulani herdsmen. Yet in many instances one or two of them on the mainstream media could become unabashedly apologetic once it touches the Fulani concerns. The Eastern Security outfit was never formed until a vacuum created by the refusal of the South-Eastern governors to respond to the security concerns of the region just for political correctness, led to the emergence of Eastern Security Network. It was only then they arose hypocritically to form Ebubeagu that obviously was moribund at its conception, a move that was perceived as aimed at countering the ESN as they strived to dance to the tune of the Fulani paying piper. Today like all non-state actors that lack legitimate control, the Eastern Security Network has metamorphosed to all forms criminality that have decimated the entire region.

Omokri's view is apt when he avers that "even as the Igbo man is such an economic genius, he is sadly lacking in centralised leadership. An Anambra man named Ebele, may refuse to work with an Imo man named Ebere. The Igbo are all too often unwilling to surrender individual interests for group interests, and this inability dissipates their political and economic influence. And until they learn to work with their brother, even if they do not like him, they will continue to serve others who have that ability." It may however be pointed out that his view in that article "Without Igbo Unity, there can't be Igbo Presidency"^{xxiii} is so sweeping and fails to reckon with the conspiracy with which the Ndigbo have had to labour under in one Nigeria ever since independence reaching its crescendo in post war period. It also fails to reckon with the fact that decentralized and republican system run traditionally by Ndiigbo is an indicator that perhaps the Igbos could have not been part of the other regions that is more cultural given to centralized

system of leadership or perhaps the Igbos would thrive more in regional system of Government. This notwithstanding, his observation is not entirely baseless. There is no doubt that parochialism in many cases rears its ugly even when very important issues that border on the very existence of Ndiigbo is at stake. These and more show that “selfish interests have over-ran collective community vision as evidenced by high level of betrayal of public trust by their leaders.”^{xxiv}

The Contemporary Erosion of the Synchronic Dynamics of Ikeotuonye and Ikeḡha

Okpalike in his “Ḡganihu Ndiigbo: through the social-existential forces of Ikeḡha and Ikeotuonye,”^{xxv} gives a scholarly historical analysis of what he identifies as two historical moments in the build up to Ḡganihu Ndi Igbo. Okpalike identifies the two epochs as one which spans from immemorial times to the period of civil war and the second from after the war till the present times. According to him ḡganihu ndigbo is an ontological drive in being Igbo and this according to him was driven by the existential forces of Ikeḡha and Ikeotuonye. One thing that one notices in the work is the optimism that pervades it regarding the Igbos even while he reads the beginning of Ikeotuonye in the war and post-war era. Okpalike obviously acknowledges some negative aspects of the contemporary ikeotuonye but in all he sees it in a positive light. While Ikeḡha is in line with the communalistic ethos, ikeotuonye is in conformity with an individualist ethos. He asserts that it still serves “the same living quest and pan-Igbo consciousness—ḡganihu.” Both forces, he notes “are not contradicting of that pan Igbo existential drive of ḡganihu Ndiigbo.” This is perhaps the reason that he takes it for granted that “ḡganihu Ndiigbo is one consciousness to which every “Igbo-bu-Igbo” is connected with passion.” While I applaud Okpalike for the analytical and hermeneutical expertise brought to bear, I cannot hide my misgiving with regard to his conclusion that Ikeotuonye is only a

moment in the build up to *oganihu ndi Igbo*. I share his view that Ikeotuonye is a moment in the build up to the *oganihu ndi Igbo* but only in a synchronic dynamism with Ikeoha. It in particular baffles me that he does not see in the so called contemporary Ikeotuonye a negation of the holistic cosmology that had characterized the Igbo world. Besides Okpalike's hermeneutics betrays a lack of appreciation of Ikeotuonye in its full rendition, otherwise, he would have discovered that the phrase is only an abbreviation whose full rendition is "*Ikeotuonye anaghi ezucha*" This is a pointer to the complementarity that should exist between the individual and the community. This insufficiency is ontological as it is existential and it indicates that the individual in his being, becoming and accomplishments must be other-referent. In practical terms the other, the common good must be considered always and referenced as the validating ground of all forms of personal and sectional interest. In fact, ikeotuonye is both an affirmation of the reality of the individual dynamo and the reality of its insufficiency and limitation. One then wonders how this notion of Ikeotuonye excised from this reality of insufficiency as is seen in the contemporary times is said to be ultimately for *oganihu ndi Igbo*. Yes, it is a moment but it cannot be seen merely as a historical, linear moment in which case the forces of Ikeoha and Ikeotuonye are not held in their complementarity at every point in time.

The strength of *ndigbo* had been a philosophy that affirms without accentuating the individual in disregard of the community. It rather moves at once to locate the individual within his community. Even Okpalike acknowledges this when he writes that in traditional African Igbo society person is defined in terms of community. In his words, "it is the community that is the existential person and the ontological expression of individual existence. Existential force resides in and with the community." He further writes that "as a matter of fact, the individual person exists like he/she is the community because the community is the person *de iure*."^{xxvi} Thus it is not a philosophy that views man in collectivist fashion; that

denies or muzzles the reality of the individual. Nor is it a philosophy that views man in the light of liberal individualism which more or less deifies the individual in the name of rights and freedom. It is rather a communalist philosophy which both affirms the individual and the community whose supremacy he has to recognize. The Igbo culture locates a child in his community hence; the customary question is always “nwa be onye?” This question immediately locates the child in his immediate family, lineage, history and culture.

As has been noted, the individual is not muzzled in the Igbo cosmology. He is accorded his place and given the horizon and framework to excel. Yet the Igbo knowing that the individual affirmation can degenerate into unmitigated, raw individualism matches it with communal ethos. With respect to the latter, among other things, the individual is meant to act and live by “ogu” which could be captured in the saying “ndu mmiri, ndu azu”, life to all life. This already shows that ikenga is not meant to be an ultra-individualist symbol without communal anchorage. It rather submits to motif of connection and decour with people. The Igbo hold that “uwa yaghara ayagha, ogu na-edo ya: the world is chaotic but ogu orders it, as a world organizing and life promoting force. Ogu is an alien English word but the roughest possible translation is the compound word Truth-Justice though in Igbo world it is richer because it is symbolic. I have pointed out elsewhere that the need for the ogu is because of the phenomenology of interest which can be blinded by the primordial instinct of self-preservation that in its ambivalent operations eclipses rationality and with it, the import of the community.^{xxvii}

So the problem is that Ikeotuonye has been removed in its synchronic dynamism with Ikeoḣa. Of course, it was expedient given the war and after war experience. It was a way they responded for their survival but the truth is that that expediency has gone on

for too long and has become normalized. What one sees in the contemporary form of Ikeotuonye that tend to ignore its insufficiency while eclipsing the ikeoha is simply decadence, bankruptcy of value and steeping into modernism's desymbolification and bankruptcy of meaning: raising individualism above all other values leads to nihilism. Rampant and unmitigated individualism ultimately translates to the anarchical proliferation of egotism at the expense of communal values shared by a people "who are conscious of sharing a common heritage for the survival of which they are prepared to make personal sacrifices."^{xxviii}

In need of Expanding the Scope of the Ikenga Functional Ontology

The discussion so far highlights the need expand the scope of Ikenga functional Ontology. Ikenga has been shown above to be a symbolism of individual success and accomplishments. Spoken in terms of metaphor of the thumb, it clearly shows that it is functionally geared towards the family. This is the reason that it is variously referred to as ikejiulo. The metaphor of the thumb underscores its leadership relation to the rest of the member of the family. Thus, it is connected with providing and sustaining the family. A typical family in traditional Igbo society is not nuclear but extended system. Today there is already a de-emphasis of this extended family system where generally the nuclear is shielded from the extended in the light of the instinctual logic of 'the nearer the better and more precious.'

Yet the success of an individual is a moment, a missing link in the communal success, all of them and more constitute the success of a community. The community from which I come holds an ontological and to a reasonable extent an existential and cultural priority to my being. It is in the situatedness of this community that I had my being and enjoyed my existence. I, as it were, bear the mark of this communal identity wherever I am. This must elicit a

fundamental gratitude which is expressed in kinship solicitude, solidarity and patriotism. The diversity of the community adds to the diversity of existence which is not a monotony. My preservation of the missing link of this diversity which my community is, is a preservation of life and existence. It is a preservation of the beauty of life which lies most often in its diversity. To ignore the Igbo moment of diversity to which I belong and which I owe a fundamental gratitude while allowing it to go into oblivion or allow it to wobble is a failure in my fundamental responsibility both to the community and to the cosmic-globality which vitality among others comes through diversity.

The personal Ikenga must therefore synchronize with the communal ikenga and beyond this a Pan Igbo Ikenga. None must work in exclusion of the rest. The synergy is the beauty and the pride. The communal Ikenga standing for group rather than individual achievements, prestige demonstrates continuity between the individual and society. The motif depicts what the community is known for and in many cases during annual festivals, all males born during the previous year are brought before the community ikenga and validated as members of the community. Yet the communal is itself insufficient in the actualization of being in history. The communal success must understand itself in its limitations, inadequacies, diversities, heterogeneity and multidimensionality in mutuality seeking universality and globality for its legitimization and authentication.

Besides, the Nigerian reality has continued to show that the present structural constitution of Nigeria is hardly sustainable being rooted in cankerworms of tribalism and religious bigotry. While I am not a pessimist of 'one Nigeria' project, pointers are to the fact that the Nigerian reality calls for a Kuhnian paradigm shift which allows for certain autonomy to the various peoples that make up the one Nigeria. The Igbo people are continuously marginalized since the

civil war in the Nigerian polity. The reality and feeling of being marginalized have become too loud since the war and more than ever today. The positive about such feeling is that it is in tune with what Hegel refers to as unhappy consciousness which for him could generate in a person or a group a sense of unity of purpose and unity of consciousness to forge their cause. Sartre shares this same view when he writes and asks the question “what is it, then, that serves to keep a semblance of unity in the Jewish community?” In responding, he notes that it is simply because they share similar predicament precipitating unhappy consciousness. In his words: “It is neither their past, their religion, nor their soil that unites the sons of Israel; If they have a common bond, if all of them deserve the name of Jew, it is because they have in common the situation of a Jew, that is, they live in a community which takes them for Jews.”^{xxix}

He added that the Jews did not exist as a primordial nation. Their existence as a distinct ethnic group resided first and foremost in the minds of the surrounding society that always reminded Jews of who they are as well as blocked their assimilation. It is as a people that Ndigbo are marginalized. My Igboness is a facticity and as long as the Igbo is defaced, I am defaced because that is who I am. Igboness constitutes my identity and so when Igbo is undermined being intimately sharing in that identity I am undermined. It is my kith and kin. The Igbo man cannot claim to succeed merely as individual within the Nigerian entrapment. Many who thought they could, had one regrets or the other. A strong Igbo front would ensure and defend personal interest of members. A lone baboon would soon become a prey for some predator if wallows without any group to protect and defend it. These and more are the reasons that the personal ikenga should not be the exclusive canon of action. It must be located with the dynamics of communal ikenga which must learn to transpose to Pan-Igbo ikenga for the ultimate success of the Igbo as a corporate entity. This demands a responsible, patriotic

belongingness and leadership in which the forces of ikeotunye and ikeḡha are held in a synchronic dynamism.

Conclusion

So far, the work has been able to show the damaging force of the prevalent ikeotuonye in its excised form from the ikeḡha to the ḡganihu Ndigbo. Divested from ikeḡha and in refusal to acknowledge its ontological and existential insufficiency, ikeotuonye degenerates into ikenga anarchism which is damaging to the very existence of Ndiigbo as a people. While the duo of colonialism and modernism charted the path for the institution of ultra-individualism, and the post Biafran-Nigerian civil war toed that path as a matter of exigency, ḡganihu Ndigbo can only be forged in the synchronic dynamism of ikeḡha and ikeotuonye. This demands that the functional ontology of ikenga symbolism be expanded in the renewed understanding of the demands of fundamental gratitude and patriotism.

End Notes

-
- ⁱMmaduabuchi Dukor, *African Philosophy in the Global Village*, (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010), 200.
- ⁱⁱBona Uchenna Umeogu, *Kolanut in Igbo Metaphysics: A Phenomenal Research into its Symbolic Universe*, An Inaugural Lecture of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, (Onitsha: Noben Press Ltd., 2019), 21-22.
- ⁱⁱⁱCyril Chibuzo Ezeani & Charles N. Nweke. 2022. "Oji Anaghi Asu Asusu Ozo: Appraising the Cultural Insistence on the Exclusive Use of Igbo Language within the Ambience of Igbo Kola Ritual Ceremony," *Ohazurume: Unizik Journal of Culture and Civilization*, vol.1, (2022), 115-116.
- ^{iv}Emeka George Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology: The Ontogeny and Hermeneutics of Igbo Sculpture*, *Studies in African EthnoAesthetics*, (Owerri: Living Flames Resources, 2009), 44.
- ^vMichael Angulu Onwuejeogwu, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony*, (London: Ethiope Pub. Co, 1981), 50; as cited in Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology*, 144.
- ^{vi}T. Uzodimma Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, (Ikeja: Literammed Pub. Nig. Ltd., 1985), p.213; As cited in Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology*, 144.
- ^{vii} Ekwuru, *Igbo Cosmology: The Ontogeny and Hermeneutics of Igbo Sculpture*, 145.
- ^{viii}E.C. Ejiogu, "Chapter Twenty-Four, Age-old Democratic Social Authority Patterns: The Bases of Igbo Identity and Politics," in T. Uzodimma Nwala, Nath Aniekwu and Chinyere Ohiri-Aniche, *Igbo Nation: History & Challenges of Rebirth and Development, Volume One*, (Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2015), 535.

-
- ix Ejioogu, "Chapter Twenty-Four, Age-old Democratic Social Authority Patterns: The Bases of Igbo Identity and Politics," 535.
- x Chinweizu Chinweizu, "Chapter One: Keynote: Ikenga Run Amok—Towards a Diagnosis and Healing of the Ndigbo Crisis," in Nwala, Aniekwu and Ohiri-Aniche, *Igbo Nation: History & Challenges of Rebirth and Development*, 45.
- xi Chinweizu, "Chapter One: Keynote: Ikenga Run Amok—Towards a Diagnosis and Healing of the Ndigbo Crisis," 44.
- xii Chinweizu, "Chapter One: Keynote: Ikenga Run Amok—Towards a Diagnosis and Healing of the Ndigbo Crisis," 46.
- xiii Abraham William, "Prologue: Crisis in African Culture," in K. Wiredu and K. Gyekye (eds.) *Person and Community*. Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, I. Washington D.C, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, (1992), 27.
- xiv Jude Uwalaka, *The Struggle for an Inclusive Nigeria: Igbos to Be or Not to Be, A Treatise on Igbo Political Personality and Survival in Nigeria*, (Enugu: Snaap Press, 2003); as cited in JBG Chika Okpalike 2017. "Oganihu Ndiigbo: through the social-existential forces of Ikeoha and Ikeotuonye," *UJAH*, vol. 18, (2017), 60.
- xv Nnamdi Anumihe, "The Igbo Origin Question: Towards Reviving Igbo Culture in Contemporary Nigeria," in T.I. Okere (ed.) *The Igbo Question: Proceedings of the International Symposium Organized by Whelan Research Academy, Owerri, Nigeria* vol. 1, no. 9. (Owerri: Gabtony Prints Ltd., 2010), 50.
- xvi Anumihe, "The Igbo Origin Question: Towards Reviving Igbo Culture in Contemporary Nigeria," 48.
- xvii Victor Ukaogu, "The Rise of Individualism and the Growing Irrelevance of the Igbo in the Nigerian Project," in pp.71-84 in Raphael Chijoke Njoku & Chima Korie, *The Igbo in an Age of Globalization*, (Goldline & Jacobs Publishing, 2017), 76-77.

- ^{xviii} Ogochukwu Violet Okoye, “Elughelu Ethos and Igbo Philosophy of Ohaka (Community is Supreme),” in Raphael Chijoke Njoku & Chima Korie, *The Igbo in an Age of Globalization*, (Goldline & Jacobs Publishing, 2017), 66.
- ^{xix} Okoye, “Elughelu Ethos and Igbo Philosophy of Ohaka (Community is Supreme),” 66.
- ^{xx} Korieh, Chima and Uzodimma Nwala. 2015. “Introduction” in T. Uzodimma Nwala, Nath Aniekwu and Chinyere Ohiri-Aniche, *Igbo Nation: History & Challenges of Rebirth and Development, Volume One*, (Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2015), 34.
- ^{xxi} Victor Ukaogu, “The Rise of Individualism and the Growing Irrelevance of the Igbo in the Nigerian Project,” 81
- ^{xxii} Ukaogu, “The Rise of Individualism and the Growing Irrelevance of the Igbo in the Nigerian Project,” 81-82.
- ^{xxiii} Reno Omokri, “Without Igbo Unity, there can’t be Igbo Presidency,” 2021
- ^{xxiv} Korieh and Nwala, “Introduction” p.34.
- ^{xxv} JBG Chika Okpalike 2017. “Oganihu Ndiigbo: through the social-existential forces of Ikeoha and Ikeotuonye,” *UJAH*, vol. 18, (2017), 46-69.
- ^{xxvi} Okpalike, “Oganihu Ndiigbo: through the social-existential forces of Ikeoha and Ikeotuonye,” p.55.
- ^{xxvii} Cyril Chibuzo Ezeani, “Ego Mbutu Phenomenon: Towards a Rediscovery of Igbo Philosophy of Wealth,” *Ideal International Journal of Igbo Scholars Forum*, Nigeria, vol. 15, (2022), 62.
- ^{xxviii} Gemeinschaft & Gesellschaft—
home.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/debenoist/alainb.html)
- ^{xxix} Sartre, Jean Paul. *Anti-Semite and Jew*, (New York, NY: Schocken Books), 1948, 67.