

PEACE BUILDING IN AFRICA: THE STUDY OF INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN *IKOMMEE* TRADITION OF *OMABALA*

By

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Abstract

The paper explores *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala* as an indigenous conflict resolution. Communities in *Omabala* like her counterparts in Igbo Land and world over have their share in the global challenges of conflict. They have made great effort at offering solution to this universal problem facing mankind using *ikommee* whenever human blood is involved as integral and indigenous approach to conflict resolution. The objective of the study is to expose the potency in the *Omabala* people's traditional peace building to the world. The area of study is on indigenous conflict resolution, as it concerns peace building in *Omabala*. The data for the study are sourced through mixed method such as observation, oral interview, focus group discussion, library as well as internet. The literary theory adopted for analysis of the study is "Archetypal Theory," to expose the nature and process of *ikommee* in *Omabala* for easy understanding. At the end of the study the finds revealed that *ikommee*, does not offer preventive solution to conflict, rather it serves as a potent check on peace building amongst the warring Communities in *Omabala*. It helps to restore order, peace, and mutual co-existence of the Communities in conflict in *Omabala* at any point in time it is observed. The attitude of 'willingness to let go and suppression of the will to continue,' appears to be the common factor in the *ikommee* tradition. It revolves around fear and influence which are at the centre of *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala*, as an approach to peace building. The study would be of great value to the general public, mostly to students and researchers with keen interest in the study of alternative method of conflict resolution/ peace building.

Keywords: Peace Building, Iko mmee, Omabala, Conflict Resolution.

Introduction

Peace has been eluding mankind since the time of fall of our first parent according to biblical account, which results to the act of man inhumanity of Cain against Able. Since then, conflict and its attendant violence have been threatening the peaceful coexistence of people in the society. The occurrence of conflict in the society is on the increase. It has become part of human nature that cannot be easily wished away. Hence every society and every generation had and has been devising means and ways of solving this universal problem facing mankind.

Communities in *Omabala* like her counterparts in Igbo Land and world over have been engaging in one conflict situation or the other. The people have their share in this global challenge of conflict. They have made great efforts at offering solution to this universal

problem using *ikommee* and rituals involve in it as an alternative approach to peace building. It is as a result of this effort on how best to resolve the ugly incidence of conflict mostly when it involves shedding of human blood, which often occurs that *ikommee* comes into existence among the communities in *Omabala*. It is a way of resolving conflict between and amongst the communities as well as serving as a means of sealing the reconciliation processes between and amongst parties involved in the crisis.

This study explores the *ikommee* tradition and belief in using the traditional values of *Omabala* people to foster peace amongst them. It is adopted as a reconciliation process because of its ability to managing the ugly circumstances arising from conflict. It is also a means of exposing the potency in this traditional technique of peace building by the *Omabala* people, in particular on peace building alongside human relationship in the society. Therefore, it is important that this aspect of peace building of *Omabala* people is studied with focus on its socio-cultural importance as a seal of resolutions reached during the rituals involvement in reconciliation mostly when human life is involved.

In Igbo Land left for the war situation, whichever way one is killed in another man's hand the person who committed the murder is bond to run away into exile for seven year. There are two reasons behind the tradition of going into exile by any person that committed a murder. One of the reasons is for the safety of the person, because if s/he is seen around as if nothing happened some angry mob could kill such person. The second reason is to respect the tradition which serves as a way of buying time for healing the wound as the processes of the blood cleansing-*ikommee* is organized and performed. Even in the war situation where it involves communities, *ikommee* is organized, as a form of ritual for appeasement of the God, earth goddess deity(s) ancestors and the spirit of the person killed from avenging for the death of the person(s) in both interpersonal and group or communal conflict.

Ikommee in itself is different from covenant, however, covenant or oath of peace could come in as part of the processes of *ikommee* when the fear of further killing of human beings by the aggrieved party is felt. It is in the process of making covenant or taking of oath of peace in the *ikommee* tradition amongst the people of *Omabala* attracts the presence of spiritual realities such as God, land, gods and or deities and ancestors. However, it has been established that *ikommee* like other conflict and or peace building techniques does not offer preventive solution rather it serves as a potent check on the peace already built amongst the communities in *Omabala* at any point in time it is observed. It is observed that the attitude of 'willingness to let go and suppression of the will to continue,' appears to control the atmosphere in the *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala*. Directly or by implication, either that the people are willing to let go or they suppress their zeal to continue in the conflict due to fear and influence. The fear and influence are at the centre of *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala*, as an approach to peace building because of both human and spiritual presence. Hence it helps to restore order, peace and mutual co-existence between the communities in conflict in *Omabala*. The study would be of great value to the general public, mostly to students and researchers with keen interest in the study of *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala* as alternative method of conflict resolution.

Review of Related Literature

Archetypal Theory

“Archetypal Theory” also known as “The Collective Unconscious” is a literary theory

propounded by a Swiss Citizen called Carl Jung, who spent his life between the year 1875-1961. The theory concerns itself in finding out symbols, images, characters that have universal outlook in socio-cultural, religious, political and economic setting, which reflect in art and literature of the people. Kennedy and Gioia (2007:1520-1521) say in line with this that in a more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal, which they call the personal unconscious. It this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and it is not a personal acquisition rather it is inborn.

This deeper layer is also referred to as the “collective unconscious.” The term “collective” comes in play because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal, which quite different to the personal psyche. This is as a result of its contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. Hence, it is in other words identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psyche substrate of a supra personal nature which is present in every human being. Archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear. In line with this Dobie (2012:63) says that archetypes may have originated in the unchanging situations of human beings, such as the rotating seasons or the mysteries of death, they are not intentionally created or culturally acquired. In literature we recognize them and respond to them again and again in new characters or situations that have the same essential forms we have met before and have always known. The connection with archetypes, help in re-creating the basic patterns or types that are already in our unconscious, making us to respond to them just as someone halfway around the world from us might. Archetypes appear in our dreams, religious rituals, as well as in our art and literature.

Peace Building

Peace building is the term(s) that denote every effort put in place by the concerned individual or group which revolve around the situation of peace making and peace keeping. Many authors have tried their best in the efforts toward contributing to the meaning of peace building, one of them is Moreover, Adiele, (2007:277) opines that peace keeping is a conflict controlling and tension diffusing operation carefully designed to provide the belligerents with a stabilized situation and conducive environment for peaceful resolution of the dispute or conflict. It is a way to help countries torn by conflict to create conditions for sustainable peace.

Ifesinachi, (2007:75) says:

Peace building can thus be perceived as the attempts to overcome the structural, relational and cultural contractions precipitating conflict, usually underpinned in processes of peace making and peace keeping. It draws inspiration and is the nodal point between developmental imperatives facing mankind and conflict resolution initiatives.

In line with this, Nwanegbo (2005: 69-70) says, “Peaceful settlement of problem through negotiations, judicial settlements etc, should be seen as more potent in bringing peaceful settlement. It should be adopted and used early enough to avoid the over conflict itself, before attempt at solutions.” Nwachukwu, (2009:168) says, that it cannot be over

emphasized that nation's policies must continue to have peace building as a prerequisite for development.

It is observed from the above views of authors cited that peace building encompasses every aspect of peace making and or peace building processes in so far as conflict resolution is concerned. However some authors manipulate it to suit their various frame of mind as well as the situation surrounding them. Therefore, in summary the researcher could say that peace building is a holistic approach and measure taken by the personnel in the crisis situations or zones to restore order and peace.

***Ikommee* -Blood Cleansing**

Ikommee as a term has not been widely defined in the context it is used amongst *Omabala* people, by good number of authors in their literatures and research reports. Hence the present study is more of documentation, because the much we could lay hands on as reviewed here has been through the data sourced from oral interviews.

Etymologically, the term *ikommee* derives its meaning from the Igbo words “*i kọ mmee*” meaning to clear blood. It points at the act of clearing and removing of blood from the literary point of view. However its meaning is deeper in accordance with the Igbo thoughts and belief, because the blood referred to here is not blood of goat or cattle rather it is human blood. Therefore, it calls for ritual observance for the bloodshed as a result of conflict to be absolved. It is the ritual cleansing of blood would enable the parties to reconcile, thereby regaining their former friendly relationship with one another. This is because it is only when the issue concerning blood is addressed between parties in conflict as well as the living and dead- the spirits such as God, land, gods and ancestors that their relationship could be said to be healthy again without anyone nursing grudges. It is in this regard that the term *ikommee* has expanded beyond its original meaning of expressing serious and deadly incidence involving in the death of human being to the extent of using it when reconciling parties involve in minor issues in this present time. If it is used in this last sense, it simply means reconciliation which is a term used to restore friendly relationship. It expresses the action of making one to see the need for being compatible with one another.

Many people have contributed to the meaning of the term *ikommee*, one of them is Nnanna (2020) says that it has to do with the processes of bringing peace to a warring groups and or communities mostly when the conflict resulted to death of human being. It is initiated as a means of managing, resolving and reconciling the parties involve. In line with this, Ibeh (2020) opines, “*Ikommee* is a traditional approach to sealing the reconciliation processes in presence or assembly of God, gods, ancestor and men.” Uwanze (2020) says:

Ikommee is a tradition that concerns itself in the cleansing of abomination committed over human blood. It is the act of appeasing the God, land, gods and spirit of the person killed in the course of two fighting or war in order to build peace once more.

Nneli (2020) has it that *ikommee* is the use of divine presence to rebuild peace between communities torn apart by one conflict situation or the other of which on the process involves shedding of human blood. Udeanyinya (2020) is of the view that *ikommee* is a tradition amongst the Igbo that brings communities who were seeing one another

as enemies together in the rituals of atonement, forgiveness and reconciliation using traditional values of the people. Also in view of this, Nwattah (2020) says, “The processes in the rituals of *ikommee* removes fear of hurting or killing one another from the parties in conflict, thereby reestablishing trust in them which makes them to see one another as brothers once more.” On the other hand Udeoba (2020) sees it as a pagans' way of administering peace between communities in conflict born out of fear that the gods they assembled for the ritual have the capacity to kill the defaulters.

From the above views of *ikommee*, it is observed that the individual exposure and knowledge in the subject matter helps to shape their opinions. However, the central idea in the above definitions is that *ikommee* is a tradition with very high level of ritual that assembles both spirits and human beings together in order to bring one case of conflict resulting to shedding of human blood to an end. This is because it is when the issue concerning blood is addressed between parties in conflict that they will not see each other from the point of enemies any more.

Tradition

Tradition is a means of transmission of holistic way of life of a people such as customs or beliefs, inheritance, established pattern of thought, action, or behavior, story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable from one generation to another. Many authors have contributed in the definition of tradition and or culture one of them is Nnachor (2006:65) says:

...culture and heritage are inseparable as they both point to one direction- the beliefs and way of life people over a period of time. It stands to reason therefore, that the people of any community, whether primitive or developed, must have certain beliefs and way of life handed down to them by their ancestors. In that context, Anam as a people have certain beliefs and way of life which we inherited from our ancestors, and these form the culture and heritage of our people.

In line with this, Nwadike (2008:13-14) opines that culture is an all-embracing word which encompasses a given way of life of a people such as their language, their technology, their religion, their systems of marriage and agriculture, their beliefs, their aspirations and expectations, their likes and dislikes, their humours, their cuisines and distances, their triumphs and failures, their fears and hopes, their worldview, in fact everything one may think about a people. It serves as a means of identity to the people, hence it revolves round their behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. Culture communicates through the use of symbols that manifest in such things as language, religion, knowledge, social habits, music and arts of a particular group of people.

Omabala

Omabala is one of the geographical locations in Anambra State. It is from *Omabala* River that Anambra State derives its name from, though in a corrupt version. Nneke (2019:74) says that the communities in *Omabala* are those communities in the four local government areas as follows: Anambra East: Aguleri, Umueri, Umuofo Anam,

Igbariam, Nando na Nsugbe. Anambra West: Ifite Anam, Ezi Anam, Nzam, na Olumbanasa. Oyi: Nteje, Okuzu, Ogbunike, Umunya, Nkwele. Ayamelum: Anaku, Ifite Ogwari, Igbakwu, Omasi, Omoo, Umueje Umulum and Umumbo.

Aniako (2002:306-7) says that Eze Nri was regarded by the Igbo as their spiritual potentate and had considerable influence in virtually every part of the Igbo territory to the east and west of the Niger River. He quoted Jeffreys (1934) who says: In his study of what he refers to as Igbo- *Omabala* civilization embodied in this priest-king in historical terms. In line with this Onwuejeogwu (1972) argues:

Igbo ritual and political institutions, social lore, ritual system based on Omenani (customs of the land) are part of a complex idea system which revolves around this priest-king who fashioned, nurtured and propagated it through his ritual diplomats. The germinal phase of this civilization is associated with Eri who founded an ancient kingship or theocracy in the *Omabala* basin from where, at his death; began the dispersal and growth of settlements founded by the children of Agulu (one of the sons of Eri). It was the more elaborate crystallization of this idea system by one of the Eri sons at Agukwu Nri which nurtured it to sun-lit uplands and culminated in the production of the famous Igbo-Ukwu bronzes. Thus the Igbo-Ukwu bronzes were part of the ritual and political panoply of leadership in the Igbo territory.

However, the authors and their works reviewed above are all good in their respective context, however none of the authors and their studies is in the position to replace this research work. This is because none of the authors and their studies focused on the *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala* from the point of view of peace building. Therefore the study is seeking for a space in the corpus of literature of this nature as well to bridge the knowledge gap in the above studies.

Analysis of *Ikommee* Tradition in *Omabala*

The tradition of *ikommee* in *Omabala* involves chains of rituals that are performed in three major places, along with some people who observe it as well as some ritual items used to carry it out. It is an abomination in Igbo Land for one to temper with someone's life, therefore for a proper reconciliation to take place in any circumstance that involving shedding of human blood, the rituals of blood cleansing would be performed to appease and or to atone God, land, gods, ancestors and the spirit(s) of the dead of which the ritual is observed. However, no meaningful discourse will be carried out in this study without mentioning of conflict resolution, because the main reason for observing the rituals of blood cleansing is to atone the God, land, gods, and ancestors for committing abomination. These spiritual realities are appeased because of violation their ordinances concerning the dignity and sanctity of human life mostly as a result of conflict. For the sake of clarity *ikommee* connotes reconciliation, which has intricate relationship with conflict resolution.

Ikommee is a traditional form of peace building and or conflict resolution in *Omabala*, which requires high level of rituals in the processes of reconciling the parties. It is after the observance of the ritual of *ikommee* that the parties involved would be in the position to associate freely with one another. It is an avenue for bringing people who kill one or one another together, in a ritual where the dead are handed over to the ancestors cast out fear

from the living. This is because without ritual of *ikommee*, the people involved in the conflict situation would live in a state of fear to both the living and the dead. Without it the most aggrieved party would be on the lookout for ways to avenge for the death of their relation or townsman/woman as the case may be. Also the spirits such God, Land, gods, ancestors as well as the spirit of the person(s) so killed would be haunting the people because they have not been appeased. It is the ritual of *ikommee* that reconciles the spirits, living and death and absolve the abomination of destroying human life. It is at this point that the parties both the spirits and human beings are reconciled.

Ibeh (2020) outlines the steps to be observed in the *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala* when he says that in the first place, a house is built after which it is destroyed by setting it ablaze. The house symbolizes the human being whose life is taken by burning it down. The above act is performed as a reference to the violation of a prized asset which is the human life. The second phase in the ritual of blood cleansing is the killing of a he-goat which is the main ritual item for the blood cleansing. It is killed, butchered and its parts are dropped at the major road. It is the people's belief that the abomination has been transferred into the he-goat, therefore no part of the he-goat will be eaten in any way by the people. It is stated somewhere in the course this analysis that the main reason for observing the rituals of blood cleansing is to accord respect to tradition along with its emphasis in the dignity and sanctity of human life. It is at this point that God, land, gods, ancestors and the spirit(s) of the dead of which the ritual is observed are addressed in the following ritual words or prayer:

Chukwu anyị baili imeda Gị obi	God we have come to atone you
Anị anyị baili imeda gị obi	Land we have come to atone you
Arụsị dī n'ala anyị anyị baili imeda unu obi	Gods of our land we have come to atone you
Ndịichie anyị baili imeda unu obi	Our ancestors we have come to atone you
Anyị maara na ọ bụ	We have acknowledged that
Omume nzuzu ka anyị meli	We have acted foolishly
Site n'ikwawu ọbala ụmụnne anyị	By shedding the blood of our fellow
Nnwoke na nwanyị	Brother(s) and sister(s)
Anyị kweteli na ọ bụ alụ ka anyị meli abomination	We accepted that we have committed an
Megide mmụọ na mmadụ	Against the spirits and human
Ndị ndụ na ndị nwụlụ anwụ	The living and dead
Anyị na-egbu mmadụ anyị bụ Chukwu?	Are we killing human beings are we the God?
Ọ bụ nya ka anyị ji bịa imeda unu obi	That is why we have come to appease you
Were akalangwa nwa iji hanye	With the following items in order to commit
Mmụọ ụmụnne anyị nnwoke na nwanyị	The soul of brother(s) and sister(s)
N'aka unu	Into your hands
Dị ka anyị na-emume imeda unu obi taa today	As we are performing the ritual of atonement
Ka nun nye va ezumike ebeebe	May you grant them eternal rest
N'etiti ndịiche	Amongst our ancestors
Ka mmụọ va valị iwa anyị ava	So that their spirits will cease from haunting us
Anyị na-ayọ unu ka unu lie ọbala mkpi	We asking you to feast on the blood of this he-goat
Nke anyị ga-egbu iji kọọ mmee ve.	Which we are going to kill for cleansing of their
blood.	

Ibeh (2020)

Uwanze (2020) on the other hands explains the ritual involved in the *ikommee*, which he says that dog is one of the important items used for the rituals of blood cleansing. That the essence of dog in the rites of blood cleansing is that dog and human being are eating the same kind of food. That Igbo adage says, “Onye jeli ọgụ hụ nkịta gbuo, ọ hụ mmadụ o bee ya isi” -One who sees dog in a war and kill it cannot spear human being. It is in this regard that dog should be killed by hanging to symbolize the act of committing suicide, in place of the person that committed the murder, who should have committed suicide according to tradition. The earthenware would be used to collect the blood of the dog and the he-goat, as well as the cola nuts and wine use in the ritual. He further says that money which is one of the ritual items, would be used to marry a wife to replace the person so killed. One locally made casket-mock casket with plantain leave on it will be used to dispose the dog and he-goat as if they are human beings. He further makes it clear that in the case where a family member is killed by one of their members, while they are observing the rites of blood cleansing, they would not use dog and money because there is no need of killing another person nor marrying a wife for replacement, rather they would use tortoise and he-goat for absolving the abomination committed by one of their family members. He further emphasizes that cola nut and wine serve the purpose of the reunion feast for the parties or the family as the case may be. The words or prayer for observance of the ritual of blood cleansing is performed in the following way:

Chukwu anyị meli alụ	God we have committed abomination
Wee bịa imeda Gị obi	And come to atone you
Anị anyị meli alụ	Land we have committed abomination
Wee bịa imeda gị obi	And come to atone you
Arụsị dī n'ala anyị anyị meli alụ	Gods of our land we have committed
abomination	
Wee bịa imeda unu obi	And come to atone you
Ndịichie anyị meli alụ	Our ancestors we have committed abomination
Wee bịa imeda unu obi	And come to atone you
Anyị bialị ka anyị kpọọ	We have come to absolve
Alụ anyị meli	The abomination we have committed
Site n'inwepu ndụ mmara	By destroying human life(s).
Site igbu mmara ka ọ bu ọkọ	By taking life from human being like fowl
Ọ bu nke a meli anyị egbu nkịta nwa	For this we are taking life from this dog
Anyị na-akwugbu ye n'oo	We are hanging it on a tree
Iji ye wee nọchie anya mmara	In place of human being.
Maka na anyị aya atunyero isi mmara ọzọ	For we cannot accept to destroy another human
life	
Ọ bu nke a meli anyị ji egbu nkịta nwa	That is the reason we are killing this dog
Iji ye wee nọchie anya mmara ibe anyị	To replace the death of our fellow man.
Anyị na-agbanya ọbala nkịta n'ime ọkọ	We are pouring the blood of dog into the earthen
ware	
Nya na ọbọlọ mkpị nke bu	Along with the blood of he -goat which is
Omenala ikommee mmara	The traditional cleansing of the human blood.
Anyị na-ayọ ka udo nata n'eeti	We are asking for peace to return between
Ndị dī ndụ na ndị nwụlụ anwụ	The living and the dead
Anyị na-ayọ ka udo nata n'eeti	We are asking for peace to return between
Onye gbulu mmara na onye o gbulu	The murder and murdered

Anyị na-eme emume ọkọmmee nwe N'iru Chuku onye keli ive niile universe	We are performing this rite of blood cleansing Before the Supreme God the creator of
Anyị na-eme emume ọkọmmee nwe N'iru Anị ọgba ọgụ ive ọjọ	We are performing this rite of blood cleansing Before Land the avenger of evil deeds
Anyị na-eme emume ọkọmmee nwe N'iru alụsị ndị ala anyị	We are performing this rite of blood cleansing Before the god(s) of our land
Anyị na-eme emume ọkọmmee nwe N'iru ndịichie bụ nna nna va	We are performing this rite of blood cleansing Before our ancestors
Anyị na-eme emume ọkọmmee nwe N'iru ndị mmaru nọ n'ebe e.	We are performing this rite of blood cleansing Before the people present here.
Anyị na-awanye ọjị nwa Na-atanye mmanya nwa n'ọkụ	We break this cola nuts And pouring this wine into the earthenware
Dị ka olili nligbe ịjị mezuo Emume ntọaja e ji akọmmee	As the reunion feast to seal The ritual of the blood cleansing
Iji medaa Chukwu, Anị alụsị ndịichie Na mmụọ onye e gbulu egbu obi	To appease God, Land, god(s), ancestors And spirit of the person murdered.
Bido nị gava n'ive ọjọ aya adakwasịrọ anyị Ma anyị likoo ma ọ bụ n'ụkọ n'ogbakọ ọ bụna	Henceforth, no harm will befall us For eating and drinking together in any
gathering Nkita na mkpị e ji chụ aja a emezugo nkwa fulfilled	The dog and he-goat so sacrificed have
Dị n'omenanị ịjị mee ka udo nata Ọ bụ nke e meli anyị awa ọjị nwa nuts	The demand of tradition for peace to return That is the reason we are breaking these cola
Na-atulụ unu mmanya Anyị onwe anyị ye ata ọjị n'ụọ mmanya Ka olili nligbe nwe dekenne abulụ anyị alụ n'iru unu Iseoo! (2020)	And pouring wine to you We too will chew the cola and drink the wine May this reunion feast not be accounted As an abomination to us before you. So be it! Ụwanze

Ụwanze (2020) also says that without proper and detail attention to the above spiritual beings, the rituals of blood cleansing will not take its effect. The third stage in ritual of blood cleansing centres on rebuilding trust among the people, both the principal persons and the other people present that contributed in one way or the other in the processes of peace building. It revolves around the feast and entertainment aspects of the ritual of blood cleansing.

However, from the above two persons' opinions about house and dog as what should be replace human being in the course performing the rites of blood cleansing. Ibeh (2020) holds that house symbolizes the human being whose life is taken, that by burning down the house. It therefore signifies the act of violation of a prized asset which is the human life. Human life is highly treasured that what should be use for its replacement would be something the society banked much on. Ụwanze (2020) invalidates the position of dog in the course performing the rites of blood cleansing, when he says, 'The essence of dog in the rites of blood cleansing is that dog and human being are eating the same kind of food. That Igbo adage says, "Onye jeli ọgụ hụ nkita gbuo, ọ hụ mmadụ o bee ya isi" – One who sees dog in a war and kill it cannot spear human being.' It as a result of this that the dog should be killed through

hanging on a tree in place of the person who committed the murder, who should have committed suicide according to tradition. These two items are symbolic in the context of ritual of blood cleansing, in order to bring the message of how the *Qmabala* people banked so much on life and sanctity of life, of which the main reason the rites of *ikommee*-blood cleansing is observed.

Human Presence in the *Ikommee* Tradition in *Qmabala*.

The *ikommee* tradition of *Qmabala* people is not all comers affairs. It is important to note that the task of peace building at this stage is the exclusive of people of higher social standing. It takes people of great reputations to make some necessary moves in order to bring the parties in conflict together, mostly when the conflict escalates into group or communal crisis. Such moves to be made by the men and women of higher social profiles includes mediation, consultations and reconciliation using their outstanding personalities as great weapon, even as they are making series of sacrifices, such as offering up their time, money, energy etc. In line with this Nwana (1963:60) says that Omenukọ sent Mr. Igwe his friend to both the Ruler of the land and the Chief Priest on how he would make peace among the human community and the spirits as a result of the abomination he committed by selling some of his servants, of which he ran away from his community to Mgborogwu. In most cases those men and women are at the risk of losing their life. Amongst the people that the burden of *ikommee* in *Qmabala* lay on shoulders the are as follows: the Kings, President Generals, Intelligentsia, Chief Priests among others. Ifeagwazi (2009:125) in the same light says that individual's personality is assessed by the effectiveness with which he/she is able to elicit positive reactions from a variety of persons under different circumstances. It is the individual personality that consists of the most outstanding or salient impression that he/she creates in others. Idigo (2011: 39) observes:

Amongst the people drawn from the six communities in Anambra East local council area that contributed towards resolving the state of crisis in Otuocho includes H.R.M Igwe R.N Nzekwe of Igbariam whose negotiation and mediation role towards resolving the conflict in Otuocho Communal Crisis of 1999 cannot be undermined. His presence in the processes of resolving the crisis, brought in some notable figures like late H.R.H Igwe J.C. Emeka of Umueze Anam, H.R.H Igwe Anyansi of Nsugbe, from the external body. While amongst the three warring communities are H.R.H Eze C.N. Idigo Igwe of Aguleri, H.R.M Mike Ekweonu, Onowu of Umuleri and H.R.H Igwe Anijah, R. of Umuoba Anam, along with Chief Udealor Ignatius .E. These are the actors in the Otuocho Communal Crisis of 1999, who played important negotiation and mediation role towards achieving a lasting order and peace in Otuocho.

The prominent personalities mentioned above shows that the reconciliation processes is a serious business. Therefore no community would be taken serious if they sent unserious person as her representative in such grave matter like *ikommee* tradition of *Qmabala* people.

Covenant as Part of *Ikommee* Tradition in *Omabala*

When it comes to covenant as part of *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala* it attracts some unseen forces among them are God, land, gods and ancestors. Frankly speaking covenant is not part of blood cleansing in itself, because there could be blood cleansing without oath of peace. Covenant can take place anywhere between two or more persons when there is mistrust. Therefore as part of *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala* covenant comes in as a mechanism to build trust between two parties after blood cleansing is performed. Uwanze (2020) says, “It is important to note that the method of selecting the gods/deities to be used in the covenant between the parties in conflict is through divination.” The directives of the diviners are needed in the selection of the gods or deities to be used in the covenant, because it involves God, land, gods, living and dead. Therefore any careless undertaken could be a leakage in the potency of the gods as a result of wrong choice.

Idigo (2011: 39) opines:

There are some divine or spirit presence that plays vital role towards achieving the lasting order and peace in Otuocha Communal Crisis of 1999. The divine or spirit presence that contributed in resolving the Otuocha Communal Crisis of 1999 came in the form of gods from the six communities in Otuocha. These communities came with their gods in order to build peace using them to swear the oath of peace-Ikommee, among the three warring communities of Aguleri, Umueri and Umuoba Anam. The presence of other communities with their gods, also bears witness to the oath of peace and its term of agreement.

Principally covenant comes at the end of the rituals of blood cleansing as part of the processes when the people are nursing fear of further killing of human beings by the aggrieved party. It is in the processes of making covenant or taking oath of peace in the *ikommee* tradition amongst the people of *Omabala* attracts the presence of God, gods and or deities and ancestors. It involves the combine efforts of visible and invisible being, because the business of the day concerns God, land, the living and dead, of which their presence serves as a potent check on human excesses.

Communities in *Omabala* and their Prominent God(s)/Deity(s)

1. Aguleri-	Ọtutunzu
2. Anakụ-	Ekwensu
3. Anam-	Abuke
4. Ifite Ogwuari-	Iyiomu
5. Igala/Ibaji-	Akpone/Aduchi
6. Igbakwu-	Nebo
7. Igbariam-	Udude
8. Nando-	Qvii
9. Nkwele-	Iyiojii
10. Nteje-	Adu
11. Nsugbe-	Iyiojii
12. Ogbunike-	Iyiojii

13. Okuzu-	Adu
14. Omasi-	Agbukwu
15. Omoo-	Ajanjukwu
16. Umolum-	Otiuvio
17. Umueje-	Ogbututulutuu
18. Umueri-	Oviammili
19. Umumbo-	Weluanyagivu
20. Umunya-	Atu, Enem

The above data are sourced from library and interviews as stated below. Idigo (2011: 39) outlines that the communities and their gods used in resolving the Otuocha Communal Crisis are:

1. Aguleri	Otutunzu
2. Umuleri	Oviammili
3. Nsugbe	Iyiojii
4. Igbariam	Udedeonugwu & Amuziyyi
5. Umuoba Anam	Iwele
6. Nando	Iyiojii

Okeke (2020) also enumerates that prominent deities/gods of the communities in Ayamelum used for blood cleansing are:

1. Anaku-	Ekwensu
2. Ifite Ogwuari-	Iyiomu
3. Igba kwu-	Nebo
4. Omasi-	Agbukwu
5. Omoo-	Ajanjukwu
6. Umolum-	Otiuvio
7. Umueje-	Ogbututulutuu
8. Umumbo-	Weluanyagivu

Nwattah (2020) states that prominent deities/gods used by the communities in Oyi for blood cleansing rituals are:

1. Nkwele-	Iyiojii
2. Nteje-	Adu
3. Ogbunike-	Iyiojii
4. Okuzu-	Adu
5. Umunya-	Atu, Enem

Nnabor, (2020) in the same direction says that prominent deities/gods that are used by the Igala/Ibaji speaking people for blood cleansing rituals are Akpone and Aduchi. We have stated it somewhere in the course of this study that the cleansing of the blood is quite difference from covenant or oath taking. Therefore, the presence of these gods serves as a mechanism for fostering trust among the people involved in the conflict, mostly when there is fear that one party is not satisfied with the term of reached during the *ikommee*. These gods are not often taking to represent their communities irrespective of their prominence. Uwanze (2020) makes it clear that the community should consult diviners in order to know which of their gods gets divine approval to represent them, else it becomes a defeated effort. Therefore, the position of the deities mentioned above and how dear they are to the communities they come from does not matter. Experience has shown that it

takes the diviner to prove the deity that would represent the community in some occasions where gods are needed in the peace building process.

Items Used in *Ikommee*, and Oath of Peace in *Omabala*.

Ikommee tradition of *Omabala* requires some items such as dog, make-shift house, he-goat, she-goat, casket, tortoise, money, earthenware- mud bowl, rope, cola nuts, sacred chalk, staff, wine etc. In line with the above Idigo (2011: 39) says:

There are other items such as goats, fowls and some other animate and inanimate items includes cola nuts, wine e.t.c observed in the Otuocho Communal Crisis of 1999 conflict resolution. They are all special traditional items among Igbo people in their traditional conflict resolution method. The presence of human beings also bring those items to the desire of the gods.

Also in the same direction, Ibeh (2020) states that items used to perform the rituals of blood cleansing are: make-shift house, he-goat, she-goat, cola nuts, sacred chalk, staff and wine. On the other hands, Uwanze (2020) says that dog, he-goat, she-goat, locally made casket, tortoise, money, earthenware-mud bowl, cola nuts, sacred chalk, staff, rope, and wine amongst others are the items used to perform the rituals of blood cleansing.

These items are the prerequisite for blood cleansing wherever and whenever there is shed of human blood whether in the course of playing or fighting. The main reason for observing the rituals of blood cleansing is to accord respect to tradition along with its emphasis in the dignity and sanctity of human life. Therefore even when the state of conflict is severe to the extent that the number of persons killed in the course of fighting it out by the angry, able bodied men and women, which seemed as if they are possessed by the spirit of destruction. After all these negative exploits, it requires the above mentioned items to appease the land and bring the spirit of the dead people under control.

In line with this Nwana (1963:60-61) says Mr. Igwe came back with two lists of items from the Rule of the land and the Chief Priest. The Ruler of the land gave him the following list of items: one bull, eight eggs of hen, one cock, eight big yam tubers and eight small yam seeds. The above items would be used in feast of reunion for peace building among the human community, the spirits, and his family. While the items in the list of the Chief Priest such as: one sheep, one hen, one cock, eight eggs of hen, one egg of dock, one basket of yam, one basket of coca yam, head of cola nut, head of alligator pepper, four cola nut, sacred chalk, unadulterated palm wine, keg of low palm wine, keg of high palm wine and four eagle feathers would be used for the ritual of peace building. The items in the Chief Priest's list are mostly for ritual purposes, which often cannot be eaten by human beings.

There are peculiarities to be observed and respected in the studies whose topics have universal outlook such a peace building, conflict resolution, peace keeping amongst other terms. This is because they are all old terms used in the study of peace and conflict. However the fact remains that in the course of analyzing them, there is tendency of interwoven hence making them to be used in an interchangeable manner. It is this peculiarity in the study's background informed the adoption of archetypal theory for its analysis.

It is observed that the mood and atmosphere in the entire ritual of *ikommee* revolves

around the 'willingness to let go and the suppression of the will to continue.' One could observe that the whole process of *ikommee* appears to be influenced directly or by implication by fear of the unseen forces and respect for men of integrity. It is these spiritual forces and men are the factors and forces behind the *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala*. It is weight they throw on the parties in conflict bring about the willingness to let go and suppression of the zeal to continue due to fear and influence.

The fear and influence are at the centre of *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala*, because the people believe and value the entire process of peace building. It is the people's believe in the *ikommee* tradition makes it the centre of attraction and the act of restoring order, peace and mutual co-existence between the communities in conflict in *Omabala*. 'Willingness to let go and suppression of the will to continue,' appears to play major role in the *ikommee* tradition in *Omabala* like other conflict resolution studies irrespective of the approach one adopts. This is because at a point in the conflict situation people either willing to let go or suppress their zeal to continue. At this people who are not ready to reconcile in the first place are influenced by some presences that would make the reconciliation possible.

It is in line with this that Eyisi, (2010:10) states that Eri made rules for regulating relationships between persons and impressed upon his people that they are brothers and should not oppress one another but should show love to each other so that peace might prevail among them. This is because of the values *Omabala* people attached to God, gods/deities ancestors and people involved in the processes of resolving and reconciling parties in conflict. The presence of God, gods/deities and influential people is enough to induce the state of willingness to let go and suppression of the will to continue in the people.

Conclusion

Conflict has become a household name in the life of people in the society that concerted efforts have been put in place in other to manage it. *Omabala* people have recorded good number of conflict situations ever before the advent of white man in this part of the world. Therefore like every other geographical location in Igbo Land their existence is punctuated between peace and conflict. The *Omabala* people resolved to seek the solution to the increase in the rate of conflict indices. It is in their bid to proffer solution to this universal problem forced them to conceive *ikommee* tradition as one of their veritable cultural values as an instrument for peace building. It involves the act of searching for the common values in the society torn apart with conflict as a means for reconciling them. This study therefore opens another window in the human beings' search for peace and efforts to restore order and peace in the society, by emulating the *ikommee* traditional approach of conflict resolution of *Omabala* -Igbo.

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