

RECALIBRATING THE TRANSMISSION OF IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGION: INSIGHTS FROM CAVALLI-SFORZA/FELDMAN AND JOHN S. MBITI

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Abstract

The more mmonwu sacred institution makes outings that are not scheduled in the ritual calendar of Igbo Traditional Religion (ITR), the more it risks losing its ritual significance as the embodiment of the ancestors. Though the idea may be to transmit the substance of ITR, it gives the impression that it is the only means available. We shall establish that though Mmonwu is one of the means of transmission, it is not the only channel. We shall employ the framework of Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman to establish various models of transmission viz: vertical - parents to their biological offspring; horizontal - peers of the same generation; and oblique - members of an older to younger generation. To complement their work, we shall use Mbiti's theory of African religion to show the religious-philosophical understanding of African life which produces the substance of ITR that is transmitted. The double frameworks answer the important questions of the how and the what of transmission. Hence, the survival of ITR will depend more on the preservation of its substantive elements and the adaptation of modern ways of its transmission.

Key Words: mmonwu, evangelism, transmission, culture, oblique, digital technology

Introduction

Our interest in Igbo Traditional Religion has grown much since the repeated and sometimes ambiguous calls by certain protagonists to return to its original practice. These protagonists have been merely emotive and not epistemic given that they have never given us an educated explanation of what the Igbo Traditional Religion (ITR) means and what their call to return to it entails. It is this that has prompted my avid interest in ITR. With the rise in modernity, deepening christianization, globalization, urbanization and digital communication, the transmission of ITR is further jeopardized. Could this perhaps explain why the protagonists of ITR have resorted to the use of the sacred institution of Mmonwu as a means of 'evangelism'?

Most recently in the old Aguata area of Anambra State especially in the towns like Aguluezechukwu, Ezinifite, Umuchu, Umuomaku, Achina, these protagonists have introduced what has commonly become identified as "Mmonwu Uka

Eke/Orie/Afor/Nkwo” apparently with the goal of creating awareness and drawing Igbo back to the religion of their ancestors. It is such that on Sundays that fall on particular market days of individual towns in the area designated, the sacred institution of *mmonwu* becomes instrumentalized to distract Christians from their Sunday obligations and probably, provide for them alternatives to Christian practice. Pending further investigation, we hesitate to say whether the activity functions as a form of religious revitalization, missionary adaptation, cultural activism, or economic enterprise. Given the fact that African religion according to Mbiti (1975), is not preached from place to place, from one people to another, (p. 13) it would seem very artificial and forceful for some protagonists to be pretending to preach the ITR by any means at all, from community to community in Igboland. *Mmonwu* is one mode of transmitting ITR, but it should not be treated as the principal or comprehensive mechanism of transmission.

This study will address a gap in African religious scholarship which had up until recently been glued to Christian evangelism in Igbo land at the negligence of the preservation and transmission of ITR. (Onuh, 1992; Okeke, 2019). Our use of religious transmission is to refer to the inter-generational and cultural reproduction of beliefs, practices, values and knowledge of ITR. The major objective is to make an epistemic shift by opening up the modern Igbo consciousness to the effective and indigenous modes of religious transmission that served our ancestors well for centuries before the advent of Christian evangelism and modernity. Little or no attention has been given to this essential part of our religious heritage as Igbo people. Perhaps, this explains why the undue pressure on the *mmonwu* sacred institution seems to be a misplaced pressure that would not only be counter productive, but would dilute the ritual significance of *mmonwu* (Onyeneke, 1987) and its other roles. (Onebunne, 2019). Understanding indigenous means of transmitting ITR strengthens our understanding of Igbo culture.

Hence, our research question borders on discovering how the cultural-religious contents of ITR can be effectively transmitted across generations and contemporary social contexts using the vertical, horizontal and oblique pathways identified by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman. The aim is to provide what effectively serves in urban, diaspora, digital contexts that do not purely rely on *mmonwu* inspired type of propaganda. The result of the research will provide methods that are far reaching, more effective and all inclusive in their approach. The research will do a service to the preservation of the *mmonwu* sacred institution because the alternatives will prove that *mmonwu* methods have more limitations than earlier thought of. The fact that the method is locally bound and seasonal or event dependent shortens its reach and availability to a wider audience. The pure doctrinal and cosmological essence of Igbo Traditional Religion are adversely affected and those in diaspora who lack the authentic witness of *mmonwu* in context, will ever remain shortchanged.

Given that there is no clear-cut distinction between traditional religion and Igbo culture, the epistemic shift we are introducing would be through the channel of culture as

people's religious way of life is part of their culture. Hence, the dual complimentary theoretical framework that would carry this discussion are the cultural transmission theory developed by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (henceforth known as CSF) and the conceptualization of African religion by Mbiti. While CSF addresses the how of the transmission of ITR across persons and generations, Mbiti provides the what, that is, the very essence of the religion that is to be transmitted as a distinct way of life. CSF provides the transmission mechanism, that is the processes and social-pathways through which cultural-religious traits are transmitted, while Mbiti provides the phenomenological and ontological account of African religious life from which the substantive contents of ITR can be identified. These immediately address the lacunae of the *mmonwu* based means of transmission. We shall be paying attention to specific cultural traits rather than the overall description of culture, to show how the theory is adaptable for the transmission of ITR.

The study adopts a qualitative, conceptual-analytical methodology grounded in philosophical interpretation and contextual analysis. It relies primarily on CSF and John S. Mbiti respective theories. The major scholarship on ITR are brought in to expose how the theories we employ, adapt the aspects of ITR as cultural-religious traits to be transmitted. Other relevant scholarship on cultural transmission and *mmonwu* ritual institution are used for the purposes of interpretation.

The Conceptual Framework:

A. Cavalli-Sforza/Feldman Transmission Matrix

Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (CSF) have not written on the transmission of Igbo religious culture. They adopted a quantitative approach in their study of cultural transmission and evolution. Our interest is in their conceptual categories that will help us explain the transmission of ITR which we shall be considering as cultural religious traits. They study culture as traits that can be transmitted between individuals and through three major identifiable pathways: vertical, horizontal and oblique. These pathways influence the speed of the spread of the traits, the stability of the transmitted traits, and the variation that can exist within the groups. Before we delve into these divisions and their full import, CFS (1981) defines culture as “traits that are learned by any process of nongenetic transmission, whether by imprinting, conditioning, observation, imitation, or as a result of direct teaching” (p.7).

They take “traits” to be basic units that are transmitted nongenetically from one individual to another and that can change in frequency over time. When we mention culture traits then, we understand them to be learned characteristics (attitudes, beliefs, customs) of human behavior and artifacts that can be passed from one person to another person by social learning which includes teaching, imitation, observation, conditioning, etc.

Cultural transmission then would be understood to mean the transmission of nongenetic units from one individual or group to another through the processes of imprinting, conditioning, observation, imitation, or direct teaching. In a coauthored article in a science journal, Cavalli-Sforza et al (1982) define it thus, “Cultural transmission is the process of acquisition of behaviors, attitudes, or technologies through imprinting, conditioning, imitation, active teaching and learning, or combinations of these” (p.19).

It is the transfer of cultural information from one generation to the next, from one group to another group; this transmission occurs in two stages: “the awareness of the information to be transmitted and the acceptance of it” (Schönpflug, 2008, p. 5). For African religion, its transmission is more communal than individual and can happen through three different pathways which include vertical, horizontal and oblique.

Vertical Transmission:

A transmission is vertical when it is about parents to offspring. This transmission is “the one most similar to genetic transmission, from which it may sometimes be distinguished only with difficulty” (Cavalli-Sforza, 1993, p 312). The maintenance of a trait over generations is assured and stable with the probability of transmission as 1. From the usage of this model, it is shown that traits like religion and politics tend to be strongly shaped by family transmission (parent-offspring) model.

Horizontal Transmission:

This is a type of transmission that happens between people of the same generation. It is basically described as peer-to-peer transmission. This includes youth groups, age mates, and school mates. The obligatory-full day schooling implies that children are with their mates for most of the day and thus, are subject to some form of influence that is favourable for horizontal transmission.

Oblique Transmission:

This is the mode of transmission that takes place “between any two (usually unrelated) individuals” (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981, p. 54). It is a transmission model in the type of donor-recipient or teacher-student where the teacher as a trait carrier transmits to the student who is the receiver. The carrier and the receiver of the trait are usually of different generations and not related nor the descendants of the giver in a direct line. Cavalli-Sforza (1993) notes that it is the kind of transmission that is typically “cultural” (p. 312). Parents can naturally assume the role of teachers whose work is continued by other adults. This mode of transmission makes the society conservative and most social customs are most probably transmitted through this method. The beauty of this mode is that it can be used to reach many individuals at the same time while the nucleus of the message remains undiluted during the process of transmission. That is why teachers, social or political leaders find their natural habitat in this mode of transmission. It is the most frequent type of transmission as social hierarchies, schools, and indirect

communication systems develop. (Cavalli-Sforza, 1993). Many individuals of older generation who have the transmissible 'traits' often influence many others of a younger generation in such a way that what they teach reinforce each other in a coherent way. This creates a condition where the population becomes "homogeneous" (Cavalli-Sforza et al, 1982, p.20).

These transmission matrices will eventually help us to show how Igbo Traditional Religion can be transmitted independent of the *mmonwu* sacred institution. We shall be examining how ITR traits like beliefs, practices, symbols, rites etc can be effectively transmitted through the various transmission pathways like vertical-parents & offspring, grandparents-grandchildren; horizontal-peers to peers, age mates, youth associations; and oblique-sacred person in ITR like *dibia*, priests, elders, teachers, media/online figures, festivals, rituals etc. We shall show that though *mmonwu* is also an oblique transmission pathway, it is only one out of the thousand and more effective ways available.

B. John S. Mbiti Religious-Philosophical Content of Igbo Traditional Religion

As a complimentary conceptual framework, Mbiti's theory of African Religion will help us consider the substance of ITR, the what exactly that is transmissible from generation to another generation to safeguard and promote ITR in Igboland. Religion according to Mbiti (1975) is "closely bound up with the traditional way of African life, while at the same time, this way of life has shaped religion as well" (p.9). Religion and life are so intertwined that it is somehow practically impossible to isolate them. It is such that there is "no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life" (Mbiti, 1969, p.2). He defines religion in terms of "beliefs and customs; rituals, ceremonies and festivals; shrines, sacred places and objects; myths and legends; music and dance; proverbs, riddles and wise sayings; and names of people and places" (Mbiti, 1975, pp.19-27) As for philosophy, he understands it as the underlying logic, structure, and attitude of mind which explains how people think, act and speak according to their various conditions of life. Generally, he describes religion within the perspective of Africa as "an ontological phenomenon" which pertains "to the question of existence or being" (Mbiti, 1969, p.19). In his estimation, there are five ontological categories that encapsulate African religious reality. They are:

1. God as the genesis and sustenance of all things
2. Spirits being made of superhuman beings and spirits of men
3. Man including human beings who are alive and those about to be born
4. Animal and plants, or the remainder of biological life
5. Phenomena and objects without biological life

The ontology above places man at the centre of every activity from God to the objects without biological life. It is thus an anthropocentric ontology which binds the world of the African in an unbreakable bond. Those who have tried understanding the African

outside of this ontology have committed errors of interpretation. It is this anthropological ontology that will lead us into the ITR's cosmology where the categories become substantive contents that would be transmissible through the vertical, horizontal or oblique pathways as cultural-religious traits from one person or group to another.

Contextualization of the Framework in Igbo Traditional Religion

The complimentary conceptual framework of Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman and Mbiti provides us the platform to give flesh to the cultural-religious traits of Igbo Traditional Religion and examine how they can be transmitted to others in a more effective and successful manner outside of the *mmonwu* sacred institution. The cultural-religious traits include:

I. Belief in the Supreme Being - *Chukwu/Chineke*

The idea of God did not come to Africa and Igboland with the Christian missionaries. Igbo people have always had a belief in God we describe as the Supreme Being. The Igbo have three names for God, two of those come from the same root. The first two names are *Chukwu* and *Chineke* - both meaning the Great God and the God who creates. (Ndiukwu, 2014). *Chukwu* is made of two distinct words: *Chi* (god) and *ukwu* (great) to give us *Chiukwu* or *Chukwu*. *Chineke* is also from two words: *Chi* (god) and *eke* (create). The important word in both cases is *Chi*. How does the Igbo understand '*Chi*'? What in essence does it mean? According to Metuh (1981):

The word *Chi* used in a religious context, evokes three related concepts namely: the 'Supreme Being,' the 'Guardian Spirit,' and the idea of 'Destiny' or 'Fortune.' Only the context can show which of the three is uppermost in an Igbo's mind when he uses the word *Chi* (p.21).

Even among Igbo, we could still get other varieties of meaning of the word *Chi*. (Okeke, 2019) Whatever be the case, the Igbo believe that *Chukwu* is the greatest of all beings in all ramifications. He is pure spirit that in Igbo worldview, he is never represented in any symbolic way or the other. While there are images and even effigies of gods and spirits, there is none for God the Supreme Being. The other name for God is '*Osebuluwa*' meaning Lord who controls the universe. (Arinze, 2008, p. 15). It is usually the parents and the grandparents who carry this trait and transmit them to the younger generation - their offspring. It is one of the basic things to know in ITR.

II. Belief in Deities

Let us go with what Mbiti (1969) said that "the spiritual world of the African peoples is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits and the living-dead" (p.97). They are not all of the same grade in the hierarchy of spiritual beings. Igbo Traditional Religion recognizes the existence of deities, spirit-forces called *Alusi*, and disembodied spirits. The distinctions and nomenclature may not all be the same but their existence and influence in the Igbo worldview is never in doubt. According to Metuh (1981):

The Igbo deities form the great circle of non-human spirits, who come next to God in the ontological hierarchy and are believed to be his agents, helping Him to shepherd different sections of His creation...the deities are more often conceived with reference to the services they render to man; *Chukwu* who created them, assigned them specific functions (pp.54-55).

Some of the deities universally recognized in Igboland include: (i) *Ala* - the Earth-mother: This is a female deity who is considered the custodian of law and morality, and the guarantor of political stability. (ii) *Anyanwu* - the Sun: this deity inhabits the sun and it brings good fortune. (iii) *Igwe* - the sky deity, inhabits the sky. (iv) *Amadioha* - associated with thunder and lightning is also a sky deity. (Metuh, 1981, p. 55). His "presence is seen in the lightening and the voice discerned in the thunder. He is the wrathful messenger of the Supreme God" (Orjikwe, 2016, p. 64). (v) *Agwunshi* or *Agwu* deity: this deity is known for granting knowledge of medicine and is also responsible for spirit possession. (vi) *Ihejioku* or *Ahajioku* - the Yam deity is generally recognized for granting plentiful harvest of yam during the farming season. (vii) *Chi* - is the deity that assures fertility and responsible for the guidance and protection of the individual possessor. Every Igbo person has a personal *Chi* that accompanies him/her from conception to death. (Orjikwe, 2016, p. 67).

III. Spirits

These are the next in the hierarchy of invisible beings. Here is found what the Igbo describe as *Alusi* or *Arusi* - sometimes translated as spirits and other times as spirit-forces. (Metuh, 1981, p.55) We shall go with spirit-forces as translated by Metuh, to distinguish them from the proper personal spirits. Their actions are irrational. Their number is such that they are uncountable, each village has its pantheon of *Alusi*. Although there is so much misconception and inconsistency regarding the true meaning, position and role of *Alusi*, what we have stated is generally credible. Other things worth knowing of *Alusi* are the points noted by Metuh (1981):

An *Arusi* can be the property of a clan, a family, or even an individual. An informant explained to me that an *Arusi* can be man-made, but usually an object becomes *Arusi* when a spirit begins to manifest itself through it. Divination confirms that such an object has become the permanent abode of a spirit-force (p.55).

These spirit-forces find their abode in caves and rivers, rocks, lakes, forests and mysterious places. It is believed that they have supernatural powers that can be beneficial to the lucky humans and especially those privy to the secrets of their cults. (Metuh, 1981, p. 72). Generally, they inspire great fear and reverence.

IV. Veneration of the Ancestors

The belief in the dualistic world of the living and the dead among the Igbo is very manifest in their traditional veneration of their ancestors whom are sometimes called 'the living-dead.' This is a practice that is found in almost all African countries. Mbiti (1969) describes them as “the closest things men have with the spirit world” (p. 107). They receive more attention than *Chukwu* and the deities because they are always invited to be with the family whether privately or communally. They are invited to participate in all the family and communal rites. (Ndiukwu, 2014, p. 188). The veneration signifies an unbroken relationship between parents who had died long ago and the children who still live and depend on their continual assistance from there yonder. It is believed that the ancestors have the power to influence the affairs of the living for better or for worse, and that's why they merit this continuous respect and veneration. There are various means of transmitting this knowledge: parents, grandparents, elders, age groups, ritual leaders, media platforms all have a responsibility in transmitting this part of ITR to the recipients.

Other part of that anthropological ontology concerns man in himself which includes those alive and yet to be born. The cosmological view of the Igbo confirms the unity that holds the visible and the invisible members of his community and how much each is affected by what affects the other. Prayers, offerings-sacrifices, divination and care of the sacred places and objects of divination go together in a chain. Knowledge of the sacred animals and objects and their importance in the life of the Igbo man further underline how religion is a pattern of life more than just a set of beliefs. The behavioural and cognitive characteristics that must be learnt: Norms and ethics, taboos, obligations to spirits/community that constitute the religious philosophical order in which he lives, moves and have his being. All these show the interconnection between man and the world of the living, the dead, animals, plants and objects without biological life. These and many more constitute the religious traits that can be transmitted from one group to the other, one generation to another by the means of the transmission matrix that we shall examine below.

The Transmission Matrix of the Religio-Cultural Traits in ITR

The notion of 'evangelism' seems quite foreign to ITR. That is why we think that the exercise of 'evangelism' through “Mmonwu Uka Eke” phenomenon, going on today in some of the communities of the old Aguata local government area, is a misnomer. It is a desperate attempt to attract new converts, mostly from the Christian communities, into the religion of our Igbo heritage. We think it is an abnormal situation because 'evangelism' has no historical antecedent in Igbo tradition and moreover, its propagation has never been done from one region to another region for the simple reason that its essence is not missiological. This however, does not negate the fact that religious ideas may spread from one people to another in spontaneous ways through migrations, intermarriages, or other means. According to Mbiti (1969), we note that:

Traditional religions have no missionaries to propagate them; and one individual does not preach his religion to another. Each society has its own religious system, and the propagation of such a complete system would involve propagating the entire life of the people concerned. Therefore, a person has to be born in a particular society in order to assimilate the religious system of the society to which he belongs (p.5).

This observation calls for a change in tactics and that is why we shall offer a better, and more effective transmission matrix for the ITR in a way that does not commit the same error as the *Mmonwu Uka Eke* strategy, but nevertheless ensures the propagation of the religion of our Igbo heritage. Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman enumerate three pathways by which culture can be transmitted. As already detailed above, we shall go straight into enumerating and contextualizing the method for the use of Igbo traditional religion.

I. The Vertical Pathway:

We remind ourselves once more that vertical transmission is a transmission of traits from parents to offspring, or grandparent to grandchild in a direct lineage. This is the simplest and most effective way of transmitting Igbo religion. Parents who are traditionalists hand over their beliefs and practices through their living examples. The offspring simply assimilate “whatever religious ideas and practices are held or observed by their families and communities” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 4). Hence, the parent is the living scripture which the offspring read. Observations that have spanned generations confirm that religious traits like beliefs and practices, are strongly influenced by family transmission. In these modern times, this pathway can further be strengthened by the availability of teaching materials like booklets, which contain explanations of the major beliefs, practices, rituals, norms, taboos of Igbo traditional religion. This pathway is a natural form of family socialization where the simple things like family prayers and incantations, family rituals and celebrations, sacrifices before the family altars, shrines and sacred places, storytelling and festivities, seamlessly and progressively transform the child into an astute practitioner of Igbo traditional religion. It is a form of inter-generational transmission which ensures that the traditional religion does not disappear. The transmitter (parent) and the recipient (offspring) both cooperate in the transmission of religious traits.

II. The Horizontal Pathway

This is the transmission that happens between people of the same generation. Normally, initiation rites that introduce adolescents into the tradition and secrets of the land, happen for boys or girls of the same age brackets differently. (Parrinder, 1961). They learn about Igbo religion by doing. Age mates, peers, youth associations are also very strong pathways of transmitting religion. Their involvement in ceremonies, group events, peer discussions enhance the learning, assimilation and transmission of Igbo religion. Educational programmes tailored to the youths can be very effective. Adolescents learn even faster from their colleagues. For example, an adolescent may

learn ritual dances and songs of *mmonwu*, performance techniques, taboos and behavioral expectations, meaning of ritual symbols and ritual objects, etc from a contemporary. The transmitter is not necessarily a parent or religious specialist but a peer. This pathway helps much in ritual transmission.

III. The Oblique Pathway

Dibias, priests, ritual elders, leading initiates, leaders of community festivals, custodians of shrines and sacred places/objects; titled persons, traditional rulers, are all agents and transmitters of oblique type of transmission. They are in themselves human intermediaries between *Chukwu*, the deities, the spirit-forces, and humans. Ndiukwu (2014) notes that:

They conduct religious matters: ceremonies, sacrifices, formal prayers and divination...they are authorities and specialists, because they are trained men and women as regards the office...they are the harbingers of the people's culture, religion, and traditions...without them religious activities would neither survive nor function properly" (p.197f).

Their functions show how important their offices are as they are the reason why religion and its activities survive. The individuals who make up this special group of people serving the institutions they represent are describes as "specialists" by Mbiti (1969, p. 217) "in virtue of their specialized office, knowledge and skill in religious matters." By the virtue of who they are and the office/institution they occupy, they possess a special language, symbol, knowledge, skill and "office personality" which according to Mbiti, in the same work immediately quoted, "are not known or easily accessible to the ordinary person." For the cult of the deity and the divinities, it is the reserve of the priests, the *dibia*, the diviners, and the medicine men. The *dibia* is understood sometimes as the medicine man or a herbalist. The definition varies but can be taken to be "a person who tells fortune, is consulted before many sacrifices, and offers the joyless sacrifice to the evil spirits" (Arinze, 2008, p. 63). The *dibia* acts according to various categories. We have *dibia afa* – who through divination consults the spirit world for answers to mysterious problems; *dibia aja* – a specialist in offering sacrifices on behalf of men to appease the spirits or obtain special favours from them, and *dibia mkporogwu na mkpa akwukwo* – who specializes in bringing healing to ailing bodies and souls of men/women. These *dibia* have special gifts in that they decipher roots, herbs, barks of trees, and combinations that cure various forms of ailments and can ward off evil from negative forces. This special knowledge get lost if it is not transmitted to the younger generation and others who seek assistance.

For the service of worship and the activities surrounding it, the priest is fully in control and he is usually found in the sacred places like shrines, groves, altars of gods etc. In Igbo culture, the priest can be translated as 'Eze Arusi' because he conducts service at the altar of a public *Arusi* with an established cult. The priest is usually chosen and called by

the *Arusi* concerned or by the consensus of the owners of the deity.' He is thereafter ritually consecrated by traditional priests. The priest then becomes the official symbol and voice of the spirit-force, the representative of the god and the depository of traditional norms and enforcement, regulator of ritual seasons and consecrator of time, space and political institutions (Orjikwe, 2016, p.79).

In all, these institutions are custodians of religious knowledge and thus, very important in Igbo traditional religion. Without them, our religion becomes hollow. Igbo religion survives when these institutions function properly. Individuals get into contact with the "specialists" for various needs and services. When that happens, they in their various roles, places and nature, transmit Igbo traditional religion. That is the special character of oblique transmission because it happens between individuals who are unusually unrelated.

Mmonwu is one of the oblique ways but not the essence of religious transmission. If the group keeps it to its traditional roles in the community, it will still be listened to and regarded as the embodiment of the ancestors. (Isichei, 1969). The presence of *mmonwu* alone on festivities communicates the message of tradition. (Anoka, 2019). Over using it as it happens regularly today in the phenomenon of *Mmonwu Uka Eke* waters down the ritual significance of *mmonwu* and reduces it to a mere entertainment channel. Alternatives include - Media utilization which keeps the essence of Igbo traditional religion ever present in the mind of the people. Foremost in this oblique transmission of Igbo traditional religion are personalities like - Uchechukwu Obiajulu Sakar popularly known as Maazi Dibia and Mathias Ezeaku of Eziokwu bu Ndu foundation. They have become the consistent voices of tradition in the airwaves and in the media through digital technology. Their teachings, explanations of various parts of Igbo religion, and their consistent calls for a massive return to its practice transmit it to greater number of people in more ways than the use of time-and-space-bound *mmonwu* activity can do.

Conclusion

The researcher set out to seek whether there can be found other means of transmitting Igbo Traditional Religion without going through the sacred institution of *mmonwu* as has been discovered in some communities of the old Aguata local government area. The search led us to the discovery of two complimentary ways that take care of not only the mechanism but also the substance of the transmission. Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman provided the architecture of transmission through the three pathways of vertical, horizontal and oblique methods of transmission, while Mbiti engineered the religious-philosophical explanation of the African life from which the substance of the Igbo Traditional Religion can be identified. The CSF pathways enable the movement of religious traits from persons to persons, groups to groups, parents to offspring, grandparents to grandchildren, peers to peers, age groups, elders/teachers, *dibias*, priests, media outlets to large audiences etc. Mbiti's theory enables the proper analytical

identification of the substance to be transmitted as beliefs, rites and rituals, secret knowledge of herbs, symbols, traditions, societal norms and behavioral expectations, sacred objects and ancestral veneration etc. Though *mmonwu* is an oblique method of transmission, it does not have the capacity to transmit all that is essential in ITR. That is why other network of transmission pathways are quite useful and even more effective. Today young people communicate more through social media, peer networks and channels, community associations. Oblique transmission is particularly more advantageous for ITR transmission because much of its values and knowledge is embedded in communal institutions and the “specialists” who occupy the positions. Knowledge about deities, spirit-forces, rituals, taboos, shrines, ancestors, sacred places, festivals, healing incantations, interpretation of the messages of the spirits, etc is communicated only through the different “specialists” within the community. Hence, though a parent may not have particular answers to give to his/her child, other channels exist through which such can be transmitted beyond the family circle. That is why the community more than any particular channel is the most important factor in the transmission of ITR. Another angle to the changing patterns of transmission is the effect of modernisation on the pathways of transmission. Earlier it used to be from parents to the younger generation, today it has gone beyond that simple pathway to more modern channels like schools, mass media, social media, cultural festivals and peer networks. Finally, the survival of ITR is dependent on the preservation of the substantive elements of the religion and adaptation of multiple pathways through which the contents can be transmitted.

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