

AN AFROCENTRIC PHENOMENOLOGY OF NEO-PAGANISM IN IGBO SOCIO-POLITICAL MILIEU: THE ISSUE OF RETURNING TO THE ROOT

By

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Abstract

In the southeastern part of Nigeria today, there is this massive trend among the people, especially, the youth: returning to the traditional practices of their forebears. What is popularly known as “returning to the root.” The visible causes of this trend are: one, what I call the unveiling of religious ignorance hitherto beclouding the mind of the people, so to speak; two, unfounded promises of easy wealth by fake native doctors to the youth; three, the persistent reality of call to Dibiahood among the people. This new awakening conflicts greatly with the intention of indigenous people who are Christians and have the lure to go back to the footsteps of their ancestors but wedged with Christian indoctrination that traditional practices are fetish, pagan etc. I want to argue in this study that with the position of one being rooted in one’s indigenous root with critical open-mindedness, this seeming impasse will be resolved.

Keywords: Afrocentric, Phenomenology, Neo-Paganism, Igbo, Root

Introduction

By Afrocentric phenomenology is meant the author as an African discussing an African reality from his own personal experience and understanding. The author discusses this reality in question from pure unbiased and unprejudiced frame of mind for objective presentation and assessment. Hence, the attachment of phenomenology to Afrocentricism. This Afrocentric phenomenology is focused on neo-paganism as a base to x-ray a

development in Africa, specifically, in southeastern part of Nigeria in West Africa. In the Southeastern part of Nigeria today, there is this reigning mantra of “returning to the root”, that is, reactivating the traditional ancient practices of their (African) ancestors. The call for this return is occasioned by a number of factors which will be explored in this study. However, this return to the root has come with a number of abuses and aberrations that people are questioning the essence of this return. With the spate of kidnappings, ritual killings, etc., in the name of returning to the root, well-meaning individuals are agitated and questioning the understanding of returning to the root as championed mainly by the youth of this region. It has become an ugly development that needs to be addressed and arrested at the same time.

To address this issue, this work is divided into a number of discourses. Number one discourse focuses on the issue of Neo-paganism and its entrails. The second one faces the issue of returning to the root and its offal. Number three looks at the issue of *Alusi* as an integral part of Igbo traditional ancient practices. Number four argues the essence of returning to the root and its implications.

Neo-Paganism points to a current spiritual movement that undertakes to bring back to life, interpret again or take cue from pre-Christian religious traditions. Its starting points can be linked to the Romantic movement of the 18th and 19th centuries which lauded the mysticism and felt unstained ancient traditions in converse to industrialization and Enlightenment focus on rationality (Hutton, 1999, p.94). In 20th century, there was a remarkable witness of a more organized revival with personalities such as Gerald Gardner inaugurating Wicca as a new form of witchcraft and igniting bigger interest in pagan practices (Hutton, 1999, p.205). This renewal was additionally aided by increasing likings in folklore, archaeology and esotericism cum none

fulfillment with institutionalized religion. In essence, Neo-Paganism arose as a means of realigning, reconnecting with nature, paying homage to ancient deities and marking or celebrating seasonal cycles facilitating complete and pluralistic approach to spirituality (Adler, 2006, p. 22). It is remarkable to point out the fact that Neo-Paganism does not express monolithic approach but advocates diversification and adaptability to changing spiritual tradition. Some of its salient attributes include the following:

Eclectic Exercises: Many Neo-Pagan adherents imbibe an eclectic manner of approach by combining elements from different traditions to form personal, individual spiritual direction or routes. This feature of flexibility shows the movement's stress on individual freedom and creativity.

Heathen Practices: Equally referred to as Ásatrú, this practice renews Norse paganism, thrusting on the worship of deities cum upholding values like honor, community-mindedness and paying of homage to ancestors.

Druidism: This phenomenon got its inspiration from the Celtic traditions, current Druidry harps on the reverence, respect for nature, poetic influences and a steep linkage with Earth and its cycles.

Wicca (Witch): A contemporary witchcraft practice stressing on Duotheism (the God and Goddess), rituals linked with the lunar and solar cycles, and exercise founded in magic and individual empowerment (Pike, 2001, p. 56).

The diverse nature of Neo-Paganism is one of its distinguishing traits making it attractive and reachable to far more adherents and at the same time promoting a common commitment to spiritual exploration and veneration for the natural realities.

Core teachings of Neo-Paganism

Neo-Paganism enrolls a more variety of spiritual practices and beliefs, amalgamated by basic teachings, principles that focus on a deep connection with the natural world, individual spiritual growth

and collective or communal rituals. These essential teachings are stated below:

i. Adoration for Nature and the Divine Femininity

A core element of Neo-Paganism is the reverence for nature as sacred. Adherents more often than not visualize the Earth and its entrails as engulfed with spiritual meanings, promoting ecological consciousness and sustainable existence (Adler, 2006, p. 67). On this same plane, more Neo-Pagan practices accentuate the divine womanhood, celebrating goddesses as emblems of fertility, creativity and the rotational nature of life. This emphasis on the divine feminine is different from the patriarchal religious doctrines, and it gives allowance for a more encompassing spiritual ideal (Hutton, 1999, p.213).

ii. Many gods (Polytheism) and Animism

The idea of many gods is core to numerous Neo-Pagan practices, embracing the worship or recognition of numerous deities, mostly taken from ancient pantheons like the Greek, Norse, or Celtic. Animism, on the other hand, the belief that all beings including animate and inanimate beings have a spiritual essence, is equally common among them. This perception boosts a comprehensive relational treatment with the environment, that is, treating every life forms as one, interrelated and sacred (Pike, 2001, p.82).

iii. Ritualistic and Communal-Oriented Spirituality

Routine acts, rituals occupy a pivotal position in Neo-Paganism. It is a means of marking, celebrating seasonal cycles, noting life transitions and facilitating communal oneness. These rituals, in addition to making strong community bonds, they as well stamp the spiritual significance of natural cycles (Adler, 2006, p. 112).

iv. Thrust on Individual Spiritual Experience and Freedom

Neo-Paganism emphasizes a deep focus on personal autonomy and personal spiritual experience. Adherents of Neo-Paganism are admonished to pave their spiritual routes by gleaning from numerous traditions and practices that align with their own beliefs. This emphasis on individual spirituality shows a stronger repudiation of dogmatic strictures and champions a flexibly dynamic inclusive inclination to faith (Hutton, 1999, p.276).

The preceding teachings aggregately distinguish Neo-Paganism as a practice with dynamism and a pliable spiritual movement, allowing its adherents a deep sense of connection with both the natural world and their spiritual selves.

Philosophical Fundaments of Neo-Paganism

“Neo-Paganism’s philosophical underpinnings reflect a synthesis of historical, cultural, and intellectual influences, rooted in Romanticism, postmodernism, and ecological thought, while rejecting rigid dogmatic structures in favor of subjective spirituality” (Ndubuisi, 2025, para. 7) Below are some of the philosophical undercurrents of Neo-Paganism.

i. Imprints of Romanticism, Postmodernism, and Ecological Idea

Romanticism was a movement that swallowed European and then American cultures around 1775 and 1830. It was partly a reaction against the hard rationality of the Enlightenment and its official, non-dynamic, neo-classical art, countenancing the spontaneous, the unhindered, the subjective, the imaginative, the emotional, the inspirational and the heroic. Romanticism stamped a great influence in shaping Neo-Paganism by advocating the thought of realigning with

nature and ancient practices. Romantic scholars such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and William Wordsworth applauded the sublime in nature, eliciting a spiritual undertone that prioritizes individual experience above institutional authority (Hutton, 1999, p. 92). Postmodernism, in addition, affected Neo-Paganism by disputing the idea of absolute truths and universal religious tenets. Postmodern idea carries the baggage of pluralism, subjectivity, and the validity of multiple spiritual routes, resonating with Neo-Paganism's eclectic and inclusive outlook (Pike, 2001, p. 110). More so, the modern ecological movement has equally heavily imparted Neo-Pagan philosophy. Neo-Paganism harbors the environmental mores that stresses humanity's interdependence, interconnectedness with the Earth. This ecological emphasis endorses sustainable activities and a veneration for the natural world as intrinsically sacred (Adler, 2006, p. 68).

ii. Repudiation of Dogmatic Strictures and Acceptance of Subjective Spirituality

Core to Neo-Paganism is abhorrence of hierarchical and dogmatic religious ordinances. Averse to institutionalized religions that favor greatly fixed doctrines, Neo-Paganism prioritizes subjective spirituality, giving adherents the ambience to search and establish personalized spiritual gateways (Hutton, 1999, p.273). This method resonates with the wider change in current spirituality toward a self-informed and lived faith.

In accepting individual spirituality, Neo-Paganism urges its adherents to get motivation from available wide range of traditions while at the same time retaining a personal union with the divine. This dynamism and flexibility mirror a wider philosophical

attunement to originality and self-actualization, revalidating its allurements in a multi-diverse and postmodern globe.

Having seen what Neo-Paganism means and its entrails. I will now turn to the next discourse which is the issue of returning to the root.

Returning to the Root

To return to the root implies going back to the foundation, going back to the origin. And to call for going back to the foundation, the origin suggests that one has gone astray or gone to the point that one is no longer happy or missed one's way and therefore there is urgent need to return to the base. And to miss one's root can be either by forceful removal from one's original position by a superior force or by one intentionally though ignorantly following another supposedly better path with the intention of personal gains, happiness. In the context of this discourse, to return to the root suggests that there is crisis of identity for the Igbo person. It suggests that the Igbo person has taken a route that he or she is meant not to take. It implies an unhappy state, a state of deep search, a state of self-search for discovery, a state of deep questioning about one's current state, one's existence and the purpose for such existence.

For Aristotle, the chief end for man is happiness. When this happiness begins to elude man, man begins to retrace his step to regain this ultimate end. It largely seems that in Igbo land today, happiness is eluding most people. Many people are in frantic search for happiness and they have started asking deeper questions and the answer largely seems, for them, going back to the root, return to your root. The question is, what could be the cause of the uprooting in the first instance? The call to return to the root today or the trend of most Ndigbo returning to the root was remotely occasioned, initially, by the incursion of colonialism in African continent and its attendant missionary works that cut almost all Igbo-Africans out from their root. The effects of this age long incursion and its entrails

have today, proximately, necessitated the clarion call to return to the root. How?

Possible Factors Responsible for the Call to Return to the Root today

- i. **Religion's Veil of Ignorance:** Today, many Igbo people have been educated in the Western system of education both at home and abroad. In the course of these studies, they have come to realize the damage done to them through colonialism and the cover given it under the guise of missionaries and their works in Igbo socio-political environs. The missionaries made sure that the psyche of an Igbo man understood one thing, that their own way of relating to the Supreme Being and his messengers are nothing but fetish, paganist, etc., in derogatory sense. Having seen through this religion's veil of ignorance by virtue of critical thinking, they are now calling for a return to the root having seen no essential difference between the two ways of relating and worshipping the Almighty.
- ii. **Economic Hardship:** there is no gainsaying the fact that most Nigerians (Igbo people inclusive) are living below poverty line. There is increase in crime wave as people are doing whatever is possible to survive. And this is largely owned to bad leadership in the country under western system of operation that tends to cover perpetrators of crime through diversionary litigations and other forms of committing crimes that are not permissible in the traditional way of governance.
- iii. **Popular Deception:** In Nigeria today, especially in the southeastern state of Anambra, many young men and women are largely consulting and patronizing the native doctors in the hope of easy wealth through what is called *Okeite*, *Awele*, *Ibobo*, etc. These fake native doctors

have deceived these youths by making away with their money with unfounded promises. Most of them dealing on contraband goods promised to escape the eagle-eyed security apparatus, check points of the western countries have ended up jails in different countries of the world. While at home, these quack *Dibias* are living large from the money made out of their innocent victims. Due to this illicit luxurious lifestyle, many youths of Igbo extraction have resorted to learning the act of becoming a native doctor in order to escape, unemployment, hunger and poverty. A supposed divine call is now treated like any other profession just for the sake easy life.

- iv. **Call to *Dibiahood* (Native Doctor):** A stubborn lure to this call to return to the root is the phenomenon of being called to the vocation of *Dibiahood*, being a native doctor. This a big factor that gives credence to return to the root. Many Christians have returned to the traditional worship because they could not escape this phenomenon. It is as the same as answering the vocation to the Christian priesthood. Many who had this call had to go through excruciating trials of ups and downs in their lives, businesses before they could understand and finally succumb to the call. Some have tried to pray their way out but could not. Some were made to answer this call even by Roman Catholic priests in the course of their consultation and discernment processes with them. For instance, Mmili Enwe Ilo in Igbariam (personal communication, May5, 2025) was told to go and answer his call as a *Dibia* by a Roman Catholic priest after narrating his ordeals and peculiar experiences to the priest. Some who refused to answer the call after repeated signs and warning have been struck with incurable ailments, some outright madness and some others died because of it. This is an irrefutable

phenomenon that gives legitimacy and credence to the call to return to the root.

Having seen the possible factors responsible for the growing call to return to the root, the question now becomes, what is that root in itself? The experience of a young sensation in the social media known by his social media name as *Maazi Dibia* is insightful and very helpful here (personal communication May 8, 2025). He was a strong Christian on his way to becoming a priest. In his earnest desire to know God and serve him faithfully, he confessed that, through fasting and prayers, he was shown the right way through Quran, Torah and the Holy Bible both in the Old and New Testaments. The quotations are: Quran Chapter (Surah) 10 versus 94; “If you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the book from before you; the truth has indeed come to you from your Lord: so be in no way of those in doubt” (*The Meaning of Holy Qur’an*, 2007, p.125). Torah Job 8 versus 8 “Ask the former generation and find out what their ancestors learned...”(*biblehub*) ; Christian Bible, Jeremiah 6 versus 16; “The Lord says this: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the paths of former times, ask where the good way lies, take it and find peace for your soul.’ ” (*The Community Bible*, 2015, p. 1341) and Acts 24 versus 14: “But this I admit before you that I serve the God of our fathers according to the Way which they call a sect”(*The Community Bible*, 2015, p.1995) . All these quotations point to one fact; namely, follow the way of your ancestors. One may quib that going to the root, the way of the forefathers means the forefathers of the traditions mentioned, quoted. But the simple answer is that each tradition has got their own forefathers and, as such, it quite addressed the seeker to the ancestors of his own origin. And what is the way of our ancestors: it is *Odinani* largely, coupled with *Omenani*, and the hallmark of it is spirituality and not religion. How do I mean?

ODINANI (or ODINALA depending on the Igbo dialect)

Odinani signifies the spiritual beliefs and divine laws of the Igbo people. It literally means what is fixed or ordained or established in the land. For Igbo person who is regarded as “Onye *Odinani*” the person has embraced and accepted his or her Igbo identity and heritage *in toto*. And the person perceives himself or herself as *Onye Igbo* (one from Igbo extraction nothing more nothing less). This is simply the case because Igbo is the identity, language, spirituality, heritage, culture, tradition, food, wears, the overall world-view. *Odinani* is not solely slaughtering of animals and offering different sacrifices to our *CHI* (Almighty God), *Chi* (personal spirit, guardian) *Agwu* (spirit of talents), *Ndi Ichie* (ancestors), *Ndi Mmili* (water spirits), *Alusi* (different deities) that constitute our pantheons. *Odinani* is the ensemble of awareness, knowledge and comprehension of all principles and philosophies that define us as *Ndigbo*.

By nature, *Odinani* is spiritual while *Omenani* is cultural and social. By focus, *Odinani* centres on belief in spiritual beings like *Chukwu* (God) *Alusi* (deities) *chi* (personal spirit) and *Ndi Ichie* (ancestors) while *Omenani* centres on how people behave and relate in terms of marriage ceremony customs, festivals, taboos, etc. In terms of mutability, *Odinani* is perceived to be divine and permanent while *Omenani* is considered to change over time or adapt to new situations. In terms of relationship, *Odinani* is the basis that offers the spiritual reasons while *Omenani* is the expression, it displays how people live out those beliefs found in *Odinani*. *Odinani* is the “Why” while *Omenani* is the “How” (Onyeka, 2021, 37-49)

As earlier stated, the ways of our ancestors which is our root is *Odinani* which is spirituality *per se*. It is not religion! By spirituality is meant a person’s individual beliefs, individual experiences, individual practices in relation to the Supreme

Being and His agents or messengers. Whereas religion is the more hierarchically structured and institutionalized system of beliefs, rituals, practices, traditions normally relating people to God but attached or linked to a known community or organization. Further understandings of Spirituality and Religion are illustrated below.

- **Attention:** Spirituality is an individual journey, experience, inner search for meaning and the Divine while Religion is an organized methodical system of beliefs, ritual exercises within a particular society or community.
- **System of Beliefs:** Spirituality is cosmopolitan in nature, which is, gleaned from different sources and usually anchored around general ideals like kindness, love, compassion, etc., while Religion is hinged on set of defined teachings, dogma, scriptures, etc.
- **Procedures:** Spirituality involves quiet meditation, yoga positions, exercises aimed at connecting to nature while Religion involves administering of sacraments, liturgical exercises like prayer sessions, worship and adoration times.
- **Place of practice:** Spirituality can be done personally without any attachment or affiliation to any religious organization even though a lot of religious organizations equally imbibe spiritual exercises while Religion per force works with an assembly of believers with already set traditions within religious institution.
- **Sample:** A spiritual individual can personally ponder, reflect at intervals in search of inner tranquility in mind of uniting with a Being larger than himself or herself without the necessity of being attached to a particular religion while a religious individual is one who frequently attends masses or church, adhering to the tenets of one's creed and involves in other religious exercises.

The foregoing displays the essential differences between Spirituality and Religion. And it is the former, that is, spirituality that our ancestors are known for, and our root. And that is what Igbo people are called to return to. However, one phenomenon serves as deterring or debarring factor towards this call to root among contemporary Igbo people and this is as a result of Christian teachings. The issue of *Alusi* in Igbo world-view. This issue has been a controversial one among the intending converts to the root. Due to the teachings of major religions in the world especially with Christianity, people have viewed the phenomenon of *Alusi* with negative understanding and that is why it is imperative to clear the air around it at this juncture.

ALUSI IN IGBO WORLD-VIEW

Among Ndigbo, *Alu Kwusi* abbreviated as *Alusi* means a spiritual force or natural power, recognized, acknowledged and revered by a particular group of people. It can be linked with natural realities, ancestor's veneration or intangible notions. They are embodied supernatural forces that carryout substantial role in the day to day living of Igbo people. They participate in providing fertility, prosperity, justice, protection, development, peace, etc., in human existence. (Nwangwu, 2024, para 1) Within Igbo spirituality, the phenomenon of *Alusi* purports a somewhat perplex, mysterious instrument made to direct energy, guard communities and maintain justice within it. One should look at it as a non-physical figure that gathers energies, forces of the universe for a unique function within a given family or community. Any *Alusi* has a unique intention for instituting it. *Alusi* is a specific-purpose driven entity.

This entity is always re-activated and re-vitalized by means of ritual exercises, sacrifices and festival celebrations. They are perceived as go-between the natural and supernatural worlds. Belief in this phenomenon of *Alusi* is an integral constituent of Igbo traditional practices and spirituality.

For the Igbo people who follow Odinani, the world has levels. Chukwu, who created everything, is at the top but doesn't interact with us. He sends Alusi, his workers, to manage the affairs. These Alusi are not bosses on their own; they report to Chukwu. They connect closely with Ala, the earth goddess who holds the land and life. Chukwu is far away, but Alusi is nearby. They can get angry easily but can also render help. (Ossai, 2025, para 1)

And the other levels: “The world has four parts: Elu Igwe (Sky)- Chukwu crib, too high for us, Uwa (This Life)- where we and Alusi hangout, Ala Mmuo (Spirit Land)- Where ancestors and ghosts stay, Unborn Side- Where the souls are yet to be born.” (Odiike, 2025, para.)

Alusi as an integral part of Igbo belief system means that they are recourse to every now and then in Igbo (African) person's experiences. They are in constant communication with these entities in various forms and shapes. In communicating with them, there are various ways of sourcing information from them. These ways essentially entail the involvement of traditional spiritual exercises normally facilitated by the chief priest or native doctor (*Dibia*) or *Ndi Afa* (diviners). Some of these ways are, according to Odiike:

1. **Divination (*Afa*)** – The *Dibia* makes use of sacred objects, like cowrie shells, kola nuts, mirrors, divination boards, etc., to relate in lay man's knowledge the messages from the *Alusi*.
2. **Sacred Shrines (*Obu Alusi*)** – Pilgrims visit shrines consecrated to a particular *Alusi* in search of directions in life, they make sacrifices, and as well get information, revelations from them.

3. **Dreams and Visions** – More than few individuals have made it clear that they get direct messages, revelation from *Alusi* in their dreams or trance-like states.
4. **Oral Tradition and Rituals** –Through the media of storytelling, chants, ritual exercises, etc., elders and spiritual leaders hand down pieces of information, knowledge about *Alusi*.
5. **Symbolic Representations** – More often than not, *Alusi* are often displayed in carvings, masks, sacred objects and so on, which harbor hidden spiritual meanings and messages. (2025, para.)

As earlier indicated, in Igbo world-view, *Alusi* occupy strategic positions and play pivotal roles in Igbo belief system. They serve as go-between the humans and the supreme deity, *Chineke* or *Chukwu* through various mediums. Ordinarily, they are associated with natural elements like rivers, forests, hills, mountains, trees, etc., and it is taken for granted that they have influence over spheres of people's daily living. Normally, families and communities set up shrines for *Alusi* which are looked after by spiritual initiates called chief priest (traditional chief priests or diviners which may be a much younger person divinely called) and/ or the most senior, eldest in a family. "Certain *Alusi* serve communal needs, such as ensuring agricultural fertility, providing guidance in times of war, or administering justice. The worship and maintenance of these spirits involve rituals, sacrifices, and festivals that reinforce community bonds and social harmony." (Odike, 2025, para.)

Core Purposes and Functions of *Alusi* in Igbo land

As earlier stated, *Alusi* is a specific-intent-driven phenomena. But, by and large, it primarily serves the need for order and justice in a given community. Some other functions include but not limited to the following:

1. **Maintenance of Justice** *Alusi* enforces the compliance to rules and regulations, the mores ordained by the community. In case of default or disobedience, the *Alusi* spells out the appropriate punishment for the offender to ensure the maintenance of cosmic balance and harmony in the community.
2. **Regulator of Human Behaviors** By wielding the hammer of punishment, the *Alusi* becomes a constant reminder to individuals to desist from behaviors capable of injuring the peace and harmony of the community. It makes one to behave in acceptable manner always.
3. **Guardianship** Some *Alusi* are created with the sole purpose of protecting the community from external aggression, and guarantee for success in case of war situation.
4. **Energy Harmonizer** It harmonizes the confluence of energies found in the community for the stability of law and order and subsequent peace in the land.

Amid colonial strivings to obliterate indigenous spiritual practices, belief in *Alusi* persists and endures among Ndigbo till date. Currently, these phenomena subsist in occupying big role in traditional ceremonies, cultural signification and artistic expressions. The recent upsurge of awakening of interest in African (Igbo) spirituality has equally resulted in a renewed appreciation of *Alusi* as custodians of Igbo identity, heritage and world-view. *Alusi* epitomizes the natural dynamism and fluidity of Igbo spirituality. “While some spirits are transient, serving short-term communal needs, others remain central to the moral and spiritual fabric of Igbo society.”(Odiwe, 2025, para.) The knowledge and conservation of *Alusi* practices enable worthwhile insight into the elasticity of indigenous African belief systems and their importance in the contemporary globe. An *Alusi* is a nexus between the spiritual and physical divides. By dint of mysterious conjecturing, ancient

initiates crafted these mediums to avail cosmic forces, streamlining energies for a particular purpose. These energies are not haphazardly gathered but are intentionally assembled to: uphold the course of justice, avoid abominable acts, maintain harmony and provide guardianship. The objective of instituting an *Alusi* is not, first and foremost, for personal servings but to guarantee the general well-being of a given community. Its continued appearance, existence works as a regular check on people's behavior, making them conscious of their indebtedness to live morally and peacefully.

How *Alusi* is made and installed

In an oral interview with G. Nwofulundu, a *Dibia*, from Enugwu-Ukwu in Anambra State (personal communication, April 3, 2015). He asserted that every *Alusi* is made with a human being sacrificed. From his account, a warrior from another village is kidnapped because of his enormous strength. He will be tied to a tree in a secluded area where he is worn down with starvation and dehydration. By the time he is absolutely weak, he is untied and brought before the people who are to create the *Alusi*. These people will bring a small stick known as *Ogu*, turn by turn, they will hold the stick and speak their wish to it and after the speech will spit on it as a seal for that wish. By the time it has gone round all of them, the stick will be ground into a powdered form and forced down the throat of the kidnapped warrior, still alive. This process is known as *Ika Ogu*. By the time *Ika Ogu* is done, the victim will be lowered into a grave already dug and then covered alive. The immense and intense anger of the victim because of this injustice meted out to him is mystically mixed with and transformed into the wish of that community represented by those that created and installed the *Alusi*. Each time the *Alusi* is called upon with an agreed object of sacrifice to activate it, it moves without hesitation to accomplish the assignment with that quantum of anger and energy in him now turned into a forceful-wish of the people. It is that converted anger

and energy of the victim that the community manipulates to actualize their wishes.

Another source from Mr. Joseph Okonkwo Egbuna, a chief priest from Aguleri in Anambra State, (Personal communication, May 16, 2025) has it that an individual from a particular community can sacrifice himself to be used in creating and installing an *Alusi* for the sake of the whole community. This he said, is normally done for those preparing for war against another community or not to be defeated by any war monger community. The two accounts above are not the only processes of creating and installing *Alusi*. Ways abound depending on the intention of the intending communities. These variations express the wide range of cultural practices of Igbo communities, as every one of them tap into the cosmic energies at their disposal to solve their peculiar problems. Above all, like in governance, *Alusi* performs the function of checks and balances in every community. Its perceived presence assures that no one is above the law, not even the chief priests and other spiritual leaders. *Alusi* enforces transparency and accountability by meting out punishments for unjust acts and safeguards the harmony with natural contents and cosmic laws. Individuals and communities can enter into a higher and deeper state of awareness and protection by connecting with the energy, strength of an *Alusi*. Conversely, neglecting or abandoning these energies, after being instituted, for whatever reason may result in spiritual turbulence that impedes the general well-being of the whole community.

Having seen the import of Neo-Paganism and the intricacies of the issue of returning to the root, the pertinent question becomes: shall we go back to the root? Is the Igbo man's root worth returning to? The answer is in affirmative. How?

Hallmarks of Igbo man's Root

Before going into the hallmarks of Igbo man's root, it is germane that I x-ray succinctly the situation of social and political spheres of southeast currently. Socially, the people of southeastern Nigeria are living with ugly development arising from the rising spate of killings and kidnappings associated with making money very quick. This erroneous and evil thoughts are instilled in the minds of the people especially by the fake native doctors. Today, the sacredness of human life of which Igbo people is known for is today becoming an alien belief among the youths. The rate at which they senselessly harvest human organs whether the individual is alive or dead is quite alarming. People are heartlessly kidnapped for ransom and when one fails to meet up with the payment, it is either one is shot dead or one's organs harvested for sale to those using them to prepare charms. This ugly development has so polluted the social sphere of the region that today people go on their daily businesses with palpable fear of not knowing who will be the next victim. Social activities in this region are charged with fear and it has invariably affected businesses of this region. The night life of people in this area is almost reduced to zero and their economy affected negatively as most restaurants and relaxation centers that normally operate at night are shut down or close earlier than their expected time. It is: "In response to the increasing rate of ritual killings, the state government, under Gov. Chukwuma Soludo, enacted the Anambra State Homeland Security Law 2025, on Jan. 17, to combat criminal activities associated with ritual killings and fraudulent spiritual practices." (*Vanguard*. para.8)

This development is not unconnected with the political happenings in the region. The same fake native doctors prepare charms for politicians who aspire for one office or the other. This ritual has made the politicians to go hunting for their fellow human beings in search of assumed powers emanating from those practices that will guarantee their aspirations. The charms from these ugly practices are purported to give the politicians enormous power to conquer

their opponents. They equally believe that it gives them the power to be feared by the people, and as such, not to question them with regard to their constituency projects delivery. It is equally believed that they use such powers to manipulate and control unemployed youths into working as thugs for them during electioneering campaigns and doing their biddings willy-nilly. Besides, because of the constitution of the country that allows for Bible or Qur'an as means of swearing for an oath into governmental offices instead of by local deities, politicians have taken advantage of this to steal recklessly and deny the people the dividends of democracy.

The preceding negative illustrations are as a result of deviating from the root. What is then the root? What is going back to the root imply?

Going back to the root does not mean engaging in sharp practices that will give one easy wealth. Going back to the root does not mean killing fellow human beings in the name of money rituals. It does not mean kidnapping of people for ransom to be paid as a form of business. It does not mean going from house to house, individual to individual begging for alms when one can actually help oneself by working. It does not mean idling, lazing about. It does not mean wearing of masquerade during festival periods and be extorting money from innocent individuals. It does not mean use of charm to inflict harm to human beings and destruction of peoples' businesses. It does not mean importation of *Alusi* from neighboring communities or far away communities for intimidation and forceful control of other individuals. Going back to the root entails returning to Igbo man's identity. It means going back to those things that define them as a unique race, nation, and people. It means embracing our language and speaking it as it should. It means putting on those unique dresses that distinguish Ndigbo from others. It means farming those crops and animals unique to us that are rich in medicinal elements and highly nutritious. It means those

values of hard work, sincerity, respect for elders, straight forwardness, uprightness, fear of abominable acts, and respect for the dead through acceptable practices. In returning to the root, I advocate the philosophical position of being rooted in one's indigenous root with critical open mindedness. With this position, one can with criticality and objectivity remove those obnoxious practices found in one's root and be free to incorporate values, practices that are humanity-enabling from others. It is philosophical position that advocates constant critical evaluation of one's spiritual and cultural practices to keep one in positive direction. It does not entail succumbing to any spiritual tradition sheepishly. It does not accept the unjustifiable labelling of one's spiritual heritage as fetish, idolatry, paganist, etc. It highlights a spiritual journey that is constantly evolving for the betterment of the individual's soul and the community at large.

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