



**AT THE PEAK OF THE DISILLUSIONMENT: A REVISIT TO CHINUA ACHEBE
AND THE NEED FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE IGBO IDENTITY**

Uche Nnyagu (Ph.D)

Department of English, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *Africans in general and Igbo people in particular, are like the proverbial woman who has married two different husbands at different times who soon discovered who, between the two, is better. It is decades after the Europeans colonization of different parts of Africa and many Africans are getting disillusioned. Before the coming of the Europeans, Africans used to be gregarious. The Europeans came with their culture which they successfully imposed on Africa and many docile Africans are brainwashed into believing in the superiority of the Europeans' tradition. Being brainwashed, that the African traditions are barbaric, the Africans jettisoned their own culture and tradition and then, things began to fall apart. Years after the Europeans had left Africa, many Africans who had become more Catholic than the Pope, and who had embraced the white man's tradition almost completely annihilated the remaining tradition thereby making the society hollow. Things keep going from worse to worst as a result of the annihilation of the tradition and the consequent embrace of the align tradition. This paper looks at the society under the traditional religion and the contemporary society, and concluded that the society has corrupted by Christianity and therefore, recommends that Africans have a rethink and save their heritage.*

KEYWORDS: Europeans, Tradition, Africans, Igbo, Religion, Woman, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

When Chinua Achebe said that one who does not know when rain started beating him would not know where his body dries, he was referring to Africans who didn't realize that they lost their heritage the moment they allowed their tradition to go with Europeans whose tradition they embraced. Achebe and some other concerned Africans clamoured against the embrace of the European tradition but their voice was a lone voice in the wilderness. In his *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe made it vivid that the Europeans were cunning and that Africans were too compliant such that they allowed the Europeans to siphon them of their heritage. Achebe says that when the European came, our people were amused by his "foolishness" and allowed him to stay until he put a sword in the thing that held us together and things fall apart. Although the coming of the Europeans endeared the African to acquire the English language which, today, is the world language, the white man wheedled the African into believing that his tradition is barbaric so that he would be able to impose his own tradition on Africans. The Europeans made the Africans believe that their religion was satanic and that they were worshipping idol. As Achebe mirrored it, they cunningly penetrated every crannies of Africa and subtly convinced them into believing the Europeans.

It is pertinent to reiterate here that Africans were never idol worshipper neither were they atheists. The Igbo for example, before the introduction of Christianity, were ardent



worshippers of the supreme God. However, they had their traditional mode of worship. The Europeans of course, knew that the Igbo were never idol worshippers but in order to superimpose their own religion on the Igbo society like in other parts of Africa, they resorted to propaganda. Achebe presented this fact well in his *Arrow of God*. The novel, with the theme of culture contact and culture conflict, aptly x-rayed how gregarious the Igbo society was before the white man came. Like the proverbial strange fowl that stands with one leg in an align land, the European first monitored the terrain and quickly understood the loophole through which he could penetrate the Igbo people and convince them to join his religion. In Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, an ethnography of the Igbo, Achebe's setting Umuaro represents the virgin Igbo society and how serene the society was before it was corrupted by the Europeans. While many Igbo people abandoned their tradition to follow the white man, Achebe had seen the imminent danger of their action and bemoaned. Not many people understood Achebe then as they believed that the white man's god was all powerful and would protect them from whatever danger. Many of them according to Kenneth Nnyagu, willingly handed their shrine to the white man for annihilation. As Kenneth puts it, "The white man took some of the shrines to their place and whatever they did with them, nobody knows." Similarly, in *Arrow of God*, Achebe demonstrates how the new converts profusely attacked the traditional mode of worship in order to please the white man. Oduche, for instance, who is sent by his father, Ezeulu to be his eye in the new religion, imprisons the sacred python in his box, leaving it to die because their priest has told them to kill snakes including the sacred python. Today, our people are getting disillusioned about the European religion as they are beginning to understand that the embrace of the western tradition does more harm than good to them.

The Igbo and His Belief in God

Good News Bible in Deuteronomy 32:8 has made it obvious that the Almighty God allows different modes of worship and gods to different nations. It is appalling that the Europeans who wrote the bible sin turn, antagonize other nation's god and go against the biblical injunction of imposing their god on another nation. The bible maintains that for no reason should one nation abandon her own god in favour of another's. The Europeans are aware of this God's injunction and they believe in the spirit of their departed ancestors who they venerate as the saints. They believe also in Jesus Christ God the son. The same Europeans who understood the need to adore their ancestors cajoled the blacks into believing that respect to their own ancestors is idolatry. The fact that the Igbo and other societies in Africa had strong belief and regard for their ancestors through whom they reached to the supreme God is well demonstrated in *Africa Year Book and Who's Who 1977*. As recorded in the book,

Traditional religions are varied and complex, but they have common features. A common belief is in a supreme god, considered to be the creator of the world, like Faro, the god of the Bambaras, Mawou of the Ewes, Chuku of the Ibos, Mulungu of the Bembas, Ngai of the Zulus. But as the supreme god is not directly accessible, in daily affairs recourse is had to secondary gods and the spirits of the departed ancestors who, being spirits, are closer to the gods and can intercede with them.

Religion has been profoundly influenced by attachment to social groups, Ancestor worship is common. Departed ancestors, being



spirits and regarded as lesser gods, are revered as masters of the living and the guardians of law and morals (9).

The Bible recognizes that God created different nations and gave each nation her own god. Achebe aptly illustrates the fact that Igbo people, before the coming of the white man, understood that they had their god through whom they reached to the supreme God. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu is the chief priest of the Ulu and Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, understood the impending doom awaiting the people if they allowed the white man to mess with their god. This accounts for why Okonkwo fought with the last blood in his vein to ensure that the white man did not have his way. Okonkwo could not understand why the white man should not mind his own business and allow them to do their things their own way. Achebe reports in *Things Fall Apart*, that when the white man came, the Igbo people, represented by Umuofia people, allowed him to stay, soon, the white man gained ground and began to antagonize the Igbo tradition. Achebe demonstrated the unique manner, the traditional Igbo prayed to their God in *Arrow of God*. Ezeulu, praying to Ulu to bless all the people of Umuro and protect them from any danger in their various farm places on page 6, shows how peaceful, united and lovely the traditional religion is. In Igbo traditional religion, greed and envy are discouraged as they pray for the progress of all, present and absent. The Igbo had continued to enjoy relative peace until the coming of the white man's religion.

According to Deuteronomy 32 Vs 8 (*Good News*) "The Most High assigned nations their lands; he determined where peoples should live. He assigned to each nation a heavenly being." This portion of the bible is a clear indication that God knew about all nations, tribes and societies and their specific beliefs. The bottom line that despite the belief system and mode of worship, everybody (with the exception of the atheists) worships the same supreme God. This supreme God, of course, is not Jesus Christ. Only Christians believe in Jesus Christ. Christianity was not originally the religion for Africans, likewise Islam. The Europeans imposed the religions on Africans. The acceptance of the foreign god and religion is the cause of the incessant jihads witnessed especially in Nigeria on regular basis. God had warned against the embrace of align god, as he had in creation, assigned to each people, their own god. In verse 12, God frowns at the embrace of foreign god. As the *Good News Bible* records it, "The Lord alone led his people without the help of a foreign god." The African man, particularly the Igbo man lived his life, prayed to the god assigned to him by God, of course Jesus Christ, totally out of it. Igbo men lived gregariously and they lived long too because they respected their assigned god while believing in the supreme God. They lived egalitarian life devoid of enviousness, greed and rancor. They never planned evil against one another because they knew that doing so would incur the wrath of their god. As Achebe observed, things began to fall apart in Africa when the people admitted the foreign gods – Jesus Christ and Mohamed for Christians and Muslims respectively.

A typical traditional man lives holy life and does not do anything that would hurt another person because he believes that the god would strike him dead. With the coming of Christianity, our people were made to understand that the god of the Europeans is slow in anger and does not kill the evil doers, people who had the tendency to do evil quickly ran into the white man's religion where they hide to perpetuate evil without check. According to Parrinder, Geoffrey in *African Traditional Religion*, African traditional religion does not permit evil doing of any sort. According to him, "The virtue in traditional African religion is often connected with carrying out of obligations of communal aspects of life. In traditional



African religion, everyone tends to trust one another because nobody thinks evil about the other” (105).

Gregarious Nature of the Igbo

Before the coming of the European, Igbo people, despite not confined to a particular environment were united and were speaking with one voice. This was why they were not always easily defeated in any battle. Adiele Afigbo in his *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*, says that “But scholars and administrators have tended to be impressed more by the fact that the Igbo did not come under the umbrella of a single state or evolve state system of any great size; that in spite of this Igbo society and culture enjoyed a basic uniformity of pattern and cosmological and social ideas; that the Igbo proved difficult to govern under colonial rule even though they were very receptive to Western education (1). Igbo people had been gregarious and that was why they were not easily taken by the European when they stormed. Unlike the other tribes in Nigeria: Yoruba and Hausa, the Europeans in order to penetrate the Igbo, employed the services of Igbo elders as warrant chiefs. Concerned Igbo people were afraid that soon after colonization, true identity of the Igbo would be eluded and they sought to document the historical fact in their writings. In his *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Chinua Achebe has expressed his fear that in the near future, children of Igbo men and women would be misinformed into believing that the Igbo society had been without culture and tradition. With the pace things were moving then, Achebe in a bid to preserve the image of the Igbo, decided to mirror the Igbo society in his early novels so that the new generation would know that for sure, the Igbo did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans. He discloses to the public that part of his reason for writing especially his early novels is to let the new generation Igbo people know that the Igbo society was never a heart of darkness as they would be made to believe. According to him, his novels, mostly the ones set in the past would make him quite satisfied if they teach his readers that their past – with its imperfections – was not one night of savagery from which the Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them. In his “The Kola Nut: Its Symbolic Significance in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” in *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, Bawa Kammampool and Suuk Laar, write that the African society was a united entity before the coming of the European. According to him, “To Achebe, community in African literature dominates all aspects of African thought. Undertakings like dancing and worship are communal activities. Even property was held communally before the colonial era and it is the duty of African writers to reinstate that practice” (28). The Igbo people believed in the spirit of live and let live. In a typical Igbo society, members of each kindred, clan or community used to be well united and they collectively worked to achieve a common goal. This is why the Igbo have as their slogan, “Igwe bu ike” which denotes the indispensability of unity. In *Arrow of God*, Achebe vividly demonstrates this virtue as the people of Umuaro always converge at the different occasions to deliberate on the way forward. They accord great respect and regard to Ezeulu as the chief priest of their god, Ulu. In a typical Igbo society, the people never suspected anybody so at each of their meetings, the eldest would pray with a kola nut, break the kola nut and everybody around would take a lobe from the plate and chew after the kola nut had been offered to their god. The fact that the people ate the kola nut without fear of being poisoned shows how the Igbo had trusted each other. Achebe vivifies this fact with the constant meetings of the people of Umuaro in *Arrow of God*. Ezeulu as the custodian of culture, would, before the commencement of their meetings, break kola nut and the people would



partake in the eating as no member of Umuaro ever suspected being poisoned because they were bound by Ulu never to think evil of anybody. This unity eluded the Igbo the moment they accepted the white man's religion.

Conflicts among Religions in Africa

Prior to the coming of the Europeans, all Africans were traditional worshippers; they believed in the supremacy of God the Almighty who they prayed to through their ancestors. Christianity and Islam entered Nigeria and became prominent religions during colonization thus making it three major religions in Nigeria. Research revealed that the Igbo tribe used to be one and there was mutual understanding amongst the Igbo people until the Europeans came with their selfish desire. The entire Igbo people used to converge at Nri at different occasions to commune with their god and their god never disappointed them. The white missionaries obviously came to destabilize the Igbo and they understood the importance of Nri to the entire Igbo and they sought to capture Nri and other important places in order to easily dismantle the traditional religion. The unsuspected Igbo in their gregarious manner, had welcomed the white man and even made him their friend. Recall that Nwaka had, in Achebe's *Arrow of God*, accused Ezeulu of befriending the white man. The white missionary is wise and cunning. In order to be able to achieve his selfish aim, he has built his church at a strategic place to be able to get his target. Achebe writes that the place where the Christians built their place of worship is a stone's throw from Ezeulu's compound. Of course, his aim is to distract the traditional worshippers and easily get them converted to his religion. It is the tactics applied that gets the docile Igbo people, including the prominent traditionalists and elder of Igbo inquisitive to join and find out what they do. Ezeulu himself, decides to send his son to represent him since he is "tied" by Ulu. As Achebe puts it,

As he sat in his *obi* thinking of the Festival of the Pumpkin Leaves, he heard their bell: GOME, GOME, GOME, GOME, GOME. His mind turned from the festival to the new religion. He was not sure what to make of it. At first, he had thought that since the white man had come with great power and conquest it was necessary that some people should learn the ways of his deity, that was why he had agreed to send his son, Oduche, to learn the ritual. He also wanted him to learn the white man's wisdom, for Ezeulu knew from what he saw of Wintabota and the stories he heard about his people that the white man was very wise (42).

This is the peak of hypocrisy. It is appalling that Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu, who should be living by example, should take such a rash decision to send his son to join the new religion. Whatever Ezeulu's reason for sending his son to the white man's religion, to Nwaka, is unjustifiable. In his *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*, Adiele Afigbo vivifies this when he writes that:

The truth is that quite early in the period of British penetration of Igbo land it would appear to have been recognized by the more anthropologically minded among the white missionaries and administrators, that Nri was a place of some importance among the Igbo. As early as 1857 the Reverend Mr. J. C. Taylor of the Church Missionary Society, then stationed at Onitsha, came into contact with



Nri priests and agents, and it is probably a measure of his recognition of the importance of the city that he recorded meticulously the visits which 'Itshi men from Inzi' (Nri) paid him. He probably also knew that they travelled widely in Igbo land hence he seized every opportunity of meeting with them to improve his knowledge of the interior (31).

Soon, it dawned on the people that the white man is gaining ground and soon, that they would completely be overtaken, they regret their action but it is already late. Those who had joined the new religion to witness their modus operandi are coaxed into jettisoning their belief. Those who had sent their children to join the white man and monitor his activities discover soon that they were losing their children to the white man. At that time, the Igbo were becoming afraid that soon, the Europeans would take over the entire Igbo and they would lose their identity to them. Chinua Achebe disclosed that the average Igbo had been selfish even before colonization. The elders of Igbo who were traditionalists sensed that the tradition was at the verge of collapse and therefore, sought to associate with the white man so that they would not lose out completely. Achebe reveals that selfishness of the Igbo was part of the reason that they lost to the white. In *Arrow of God*, he writes:

But now Ezeulu was becoming afraid that the new religion was like a leper. Allow him a handshake and he want an embrace. Ezeulu had already spoken strongly to his son who was becoming stranger every day. Perhaps the time had come to bring him out again. But what would happen if, as many oracles prophesied, the white man had come to take over the land and rule? In such a case it would be wise to have a man of your family in his band. As he thought about these things Oduche came out from the inner compound wearing a white singlet and a towel which they had given him in the school (43).

The above extract vividly shows Ezeulu's reason for his hypocrisy. He, like the average Igbo man in the era, is afraid that if he does not go close to the white man, by the time he takes over, he would not be recognized by the white man. Gradually, the missionaries had their way and the Igbo people became converted. The problem however, is not that the new religion came; the problem was that it began to antagonize the traditional religion. The native people were convinced into believing that their own religion and mode of practice are barbaric. The traditional religion is peaceful; while members mind only their businesses, the new religion is violent and antagonistic. Not minding that the new religion was allowed to coexist in the society with the existing traditional religion, they began to antagonize the traditional region that played host to them. The picture is well painted by Achebe in *Arrow of God* where the new converts are made to kill sacred pythons.

Also, internal war among the Igbo people heralded the defeat of traditionalism. The people of Umuaro had been in enmity with Ezeulu because he spoke against them before the white man over ownership land, they had in dispute with Okperi people. Instead of coming together like a well knitted broom to fight and defeat their common enemy, they prefer to fight among them. According to Dutton in *Goodreads*, "The clash between Ezeulu and Nwaka to identify as the most respectable and powerful persons in Umuaro testifies the social identity of their belongingness of the land issue. The approvals and disapprovals of the leader's rest at the end to send an emissary to Okperi. It reminds the way to prove the social power through the war



with Okperi (137).” In addition, Umuaro had concentrated more in fighting a war over ownership of land with Okperi people than in coming together to seek a way to protect their tradition against annihilation. As Ben Dutton puts it, the fight between Umuaro and Okperi over ownership of land makes the land fertile for the missionaries to take over charges of the society. It is evident that the missionaries win the favour of Okperi by giving them the disputed land (137).

Sacred pythons are agents of gods. In Umuaro, as it is in many towns in the contemporary Anambra State of Nigeria, the creatures are not dangerous and they do not hurt people. The sacred pythons are agents of the gods and they are venerated. If per accident, one kills the sacred python, befitting burial is organized for it to appease the gods. According to Nnyagu, Kenneth, in places where sacred pythons are not killed, they are seen as totem and they don't bite anybody unless in self-defense. The creatures, as he puts it, do not visit people's households unless there is a message for the family by the gods, therefore, sacred pythons are venerated and it is a taboo to kill or harm the creature willingly. The new converts in *Arrow of God* began to kill sacred pythons to appease their priest. First, Josiah Madu had killed the sacred python and boasts having done so. Oduche, Ezeulu's son imprisons sacred python and leaves it in his box to die on its own. Oduche still nurses fear that Ulu might deal a blow to him if he kills the python. He therefore, prefers to incarcerate it in his box and allow it to die on its own. Achebe writes that at the peak of the hullabaloo among women in Ezeulu's compound over the moving box, Nwafo rushes to tell Ezeulu that, “Oduche's box is moving.”

Ezeulu does not understand what it means that Oduche's box is moving. Nwafo tells him that the box is moving about the floor. Ezeulu and other people around are afraid that the mystery is associated the mysterious prowess in the white man's religion thus he says in amazement, “There is nothing that a man will not hear nowadays.” Ezeulu knows that he has not been faithful to Ulu for sending Oduche to join the white man. So, when his daughters begin to make fuss about Oduche and the new religion, he quickly shuns her to avert further questioning of his wisdom in sending one of his sons to join the white man's religion. Achebe writes that “The wooden box had been brought from the room where Oduche and Nwafo slept and placed in the central room of their mother's hut where people sat during the day” (43). Albeit he is afraid, in order not to prove to his family that he is a weakling, he determines to see the mystery behind the moving box. Thus, according to the novel,

The box, which was the only one of its kind in Ezeulu's compound, had a lock. Only people of the church had such boxes made for them by the mission carpenter and they were highly valued in Umuaro. Oduche's box was not actually moving; but it seemed to have something inside it struggling to be free. Ezeulu stood before it wondering what to do. Whatever was inside the box became more violent and actually moved the box around. Ezeulu waited for it to calm down a little, bent down and carried the box outside. The women and children scattered in all directions.

‘Whether it be bad medicine or good one, I shall see it today,’ he said as he carried the box at arm's length like a potent sacrifice. He did not pass through his *obi*, but took the door in the red-earth wall of the compound. His second son, Obika, who had just come in followed him. Nwafo came closely behind Obika, and the women and children



followed fearfully at a good distance. Ezeulu looked back and asked Obika to bring him a matchet. He took the box right outside his compound and finally put it down by the side of the common footpath. He looked back and saw Nwafo and the women and children (43 – 44).

Ezeulu commands the women and children to leave the scene before his son, Obika breaks the box and to their amazement, a sacred python has been incarcerated in the box. Oduche hasn't imprisoned the python because the python has done any harm to him, he has imprisoned the python because the missionary had made him to believe that it was python (Snake) that deceived Eve in the garden of Eden. The missionary has made them to see python as enemy to Christianity.

Need to Come Back Our Root

According to Dutton (Ibid), The *Igbo* religious system involves a complex hierarchy of gods and deities, some major and minor. For instance, in the Yoruba cosmology the creator is known as *Olodumare*. The *Igbos* call the same as Chukwu and he is the Supreme God. This Supreme God is the creator and he created everything in the world and placed everything in its place. Achebe records that in their traditional religion, Chukwu had always answered the Igbo when they prayed to him. According to Achebe, "Nwafo's eyes picked out the special *okpesi* which belonged to him. It had been carved for him because of the convulsions he used to have at night. They told him to call it Namesake, and he did. Gradually the convulsions had left him" (6). The basic view of the traditional Africans is that the universe consists of the two realms; the visible and the invisible one. They tend to understand the cosmos as a three-tier structure consisting of the heaven above and the world beneath. (119-120). A cursory investigation into some pre-colonial texts reveals that Igbo people had been a united folk with belief in their god, *chi* through whom they reached the supreme God. Even the Christian Bible recognized that venerating the tribal god is the supreme God's injunction and that is why the *Good News Bible* has recorded in Deuteronomy 32:8 that God has created and placed a particular people in a particular place and has assigned a specific god to them. The bible goes further to warn against a nation abandoning their god to import a foreign god. Even though this paper is not an incitement against the Christian or Islamic religion, the Igbo must understand that their root was never barbaric as the western religions prophesied. In Nigeria, today, there are three religions – Traditional, Christianity and Islamic. Christianity and Islam had come with colonization; Traditional had been indigenous. In Igbo tribe, the popular religions are Traditional and Christianity.

Traditional religion is peaceful and believes in the spirit of live and let live. Nwobu Nwafo of Umuenu Village Umuawulu in an oral interview, says that the Traditional religion is peaceful and accommodating. According to him, whenever the two churches in Umuawulu, CMS and Roman Catholic churches would have their annual general bazaar, members of the Traditional religion would carry tubers of yam and the women would carry basins of cocoyam to the churches to show their solidarity. Another prominent traditionalist in the same village, Nnabugwu affirms that that the Traditional religion is peaceful but the Christian religion is antagonistic. He says that church members always destroy places of worship by the traditionalists. Another person interviewed, Okechukwu Okonkwo from Uruoji Nawfia says that traditional religion is the religion instituted by God for the Igbo people. He wonders



why a true Igbo person should abandon his religion and *chi* to run after the foreign god. As Okechukwu Okonkwo, puts it,

Our people are simply ignorant because the white man has used sponge and soap to wash away sense in the brains of most Igbo people so that they follow their ways sheepishly. As for me, I understood that my ancestors are not demonic as the church people want us to believe that respecting them is demonic. They want us to see our ancestors as Satan but to join them to pray to their own ancestors who they refer to as saints. Isn't that ridiculous? They recognize their ancestors, why would they not let us respect our own ancestors? I will never regard my father and his own father as devil because they are no longer here. I don't know when our people would wake up from slumber and come out from the disillusionment of the Europeans. They told us that we worship idol. What is idol worshipping in using kola nut to ask your *chi* for what you want him to do for you?

If we go back to history, we discover that our ancestors never complained that their gods ever disappointed them. They were never Christians and by implication, they never knew about Christ nor believed in him. They lived their lives without rancor and they lived long because they never bore grudges against one another. The traditionalist believed in law of karma and they shunned evil deeds because they knew that calamity would visit them if they perpetuated evil. The Christian belief that God is slow to anger led many traditionalists with evil intent to quickly join the Christian religion where they perpetrate their ills without any consequence. According to Psalms 103:8-18, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him..." The excerpt above from KJV heralded the profuse iniquities perpetuated in the society. Many gullible evildoers quickly run into any church where they hide to wallow in sacrilege. Today, as churches proliferate so do evils and sacrileges abound in our society and as Achebe said, things fall apart. Prabhuapada had in *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, prophesied that in no distant time, there would be proliferation of churches in different societies yet without reformation. He alleges that this would be so because the bible is so porous that it gives room for interpretations; one person would read a portion of the bible and would draw a different interpretation from it and immediately conflicts with the existing church. Next, he would establish his own church and begin to antagonize his former church. Today in our society, different denominations of the Christian religion abound and so does evil abound. *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, is a holy book for the believers in Lord Krsna just like the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran are for the Christians and Muslims respectively. Prabhuapada applauds the Hindu holy book, *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* which he says, unlike the bible, is to be read as it is without any interpretation. In traditional Igbo society where traditional religion is practiced, nobody is afraid of being harmed by the other because the traditional religion does not permit that. Consider the fact that before the coming of the Europeans, and before Umuaro clan became corrupted, Umuaro people always came together to commune with their god and Ezeulu would always break kola nut which the people would eat without suspecting that they would be poisoned with the kola nut.



Although the traditional religion is marred with its own ugly traditions such as human sacrifice and sorts, Igbo people need to restructure and go back to their roots. All that is needed to be done is reformation. The bad aspects of the traditional religion need to be expunged and replaced with saner ones. It is a fact undisputed that that sacrileges and sudden tragic deaths witnessed in the contemporary society is because the Igbo have abandoned their gods and have gone contrary to the tenets of the society by living in squalor thereby incurring the wrath of the gods.

Mode of Worship in the Traditional Religion

The modus of the Traditional religion includes sacrifice and praying with kola nut. In the past, human sacrifice was part of the tradition. Albeit this practice is bad, in real sense of it, it is not entirely different from the modus of the Christian religion. The Christian religion that brainwashed the Africans into believing that their modus of worship is evil, in actual sense, believes in efficacy of sacrifice. The bible in the book of Romans 12:1 says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." In Ephesians 5:2, the bible says, "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." It must be made vivid at the point that God had in the old testament, Genesis 22:1-19, emphasized the indispensability of sacrifice when he tested Abraham to sacrifice to him, his beloved son, Isaac. When God has seen the willingness of Abraham to obey him, he provided a lamb that would rather be sacrificed to him. This entails that the Christians understand that God delights in sacrifice not even human sacrifice. The Igbo when they sacrifice, they hope to receive favour from God. Ofo is used during sacrifice. Like the Christians use Bible, Muslims use Quran and Hindus, Bhagavad-gita, the Traditionalists use Ofo. He who holds Ofo must not be sacrilegious so that when he performs sacrifice, it would be potent. Basden records in *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, that Igbo people believed in God and they commune to God through sacrifices with Ofo. Basden writes,

For this observance of ichu-aja no idol (alusi) is ever used. The only semblance to one is the Awfaw, so named merely because it is a stick from the Awfaw tree. This stick is held in the hand and has a double significance: first, Awfaw is considered to possess the functions of a mediator between the spirits and the man, and secondly, on it the man swears that he is innocent of wrongdoing against others. The offering always consists of a selection from the following: food, strips of cloth, a gin bottle, a lizard, a chicken or a kid, and many other things, the choice being made according to the instruction of the dibia (224).

The list as recorded by Basden is a true representation of the sacrificial items. In some cases, the items are not up to that. The above does not entail that there is any evil associated with the traditional mode of sacrifice. As the society is dynamic, human sacrifice has been abolished, other bad aspects of the traditional religion can as well be abolished and the traditional religion be reformed.

One important thing Basden has not listen in the above is kola nut. Kola nut is indispensable in any sacrifice. One cannot commune to God and expect God to answer him if he does not use kola nut to pray. Every average Igbo man prays to his *chi* every morning with kola nut. Achebe painted a good picture of the importance of kola nut in Igbo tradition in his early



novels. A visitor is welcomed by the host by first presenting kola nut to him. The host would pray to God with the kola nut before they would eat. It is the belief of the Igbo that kola nut portends life and that is why it is said that he who brings kola is a bringer of life. Kammampoal and Laar, in "The Kola Nut: Its Symbolic Significance in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", writes that the kola nut and the accompanying ritual that goes along with it "symbolize" the custom and signs of respect between the leaders of the Igbo tribe in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. A ritual is a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of series of actions performed according to a certain order (27). Whenever an Igbo man prays with kola nut, he calls on God to bless everybody present and absent and to give them long life and everything good in life. This proves how united the Igbo society was before the Europeans came with the foreign religions that disintegrated the erstwhile united Igbo folk.

CONCLUSION

It is over decades since the Europeans introduced their religion to Africa. As the Igbo has it, Africans, particularly the Igbo, are like the proverbial woman that have married two different men at different time who quickly weighed the two men and determined which is better. This paper has compared life of the Igbo as a traditionalist and that of the Igbo as a Christian. A cursory investigation into the lives of Igbo people in the contemporary era shows that indeed, things have fallen apart. According to Wikipedia, as at 2019, there had been over sixteen thousand different churches in Nigeria. None of these churches believes in the activities of any other church. The appalling fact is that as the number of churches and denominations proliferate so also do evil deeds. This research found out that evils keep multiplying in the society because our people have the notion that God and Christ, the head of the Christian religion, is not quick to anger. The research recommends that the Igbo people in particular and Africans in general, reform their God assigned religion and go back to their root.

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