

THE PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE OF THE IGBO WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS PRIOR TO COLONIZATION: EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH

By

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Abstract

Through this article, the peaceful coexistence of the Igbo with their neighbours until its colonization is epistemologically investigated. An overview into the past of Igbo people from Southeastern Nigeria points out that the people have a stable socio-political structure that functions very well to sustain the nation's social and peaceful coexistence with their neighbours. The cooperative groups include; age-grade associations and various women's guilds, such as the Umuada and Inyom di. Associations served as vital instruments in the identification, award and correction of evil actions in society, particularly in the pre-colonial Igbo society. Long-range exchange in racial and cultural unity has led to the inclusion of Igbo in the growth of modern Nigeria with their neighbours. The cross-cultural fertilizing of ideas, beliefs, and customs through various degrees of exchanges within diverse communities took place until the arrival of the British Colonial government. The degrees and areas of inter-group cooperation and coexistence of harmony between the regions and their neighbours were also established. This also emerged that in pre-colonial old Igbo, the ancestors of the groups were closely linked to each other in the areas of war, marriage, trade among others. Long-term trading was essential as it was a successful pre-colonial inter-group instrument which facilitated peaceful coexistence among Igbo and their neighbours.

Keywords: Peaceful, Coexistence, Igbo, Neighbour, Colonization, Epistemology.

Introduction

The Igbo reside in Nigeria's southeastern region. They are found especially in states such as Anambra, Enugu, Abia, Imo and Ebonyi in the southeastern part of Nigeria. They Igbo equally reside in states such as Delta, Rivers, Kogi and even Cross River. The Igbo are people who love peace, particularly the elderly and the male, who value each other. They have much love for civil liberty and hates or opposes autocratic law. For them, someone in his own house is a boss, and to an ordinary Igbo man everybody is entitled to his or her opinion. However, it is seen in the politics of the people where the head of the household or the first man who was born of the household (Diokpala) is the spokesperson for the family (Emmanuel et al. 2012).

According to Emmanuel (2012), the Igbo were characterized as the king in every man, the Igbo, however, have no form of kingship. They do not think they owe any government loyalty. They believed that only God's of the earth has power. Each married man is head of the household, and only in his household is his power. He is the protector of his brother and would support them also. The first electoral district is governed by the first male child (Diokpala) of the family.

Accordingly, Ezeogidi (2013) opined that the head of the household is the father or first son or the eldest male member of the family (diokpala). He mostly perceives the contributions of other male children and can advise women, but the diokpala takes the key decisions. In Kindred Assembly (Umunna) he represents the family. Each Umunna consists of people who feel they are bound by the bonds of consanguinity. This blood bonding forbids intermarriage and deaths or joint injury as far as blood leakage is concerned. That is why people felt that they were "IbeNne." This "IbeNne" is the cultural value that prevents a blood relationship from causing one another blood harm.

According to Ifemesia(2015), outside the nuclear family, the smallest unit of political power was a limited branch, a patrilineage or extended family (Umunna). It was composed of nuclear families or houses from a growing father that followed a patrilineal descent. Any of the patrilineage leaders worked in a mile or two together. The Diokpala, who is responsible for the holy emblem of the authority called "Ofo" is the head of the patrilineal family. Indeed, whenever a bad topic that demands the highest truth should be debated, the speakers, especially the named persons, should show their Ofo, which was normally kept in their bags. The intermediate between both the ancestors and the living was considered Okpala. This position reinforced his ethical and theological authority. Ifemesia (2015) also pointed out that "The Okpala had a great deal of personal respect. A great deal based on its values, bravery and endurance, integrity and liberty, intelligence and impartiality, economic conditions and hospitality. Members would stop the offence that the spiritual members of the unit might disgust. He often chaired festivities and then had to approve the right to the community title

of members of the family. So many groups and institutions exist in Igbo land that work towards maintaining peaceful coexistence among the people and their neighbours in the pre-colonial era. These groups and institutions include; the *umuadas*, age grade association, marriage association, more so, trade associations, secret societies, the institution of deities and cultural celebrations play varied roles towards maintaining peaceful coexistence among the Igbo and their neighbours. In line with the above assertion, this piece of work is set to examine the peaceful relationship that exists among the Igbo and their neighbours prior to the colonial era.

Diplomatic Tools for peaceful coexistence among the Igbo and their neighbours in Pre-Colonial Era

The notion known as *Igba Ndu* was a very strong political instrument among the Igbo in pre-colonial times. *Igba ndu*'s concept signifies *Igba* "life bond" is bond or tie, while *ndu* is life in Igbo. The definition is, however, better understood as an arrangement between parties or classes to go into a blood covenant. This is seen as a diplomatic means, which was very prominent in Igbo territory, made wars and conflicts easier to manage and recover from by executing the proper rite. *Igba ndu* has been said to be a very significant thing for Igbos and also a trustworthy diplomatic instrument for securing treaties and agreements. Blood was drawn and mixed in each participant's veins and drunk with specially consecrated cola nuts. Once this procedure was completed, a fractured bloodline would heal or rejoin. A unique evergreen tree was created to recollect this "eternal" compact that unified all groups that are now bound to protect, respect and support each other's lives and aspirations, marked the triumph of diplomatic statesmanship over a crisis. (Falola & Heaton, 2015),

Also on the idea of the "Igbandu," two foreigners and diplomats had met and decided to negotiate, by undertaking a ritual of the same kind which would lead them into blood covenant. Abuse would, therefore, be banned between them. Furthermore, dishonesty, deception and others will also be nipped in the bud. The *Igba Ndu* institution and associated practices thus played a significant role in managing neighbouring villages peaceful relations. Furthermore, the functioning in nation relations of this diplomatic (Igbandu) was one of the forces that contributed to turning Southeast Nigeria into some kind of socio-economic commonwealth during the pre-colonial period with enough free flows of goods and services to bridge the gap between areas of lack and areas of plenty. (Ironzu, 2016).

Also, marriage was another effective diplomatic instrument in pre-colonial times for Igbo people, especially marriages involving the crossing of the national border. It was called dynastic Marriage and viewed as a strategic tool of diplomacy, for the pre-colonial Igbo, marriage served as a principal tool which connects and bonds people of different nations, tongues and cultural ideologies (Adegbulu, 2011). Any marriage between families across state borders had far-reaching geopolitical consequences for Igbo-speaking citizens. By marrying outside your birthplace, you could extend your overall reach to another state as an emissary or use your long diplomatic reach to intervene when relationships break out

between your birthplace and the place in which you marry. A man born from such a marriage is an external connector as the Igbo claim, a road that connects with the latter is the road that draws water from that sea (Adegbulu, 2011).

Notably, businessmen whose trading activities carried beyond their birthplaces went out to build many such diplomatic paths voluntarily. Ironzu(2016), while analyzing the marriage system in Igbo land and the perception held on the diplomatic role played by marriage in Igboland, saw the ideology held on marriage as “exogamy” (marriage to someone in your community as required by custom) and considered it to be a weapon that allowed the small Igbo states to exist as a cohesive social structure. Aro was yet another group of the Igbo-speaking people who, prior to British colonization through the southeastern region, used warfare as a political instrument to create relations with neighbouring groups. The Igbo regard Aroas a very vital institution, which helped secured diplomacy among the Igbo people of pre-colonial Nigeria. The Aro was able to communicate any time; however, at the same time, the Aro took more measures to persuade separate cultures to fight. If these approaches fail, the visiting of the people by their Abam and Ohafia allies has been challenged. It may be seen in the quotations above that the war art was used, in pre-colonial days, as it is recorded in other regions around the world, as a tool of diplomatic communication between Igbo-speaking citizens (Ironzu, 2016).

Practical Instances of peaceful coexistence among the Igbo and their neighbours in Pre-Colonial Times.

The undisputed historical truth is that no nation has ever existed in isolation in history, regardless of era and climate. States naturally pursue external ties with other countries. Such ties, according to international conventions or arrangements, allowed free travel across borders for citizens and goods. It is also worth noting that in western African nation, the status for those elected to perform diplomatic functions is diverse, but in all cases, individuals selected to perform diplomatic roles are close to the rulers and sometimes great men; even royal princes are being sent to a mission to make them strong (Opone, 2012). To seek to demonstrate the essence and arrangement of diplomatic activities within societies was considered to be acephalous (Smith cited in Patrick & Esi, 2017). Accordingly, Smith, in Patrick & Esi(2017) noted that Chinua Achebe offered an insight into how diplomatic activities were conducted in a traditional Igbo environment through his classical novel *Things Fall Apart*. For example, Achebe demonstrated how there had been a dispute between two groups: Umuofia and Mbano, but the leaders of both communities had stopped the budding war through diplomatic engagement and preservation of peace. Achebe brightened up this when he stated that sons of wild animals had dared kill Umuofia’s sons, and many others talked and agreed to follow the usual course of action with indignation and lust for their blood. An ultimatum was then sent to Mbano asking them to choose between the war on one hand, and the promise of a young man and virgin for reward on the other. When Okonkwo of Umuofia came to Mbano as a violent and ineffective war emissary, he was treated with great honour and reverence two days later with the fifteen lads, and a young virgin by the

elders when he returned home. Smith submitted that the “Igbo, as well as other people from Southeastern Nigeria, have warned their foes (Opone, 2012).

Opone (2012) demonstrated the richness of political relations between Aro and his allies, Abam, Ohafia, and Edda, in the Arolabour oligarchy eclipse of the 19th century. The Aro allegedly engaged in diplomatic talks and settlements with these people in order to maintain their supremacy in the entire length and width of the south-east and south-south regions with a strong military presence. Since war itself has frequently been said to be the continuing diplomatic negotiation.

The Role of Age Grade Association in fostering peaceful coexistence among Igbo people and their neighbours in pre-colonial Era

In conflict resolution and social governance in the Igbo pre-colonial era, age-grade association is the central body. The age or age group of people born in the same year or age bracket. They have mutual ties and do things together because they trust in one another's interdependence. In most cases, they use a specific name like the age of Udoka, Igwebuiké age, Ona edo age, among others. They stick to laws and change the age and culture. They are the ones that enforce the decree of masquerades and oracles, and every decision made in society, and play a role in conflict resolution and social influence (Opone, 2012).

According to Zachary (2012), the grades of age ensure peace and harmony between members. The Crimes Control is a growing area of need in many communities today, conflict resolution within and across the ages, community fighters in both the physical and spiritual warfare, maintained ‘unity among members, maintain security and security of life, enforcement and law, developers/executors of community initiatives and projects. It identified it as agents of transformation and progress and refinement, role models and the consciousness of the community, educators and socializers, project administrators, advocates of good practice and the balance of power in the society; programs that benefit the vulnerable and marginalized, proponents of age aspirations and protectors of cultural values.

Women as Peace Agents in Pre-Colonial Igbo Societies.

According to Obasi and Nnamani (2015), women were especially important in the conflict management in pre-colonial Igbo society, particularly in conflicts which defy men's ability to settle. Such women in various guilds are coordinated. In some areas, Umuada or Umuokpu, and Ndiyom or Ndinwunyedi, are notable among the guilds. Umuada represents the married women of certain siblings. In every community, these women group asserted strong influence, and helped to bring good health to society in their unique ways, particularly, they were very notably in ensuring that married woman behaves in traditionally acceptable manners. In a typical pre-colonial Igbo society, the Umuadas may use diverse approaches which include ex-communication, and public shaming to punish women who committed adultery, involved in stealing, those who maltreat their husbands, co-wives, and step-children and women caught up in witchcraft practices and many other behaviours which were deemed culturally inappropriate (Obasi and Nnamani, 2015). Among the Igbo people of modern

Nigeria, the cultural community Umuada Igbo is one of Nigeria's most united, friendly and talented people. When citizens and community contribute to families, societies and nations' capacity to overcome the problems of poverty and violence.

In the words of Agbasiere (2010), "Umuada is distinguished from Ndiyom or married women. Igbo people in cultural, economic and social life are usually grouped in these two categories. In women guild, dispute problems in which men cannot resolve, Umuada balances the final strength. In general, the Umuada group succeeds because of its sincerity and tenacity. They felt they would have the responsibilities of finding stability in their fathers' home as women who were engaged. This Umuada hail from various homes and they would direct their members, whose father's home the problem came from when there were problems. If a single person is believed to be the cause of the trouble and possibly the root of the dispute, the representative is named to be led by the immediate sister of the troublemaker. The umuada offers a definitive decision which may involve ostracization if the problem-maker continues.

In the words of Obasi and Nnamani (2015) in conflict resolution strategies Umuada follow two methods of helping conflict groups accept and understand disputes and using mediation strategies to find constructive answers to their conflicts. Where a strongly rooted feeling of animosity and acrimony has emerged in the confrontation, the parties pose a danger that the borders of hate are not crossed. Boundaries are drawn against the interests of the parties to the dispute in this situation, or at least one of them is permanent.

For Obasi and Nnamani (2015), Ndiyom alone is influential in family problems and child violence in particular. They will hit a man infamous for his wife's mistreatment. For instance, in the years back, Umuleke's women held protests against the sexual abuse of children, and some days fled their homes to their husbands who did not do much to punish the culprit. They were often able to protest and threaten men. The protest caught the peoples' attention, and they suddenly had to act.

War outbreak and peaceful coexistence among Igbo and her neighbours in pre-colonial times

There was typically widespread of war in pre-colonial Igbo culture that offered a basis for productive inter-group interactions. Interactions characterized the pre-colonial past wars, and most of them occurred in relation to both the inter-political and intra-political conflicts over headship, disagreements and governmental confusion (Falola, 2010; Obi, 2013). The completion of rituals of the period is another aspect worth noting. These were the parameters upon which certain wars were based between the region and its neighbour. However, wars were launched against Aro slave traders by the warriors from Ohafia in the time under investigation. In the pre-colonial era, another cause of the conflict was the issue of land disputes by the society/citizens interlinked with the other villages. Igbo has loved and appreciated property, like every other region has (Batubo, 2010).

The value put on land is best demonstrated or reiterated by the assertion made by one of the Nigerian politicians, Gboteyi, the Elesi, Second Chief of Odogbolu, Ijebu-Ode, who appeared before the Committee on West African Land in 1912, who argue: "I think the land belongs to a vast population, many of whom are deceased, some are alive, and others are still unborn". This submission made by Gboteyi, the Elesi, Second Chief of Odogbolu, Ijebu-Ode, goes a long way to clarify the significance or value placed on Land by people of all tribes in Nigeria, both in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. When a dispute or conflict occurs over a strip of land or between individuals, two or more societies, war is inevitable. Accordingly, Daniel (2016) affirms that war emanating from Land dispute was a scenario which challenged peaceful and diplomatic peace agreement and solution; therefore, the recourse to battle. Land wars, before then, had been very startling in the war's history; their historicity exceeds all the other dispute triggers in Igbo pre-colonial culture. The Igbo people of pre-colonial Nigeria have fought a war with the Annang and Ibibio people on the land they ultimately settled in the annals of history. They struggled with each other (Daniel, 2016).

In the course of conflicts, the Age grade was instrumental in defending the territorial integrity of their societies. In pre-colonial days, the right or acknowledged duty of the Grade of Age of the nation was primordial in the political complexities of the nation as a whole to protect and maintain both internal and external security as well as to protect the sovereignty of this region. When the nation is to accept a generation, it must be capable of representing the nation in various respects, which are no exception to military campaigns and conflicts (Ezeogidi, 2019). The Igbo and their neighbours have thought twice before embarking on more wars, and this justifies war as a political tool because of fears of loss of life and wealth. It also allowed and facilitated the assimilation of elements of the culture of neighbouring villages, including the additional introduction of some "local" languages and dressing traditions. Blood covenant reached between parties allowed all to live in harmony while increasing social contact and coexistence as tensions and the danger to the protection of life and properties are eliminated (Nwankwo, 2012).

Marriage as a measure for peaceful coexistence among Igbo and their neighbours prior to the colonial period

Marriage is another area in which individuals and their neighbours have contact. The marriage institution is as old as the globe itself. In consideration of this fact, Nwankwo (2012) points out that "primary marital partnerships, linking relatives, lineages and other groups with one another, in reciprocal responsibilities" were the goals of the organization fosters inter-community partnerships. The researcher also described the beneficial impact of intermarriages by acknowledged the dominant role of the families in the formation, preservation and dissolution of marriage which was already contracted was understood under Traditional Law and Customary Marriage and Family. Traditional law and the custom recognized polygamy as a people's system, so the institution was formed between the girl's family and the man's family (Nwankwo, 2012).

The subsequent union was seen as a partnership of two families, as was acknowledged by Chief James Onuoha of Amankalu, who further noted that the towns and their adjacent sister towns such as Ngwa, Anang, Ibibio, Edda, Okigwe, and others had intermarriages. These intermarriages contributed to the enhancement, integration and interaction between such a community and its neighbours (Daniel, 2019). Elder Anyogu Ukandu stated that in traditional Igbo culture, intergroup marriages and acceptance of polygamy made a woman or women. The acceptance allowed the people to make marriage partnerships with other groups and thereby resolve relationship problems and mistrusts. He also stressed that, through marriage relations, some structures and unions are formed in the Old Ibo extraction such that groups such as the Umuada Women's Society survive (Daniel, 2016).

Trade as a means of fostering peaceful coexistence among Igbo and their neighbours prior to colonization

According to Adegbulu (2011), trade was the most powerful and prominent of all the interactions between the people and their neighbours in pre-colonial days. It has enhanced cooperation among one village and the other. The inter-clan trade crossed the width and length of the region and allowed a variety of crops and items to be produced and exported.

Trade lanes from Arochukwu, Uposi, Bende, Uzoakoli, Abam, Abiriba, Ohafia, Elu-Anyim, Isuikwuato, Uturu, Oboro and Ohuhu, are radiated from Umuhu, Alayyi, Ugwueke. The other was the network Owerri, Aro-Ngwa and Nkwerre. The principal places for the sale of goods and services were markets situated at these places. Once at an interval of four days or Igbo week, the markets took place. Eke, Ori, Afor, Nkwo have been these days. The Igbo regular market custom of the rest days was developed in these days. Due to this tradition, numerous divisions within the group abstained from farms on specific days during the four weekdays (Chinedu et al., 2019; Emmanuel, 2018). The Igbo market was and is an extremely lively assembly, which has been attended by people from various communities. The traders were trading in palm-oil, palm-kernels, yam and pottery products, interchange for goods like arrows, spears and religious objects from Arochukwu, Dane guns, iron as well as other tools of warfare were made available. These relationships and transactions have led to market growth in different locations (Adegbulu, 2011).

For long distanced trades, traders participating in such business visited remote Uburu markets with other distant markets, as noted in the precolonial period, for the significant 'Nnu-Uburu' (Uburu salt). Trade relations include the Akoli-Edda, Uzoakoli and Nkwerre markets. The traders have taken some security precautions and have travelled (otuije) in groups. This enterprise was a dream of its own. Sometimes families operating as groups were involved. The group's key role was to reduce the possibility of irresponsible attackers along the way. Rituals and blood pacts (blood covenant) were other methods. This arrangement assured free passage across the disputed territory and the security of resident merchants as well as cooperation. The blood bond parties were supposed to lead, inform and defend one another against criminals and other acts of violence (Obasi & Nnamani, 2015).

Throughout the time of market interaction, family ties completely assured and ensured protection for traders from important strategic places who choose the spouses. They were recognized as members of the society of their spouses through this partnership. This system of trade and marriage, social relations are encouraged, bridged and alleviated communication problems, which resulted in the acceptance of merchants and folks and other neighbourhoods with whom they had a business relationship. The Igbo Community developed good ties with its neighbours, both far and near, through its market network, inter- and intra-commercial networks. At this juncture, it is important to remember that these commercial partnerships have often encouraged contact between individuals and immediate neighbours with whom they have very direct links. For example, signals, as well as messages, were passed through traders to one's relationships in a different society (Ironzu, 2016).

Secret Societies and their function towards peaceful living among Igbo and their neighbours

In conventional Igbo society, another of the leading agents in the promotion of inter-communal relationship and control was the 'secret society.' In general, members of secret societies appeared during the night and were covered by darkness. They have had the mission of denouncing or attacking offenders, supernatural beings or spirits. The secrecy and the unnatural aura of the leaders rendered a strong deterrent against crime in society. They were typically "strong forces in upholding law and order" as well as preventing violence, punishing convicted persons and harmonizing with each other. As a result, people acted and attempted not to cause outrage (Ironzu, 2016).

For example, in traditional Aro society, 'Ekpe' (for men) and 'Iyamba' (for women) were outstanding for crime control. The Ekpe, named after the Leopard, King of Beasts, asked that the representatives respect their leaders' silence, submission and fidelity. They beat and compelled both members and non-members and placed some offenders under prohibitions so that others would be unable to trade and deal with such offenders. The Ekpe can also seal the offender's house, arrest him or her, detain him or her, fine or kill him. The "Iyamba" was an Aro women's secret organization with both the head performing quasi-judicial operations in all stations. By a divine force of the Iyamba cults, the head may inflict punishment on an individual or call on elders of the guard to jointly discipline any perpetrator. Particularly married women who have committed adultery are disciplined while erring men may be entitled to "ritual prohibition (Obasi & Nnamani, 2015).

Except for Aro culture, the Odo and Omabe sectors in Nsukka nations, the masquerade or the Spirit Mask in Northern Igbo (Mmuor Mmanwu) and 'Egbele' in the region Afikpo, Oguta's 'Oshereji' and Ngwa's 'Okonkwo' were used in many secret societies. In traditional Igbo society, they were agents of social and crime management. This is available for all eligible adult men and is conducted during the new yam festival once a year (Ironzu, 2016).

A widely regarded social organization among women for maintaining moral uprightness and business, the Uju Ede Cult is the largest women's Igbo nation. They provide a forum for

socialization and moral leadership. It has been celebrated once a year, especially prior to the traditionally considered female harvest of cocoa yam (Ede). No woman ever convicted of theft or other criminal activities was allowed to enter the cult. The well-known criminals and their husbands have been revealed and ridiculed by songs. The ladies put on their finest clothes and necklaces for this celebration and showed their prosperity, skill and solidarity publicly (Ironzu, 2016).

The Institution of Deities and Oracles and their roles in the peaceful relationship among Igbo in pre-colonial Era

Many villagers had strong deities who could disturb domestic and foreign enemies from the possible mismanagement, according to their beliefs. The traditional Igbo society was afraid of community divinities, believing that these gods were capable of reflecting the mind of the people and might punish people with or without criminal behaviour, for merely harbouring bad intentions (Emmanuel *et al.*, 2012). Many tragic incidents that took place in those days of certain people or communities were regarded by deities as a tragedy punishing them for their misdeeds. From this perspective, the effects of the deities and their priests and emissaries in Igbo's traditional society was so wide that it impacted on people's psyche and restricted them to commit serious misconduct. Deities also settled charges and disputes about illegal activities, including false land ownership disputes, during those days (Emmanuel *et al.*, 2012).

The "ibinukpabi" oracle, commonly known and referred to as "Long Juju" by early European writers, was a typical example of these dreaded deities. The Igbo in the Niger River and Cross Basins was the "highest court" of appeal and the supreme religious and judicial body. Many feared deities or oracles were the 'Igwe ka Ala,' from Umunoha in the present-day Mbaitoli district of Imo state and the 'Agballa of Awka,' Onyili-Ora' near Nri and the Ogba Ogbunike,' where people begged for not to appear on crime-related matters. There were also numerous deities consulted and facilitated intergroup relationships among the Igbo speaking people of pre-colonial Nigeria and their neighbours. The Ibini-Ukpabi was the most prominent among the deities. Ogwuma, EleNnono, Ikan Ibibio, NnemmiriDeity, Ala and IkangaOboro, Uyam among others were among other prominent oracles despite their prominence. The Aro oracles, who never consulted Ibini-Ukpabi for their purposes, were consulted by the people of particular communities and their neighbours (Ezeogodi, 2013).

Cultural Celebrations and its impact in peaceful coexistence among Igbo and their neighbours in pre-colonial Era

The old Igbo division has all of its cultural activities. Cultural ceremonies were held in this area, and one of its major roles was to strengthen intergroup relations. Amongst these was the Ekpe, which was used annually to celebrate the land goddess, and which usually attracted neighbouring communities and people who watched and were present at the ceremony. The most critical aspect of this occurrence is the slaughtering of a huge goat in one attempt. It usually took place one day on the market. The IkwaOzu (Burial) and Iriji were other

ceremonies, which have survived into modern-day Igbo societies. Ndi Oba, a male company of those successful members of the community who have earned money with hard work, this ceremony is held every year (Adegbulu, 2011).

Conclusion

Pre-colonial Igbo society was structured into segmentary family units led by the elderly man (Di-okpala) of the family via a well-structured family-based political system. The oldest man from various families was led by the oldest male child of the household, who was a member of the council of elders. The priest of oracles, the underground society like spirit masquerades, the community of the times, the named men's guild and women's guild were other entities in the political system. These institutions both individually and collectively provided social governance in the pre-colonial Igbo societies and were also instrumental in conflict resolution processes in the pre-colonial Igbo societies. While the heads of family are responsible for the conflicts in the family, both conflicts in the family and conflict among the two different sons are the responsibilities of the council of elders. Disputing parties who are dissatisfied with the decision of the heads of the family and the elder's council, then seek further intervention, as they take the matter to the oracles for arbitration. Masquerading tended to enforce laws and regulations in society and, among other issues, the relationships between age-grades led to the decision-making or judgment of the other bodies of the group.

In conclusion, despite the lack of a particular jury coordinated by the pre-colonial society, Igbo people were able to arrange an articulated mechanism for social control based on the family and its interconnectedness with other fibres of the society. The people had no capital punishment because they thought they had blood relations. It encourages shared esteem, irrespective of age and status. Individuals and associations under the general policy system are free to resolve questions and appeal to any bodies, to families and associations, trustworthy and revered individuals, or even to the oracle, the deity and their priests.

Recommendations

Consequently, this paper recommends that the government should establish a special committee to investigate and articulate different social control mechanisms of not only Igbo people but also ethnic groups in Nigeria. Specialists in the subject fields, such as historians, political scientists, sociologists and lawyers, should be included in the group. This committee would bring into the judicial structure of Nigeria, a functional pre-colonial process of constitutional justice and dispute resolution strategies.

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