

# AGE-OLD DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL AUTHORITY PATTERNS: THE BASES OF IGBO IDENTITY AND POLITICS

E. C. EJIOGU  
*University of Nigeria*

## *Abstract*

*Almost every view expressed on the Igbo Question in post-Biafra war Nigeria is spiced with concerns that are raised about 'the absence of internal cohesion within the Igbo nation and the lack of national focus.' This paper that straddles aspects of the Colloquium sub-themes of who the Igbo are, their pre-history, and their national character, i.e. their indigenous world – culture, philosophy, religion, etc.; is intended to raise some of the core ideas and information that will facilitate and build our knowledge about and understanding of those peculiar and unique traits and characteristics, i.e. the age-old democratic, and distinctive social authority patterns that make the Igbo who they are, the natural origin of those distinctive social authority patterns and the crucial need to harness and utilize them to facilitate and enhance efforts by the Igbo to confront and tackle their concerns about the 'absence of internal cohesion within the Igbo nation and the lack of national focus' as the true bases of the politics of the restoration of Igbo independence after the Biafra War.*

## PREAMBLE

PERHAPS ONE OF THE SEVERAL outstanding legacies that anyone who is conversant with the shining cultural nationalism that pervades Chinua Achebe's life and work can pick out with ease is the one about his stoic role as a teacher to readers of all he wrote. As he puts it:

I, would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.<sup>1</sup>

Evident here in this quote from one of the first published seminal essays by Achebe is that subdued, but still virtuous modesty that characterized his civic engagements with others. In this case, the said modesty is evidently why he preferred to specifically speak just for himself in the quote. Emmanuel Obiechina's take – which Achebe endorsed, no doubt – on the same subject matter is more generalized; i.e. that "West African writing"<sup>2</sup> is;

a purpose, implicit or explicit, to correct the distortion of the West African culture, to create the distortions of the West African culture, to recreate the past in the present in order to educate the West African reader and give him confidence in his cultural heritage, and also in order to enlighten the foreign reader and help him get rid of the false impressions about West African culture acquired from centuries of cultural misrepresentation.<sup>3</sup>

Most true to his convictions, Achebe took this role beyond the crispy pages of his fiction and non-fiction works to also the listening audience that usually rushed his public lectures. In one such lecture—the first “of three lectures that I [he] delivered as the 1998 McMillan-Stewart Lectures at Harvard University on December 9, 10, and 11, 1998”<sup>4</sup>—entitled, “My Home Under Imperial Fire,” Achebe took his time to educate his international audience present for that lecture on some of the core elements of the subject matter of this paper. I crave your permission and patience to reproduce the relevant portion of that lecture, here to you today in its entirety:

The Igbo nation in precolonial times was not quite like any nation most people are familiar with. It did not have the apparatus of centralized government but a conglomeration of hundreds of independent towns and villages each of which shared the running of its affairs among its menfolk according to title, age, occupation, etcetera; and its womenfolk who had domestic responsibilities, as well as the management of the scores of four-day and eight-day markets that bound the entire region and its neighbours in a network of daily exchange of goods and news, from far and near.

The town of Ogidi to which my family returned in 1935 was just one of these hundreds of towns which were in reality mini-states that cherished their individual identity but also, in generic way, perceived themselves as Igbo people. Their Igboness would remain a vague identity because it was not called too frequently into use. What mattered to them on a daily basis was the sovereign authority they enjoyed in practical matters in their eight hundred or so villages. As was their habit they made a proverb to sanctify their political attitude: *nku dina mba na-eghelu mba nni*, every community has enough firewood in its own forests for all the cooking it needs to do.

Competition among these communities has remained a strong feature of Igbo life from antiquity through colonial times to the present. At its worst it could lead to conflict. But there were also compelling reasons for peace and cooperation arising from the need to foster vital regional institutions such as intricate and vibrant network of markets, the rites and obligations of cross-communal marriages and funerals, the dissemination of

recreational songs and dances that one village would travel to learn from another and later, in the role of host and mentor, pass on to a third...

I heard, for example, that one of Ogidi's neighbouring towns had migrated into its present location a long time ago and made a request to Ogidi to settle there. In those days there was plenty of land to go round and Ogidi people welcomed the newcomers, who then made a second and more surprising request—to be shown how to worship the gods of Ogidi. What had they done with their own gods? Ogidi people wondered at first but finally decided that a man who asked you for your god must have a terrible story one should not pry into. So they gave the new people two of Ogidi gods, Udo and Ogwugwu, with one proviso, that the newcomers should not call their newly acquired gods Udo but Udo's son; and not Ogwugwu but Ogwugwu's daughter. Just to avoid any confusion.

For many years this fragment of local lore meant no more to me than one more story of internal migration in Igboland, probably part history and part mythology, the kind of story one might hear invoked or manipulated in a court of law today in boundary litigations between towns. But its profound significance dawned on me later—the reluctance of an Igbo town to foist its religious beliefs and practices on a neighbor across the road, even when it was invited to do so. Surely such a people cannot have had any notion of the psychology of religious imperialism. And that innocence would have placed them at a great disadvantage later when they came to deal with European evangelism. Perhaps the sheer audacity of some stranger wandering thousands of miles from his home to tell them they were worshipping false gods may have left them open-mouthed in amazement—and actually aided their rapid conversion! If so, they were stunned into conversion only, but luckily not all the way to the self-righteousness and zealotry that went with the stranger's audacity...

...The first ancestor of Ogidi people was named Ezechuamagha. He was created by Chukwu on the present site of the town. Chukwu then moved a certain distance planted another primordial man called Ezumaka, father of the neighboring Nkwele people. For boundary, Chukwu created the Nkisi River to flow between them. Again, just an interesting little piece of folklore. But as I learned more and more about Igbo people, it began to dawn on me that this insistence on separate and individual creations of towns chimed perfectly with their belief that every single human being was a unique creation of chi, Chukwu's agent, assigned exclusively to that individual through his or her life. This chi, this presence of God, in attendance on every human being is more powerful in the affairs of that individual through his or her life. This chi, this presence of God, in attendance in every human being, is more powerful in the affairs of that person than any local deity or the conspiracy of any number of such deities against that person. I shall return anon to this unprecedented expression of Igbo individuality. But I want us to look first at an analogous proposition about community...

One morning all the animals were going to a meeting to which the town crier had summoned them the night before. Surprisingly the chicken was headed not to the public square like the rest, but away from it. When his neighbours and friends caked him if by any chance he had not heard the summons to the meeting, he said he had indeed heard but unfortunately, must attend to a very important personal matter that just cropped up. He asked them to convey his good wishes to the assembly and, for good measure, added his declaration to support and abide by its resolutions. The emergency before the animals, as it happened, was the rampant harassment that man had began to cause them since he learned to offer blood sacrifice to his gods. After a long and heated debate the animals accepted, and passed unanimously, a resolution to offer the chicken to man as his primary sacrificial animal. And it has remained so to this day.

In the worldview of the Igbo the individual is unique; the town is unique. How do they bring the competing claims of these two into some kind of resolution? Their answer is a popular assembly that is small enough for everybody who wishes to be present to do so and to "speak his mouth," as they like to phrase it.

A people who would make and treasure that fable of the negligent chicken and the assembly of his fellows must be serious democrats. In all probability they would not wish to live under the rule of kings. The Igbo did not wish to, and made no secret of their disinclination. Sometimes one of them would, believe it or not, actually name his son Ezebuilo: A king is an enemy. I ask, ladies and gentlemen, to contemplate a society wherein a man might raise his voice in his compound of an afternoon and call out to his son: "A-King-Is-An-Enemy, get me some cold water to drink, will you!"

To assert the worth of the individual by making him not the product of some ongoing, generic creativity but rather of a particularly once-and-for-all divine activity is about as far as human imagination can go on the road of uniqueness. To then put this already unprecedented artifact on a piece of land chosen, sod for him surveyed and demarcated by God for him may seem like taking matters a trifle far. But we must always remember that the extravagant attire which Metaphor wears to catch our eye is merely a ploy to engage our hearts and minds. It seems to me that the Igbo people, recognizing the primary necessity for the individual freedom, as well as the virtual impossibility of its practical realization in society, went out of their way to give the individual a cosmological head start in their creation stories. In this way man might have something approaching a sporting chance in the game of life—an ability to hold his head up and declare, as the Igbo are wont to do, that no man should enter his house through another man's gate.

Similarly, those hundreds of autonomous Igbo villages and towns, so deeply suspicious of political amalgamation, would be stretched to the

limit should they ever face an enemy able to wield the resources of a centralized military power, acting directly or through local surrogates. They would need every fortification to be found in their histories and creation myths. The threat of anarchy, always attendant on the Igbo choice of political organization, crept closer and closer to realization as devastation of the Atlantic Slave Trade reached further and further into their hinterland.

The Igbo have always lived in a world of continual struggle, motion and change—a feature conspicuous in the tautness, overreach and torsion of their art; it is like a tightrope walk, a hairbreadth brush with the boundaries of anarchy. This world does not produce easygoing people. Those who visit the Igbo in their home or run into them abroad or in literature are not always prepared for their tense and cocky temperament. The British called them argumentative.<sup>5</sup>

### THE ECKSTEIN-GURR CONGRUENCE-CONSONANCE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Achebe is not a social scientist, but he tops the list of all worthy practitioners of the art of creating novels who Harry Eckstein and Ted R. Gurr rightly described as individuals that “tend to be gifted observers who generalize personal experience.”<sup>6</sup> Achebe is talking about the functional roles of age-old internal variations amongst the that in their *congruence-consonance theoretical framework* or E-G Scheme, Eckstein and Gurr called social authority patterns and explain as being peculiar to any group, social unit, or polity, as evolved social traits by its members over the course of time to guide them in the practice of authority and the management of their affairs in all realms in their society. Like it is the case all social units, the age-old social authority patterns that the Igbo evolved over the course of time anchored their practice of authority in their society. In every social unit, the evolution of social authority patterns occur through processes that involve the interactions of people with the ecology of the geophysical environment they inhabit as homeland.

By definition “an authority pattern is a set of asymmetric relations among hierarchically ordered members of a social unit that involves the direction of the unit.”<sup>7</sup> Authority patterns configure in four distinct dimensions: *Directiveness*, *Participation*, *Responsiveness*, and *Compliance* that enable any keen observer to discern the nature, quality, and depth of influence flow in any given society between people and their leaders.

Briefly defined, *Directiveness* is “the extent to which leaders attempt to influence the behavior of members of social units by means of directives”<sup>8</sup>. In society, *Directiveness* would encompass formal laws, policies, informal customs, traditions, mores, norms, etc. that are used to regulate the conducts and affairs of people, groups, and organizations. In autocratic political systems, the *coverage* of *Directiveness* is *comprehensive*, but *restricted* in

the converse. Its *latitude* is *specific* in autocracies, but *general* (leaves room for discretion to members of society) under democratic systems. In autocracies, the *supervision* of *Directiveness* is *close*, but *loose* in democracies. The *sanction threshold* of *Directiveness* is *severe* in autocracies, but *lenient* (*calibrated*) in democracies.

*Participation* indicates that interactions between leaders and members of society do not simply amount to one-way street relationships in which all non-leader members are mere passive actors who simply receive and follow directions. In most if not all real world social units, there are bound to be some non-leader members of society otherwise called subordinate actors (sub-actors) who may be passive followers of directions, and there may also be some who may “generally attempt to influence the directive activities of their leaders”<sup>9</sup> in their society. In democratic systems, there are *channels* of *Participation*, that are *open*, *facilitated* and people utilize them *intensely* and *voluminously* through group actions, direct and indirect personal actions, etc. to influence their leaders in the direction of their affairs. In autocratic systems even when *channels* of *Participation* exist, they are *impeded*, and people expose themselves to enormous risks to create their own *channels* somehow, and embark on creative acts of participation that usually subvert the system.

*Responsiveness* is the logical consequence of *Participation*. It is indicated by representative institutions, possibilities of recall and over-ruling leaders, etc. in the political system. Participant members of society seek to influence the way their leaders direct their affairs; and responsive leaders are disposed to be influenced by them and seek out “inputs” from them.

If all things were to be equal, the logical flip side of “the directive leadership is the complaint followers.”<sup>10</sup> But then, nobody should assume that every subordinate actor will simply go out of his or her way to comply with whatever directives that emanate from the super-ordinates without cost-benefit calculations. Depending on how the other three dimensions configure in society, when it comes to the *Compliance* dimension, people can be *submissive*, *insubordinate*, or *indifferent* to directives as the case may be. They can also show *allegiance* or stand up in *opposition*.

## GEOGRAPHY AND ECOLOGY: A PEOPLE AND THEIR HOMELAND

Igbo land is located in the thick ever-green rainforest, which is also one of the four ecological zones that nature demarcated parts of West Africa’s upper and lower Niger basin into. These constitute the areas of the Niger basin that the British carved into the Nigerian supra-national state beginning from the late nineteenth century. Like the other three ecological zones, geography is central to who the inhabitants of the thick ever-green

rainforest zone are. Evidentiary proof associates the four ecological zones with the evolution of specific political systems. Where different nationalities inhabit the same ecological zone, the ecological circumstances that prevail in that zone influenced uncanny similarities in the political systems that they developed.<sup>11</sup>

The forest ecology played central roles in the evolution of the unique and seemingly intricate political economy evolved by each of its inhabitants. This is particularly true about the Igbo who are cultivators because of the thick ever-green rainforest ecology of their *homeland*, which equally helped preserve their pure Negroid genetic stock. The thick ever-green rainforest and its ecology were natural barriers that protected the Igbo from large-scale invasion. More than anything else, that environment impacted the course and outcome of political development in Igboland. It was partly because of that environment that the Igbo had no need for and never evolved large scale political organizations.<sup>12</sup> Instead of large centralized political systems, the Igbo evolved small village-based democracies.<sup>13</sup> It was for the same reasons that relate to the geography of their respective *homelands* that the Igbo and their Ogoja, Ibibi, Yako, et al neighbors in the thick ever-green rainforest ecology evolved economies that were based on cultivation and long distance trade. Those same reasons accounted for why none of them evolved or successfully achieved large scale political organizations with centralized institutions and social authority patterns.<sup>14</sup> There is a relationship between population, migration, and ecology in the social, economic, and political evolution and transformation of societies and polities in the Niger basin. That assertion is underscored by the prominent role played by all three factors in the development of markets amongst the nationalities, which in turn aided the transformation of their indigenous economies respectively.<sup>15</sup>

According to Adiele E. Afigbo, the Igbo political system is resoundingly democratic because of its characteristic feature of direct democracy.<sup>16</sup> When Michael Mann observed that the superb democratic qualities of political institutions of the indigenous peoples of continental America prior to white settler-colonialism, rested to a good measure on “forms of political participation that were more direct than representative”<sup>17</sup> he could have been referring specifically to the Igbo whose authority patterns are also normatively democratic. The democratic characteristics of the Igbo social authority patterns have also underpinned the fractious politics that the Igbo have continued to experience within the crucible of the Nigeria supra-national state, which from its founding and for reasons that derive from the imperial designs and conscious social engineering employed by its British founders, encapsulates the autocratic social authority patterns of the Hausa-Fulani in the hands of whose elite, the British entrusted state power through the manipulated outcomes of the 1951-2 census and

the 1959 general elections that ended de facto alien rule on October 1, 1960.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Igbo constitute one of the three most populous nationalities that inhabit the parts of the Niger basin that were carved into Nigeria, like the other inhabitants, their exact population is still undetermined. The British politicized the 1952/53 national census, which established a legacy of inaccuracy that has made it difficult to conduct a credible population census in Nigeria ever since. To the outsider, the Igbo and their pre-colonial world amounted to a patchwork of confusion and anarchy, totally lacking of authority and control.<sup>19</sup> But like social units elsewhere, indigenous Igbo society comprised of leaders (super-ordinate actors) and the rest of members of the society (subordinate actors) who were involved in dynamic and interactive asymmetrical authority relations aimed at directing the affairs of their society. My conception of direction here is theoretically Gramscian, i.e. connoting “the ideological capacity to win consent”<sup>20</sup> from society and its members at large.

#### THE IGBO SOCIAL AUTHORITY PATTERNS

In view of their exclusive habitation and continued occupation of a *homeland*, possession of a common language (with slight differences), and remarkable similarities in most of their socio-political institutions, the Igbo are, and have always been regarded as a people.<sup>21</sup> However, there are some variations in Igbo “culture and social groupings.”<sup>22</sup> Forde and Jones (1950) utilized those variations to categorize the Igbo into five broad divisions: Northern or Onitsha Igbo, Southern or Owere Igbo, Western Igbo, Eastern or Cross River Igbo, and North-Eastern Igbo.<sup>23</sup>

Again, the variations that constitute the basis of these broad categorizations have a lot to do with the response of the Igbo to the specifics in the ecology of the part of the Igboland inhabited by each group. In every specific instance, the ecology impacted the two mainstays of the Igbo economy—cultivation and trade. The ecology impacted the “patterns of territorial expansion and supporting mythological charters, residential and land tenure systems and, following on this, the distinctive features occurring among [each group] with respect to marriage and kinship relations to political organization and its supporting institutions.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite the categorization of the Igbo into five broad groups, the format of analysis of Igbo authority patterns reveals the “general pattern of political process which is shared by all Igbo.”<sup>25</sup> The outcome reveals that the authority patterns of the Eastern or Cross River Igbo whose decentralized village-based democratic political system is closely similar to those of the Southern (Owere) Igbo, and the Northern Igbo. One must caution ahead of time that apart from the Eastern or Cross River Igbo who have a

matrilineal lineage system, the rest of the Igbo groups all have a patrilineal lineage system. Even some Aru Igbo who sojourned and subsequently settled amongst the Eastern Igbo in Afikpo area still retain their patrilineal lineage kinship system. The matrilineal lineage system of the Eastern or Cross River Igbo rendered their marriage and kinship systems as well as their "rules of inheritance and succession"<sup>26</sup> slightly different from what obtain among the other Igbo groups. Also, "the forms of their men's associations and cults"<sup>27</sup> differ slightly. The monarchical political system tenable amongst the Northern and Northeastern Igbo highlight the cultural variations among the Igbo. However, variations do not constitute grounds for defining the Igbo as different peoples.

### THE LEVELS OF AUTHORITY AMONGST THE IGBO

Social and political authority patterns in Igbo society configured into four distinct levels. The primary level of authority resided in the *Ezi* or compound, which is composed of households or *Onu-usekwu*. Superseding the *Ezi* is the *Umunna* or sub-lineage, which is in turn superseded by the *Ama* or Village. Following the *Ama* in that order is the *Ama-Ala* or Village-Group where authority terminates.

### THE EZI

The *ezi* is the primary segmental unit most proximate to government in Igbo society. It is the cradle of and reinforcement node for the socialization of every Igbo. The *ezi* is made up of a number of *onu-usekwu* that are "economically independent households, each with a man or a woman as the head householder."<sup>28</sup> This trait of economic independence renders the *onu-usekwu* the basic segmental unit of economic sustenance for individual Igbo. Managerial authority in each household revolves around its head who is expected to hold his household together. He is the source of most of the directives in his household. If his children are grown he often consults them on issues of vital importance in the household. He ensures that the women of the household—his wives and the wives of his sons—do not lack equitable access to plots of land on which they raise the subsistence food crops such as coco-yam, beans, cassava, maize, vegetables, etc. that they grow by the side to supplement the nutritional needs of their children. His economic role centers on the cultivation of yams, the principal crop among the Igbo. Given that yam cultivation is a labor-intensive undertaking, the household is the primary source of labor for its head. When his sons come of age it is often his responsibility to start them off as yam cultivators by providing them with their initial seed yams. He is a

manager who strives to be a good role model to his children and grandchildren. His personality determines the style of management that he adopts to ensure the success of his household as an economic unit.

The *Opara* or first son of the head of the household takes precedence over the rest of his siblings regardless of the number of wives that their father has. His preeminent status corresponds to that of the *Ada* or first daughter of his father. Usually, unless the most senior wife in the household was childless or could not have children in time, the *Opara* and the *Ada* share the same mother. Birth position earns males and females automatic membership respectively in the *Ndi Opara* and the *Umu Ada* civic associations at both the village and village-group levels. Both associations are segmental social units that are also quite proximate to government and the practice of authority in Igboland. While the *Ada* would marry and relocate to her husband's household (without severing the ties in her household of birth) the *Opara* (*Okpara*) assumes the position of his father at his death. He inherits his *obi* or reception hall, which is the premier edifice in the household in which the male head of household lives and receives his visitors, his *Ofò* (which symbolizes the substantive legitimacy of the authority he wields as the head of household), etc.

The most senior male who is called *Onye-nwe ezi* exercises authority in the *ezi*. Every household head and his or her members recognize the authority of the *Onye-nwe-ezi*, who they usually consult prior to taking decision on any major political issue.<sup>29</sup> In view of the inherent asymmetry in the relationship between the *Onye-nwe-ezi* and the members of the *ezi*, he is the rightful leader in the compound. He is the conduit through which the *Directiveness* dimension flows in the *ezi*. This is on the grounds of his age, extensive wisdom and knowledge of the custom and tradition of the *ezi* and the community at large. He does not decree directives. All directives from him stem from custom and tradition that the other adult members of the *ezi* are also conversant with. His authority in the *ezi* is not self-sustained, i.e. it derives from the ancestors.<sup>30</sup> His failure to exercise authority fairly attracts the wrath of the ancestors and deities against him as well as the disdain of members. If a member of the *ezi* violates a custom and it is brought to his notice, he is expected to interpret the degree of the violation and prescribe the requisite ablution in a non-prejudicial manner. His responsiveness derives from steadfast adherence to the custom and tradition. His position encapsulates both political and religious responsibilities.

Apart from the *Onye-nwe-ezi's* authority to arbitrate disputes that arise between members of the *ezi*, he is also in charge of the external affairs of the *ezi*. He is both its spokesman and representative in those situations that do not require the presence and direct participation of its adult members. Given that governance in the *ezi* is by direct democracy,<sup>31</sup> involving

the participation of all the adults, the process and phases of its direction involve the *Onye-nwe-ezi* and members.

One could use problem recognition, which is one of the several phases of the 'process of direction' under the E-G scheme as a point to illustrate the *Onye-nwe-ezi's* responsiveness and the participation of members of the *ezi* in the direct democracy that prevails in the *ezi*. Although his position, age, wisdom, etc. make it imperative on the *Onye-nwe-ezi* to recognize problems that may arise in the *ezi*, every adult member can equally call his attention to problems through complaints. On this, a similar assertion can also be made about the other phases in the 'process of direction' that are identified in the E-G scheme to include "the definition of issues ... deliberation, resolution ..., implementation, sanctioning."<sup>32</sup> In the context of the E-G scheme therefore, the *Onye-nwe-ezi* is neither an alterocrat nor an autocrat, his responsiveness varies in terms of low and high at each of these phases.

#### BASES OF LEGITIMACY PERCEPTION

Borrowing directly from the E-G scheme's tenets, the *bases of legitimacy perception* of the *Onye-nwe-ezi's* authority rests solidly on the normatively prescribed qualifications that earned him his pre-eminent position of authority in the compound. Those qualifications include his age, and his ascribed position as the *Opara*. These qualifications are recognized and acknowledge by members of the *ezi* through their respect for him shown through their compliance to his directives. The same applies to the outsiders with whom he inter-faces in the course of his external representation of the *ezi*.

The *Onye nwe-ezi's* 'personal legitimacy' is a function of the recognition and acknowledgement by individual members of the *ezi* of the two criteria (the office and recruitment process) that qualify him to exercise authority. As far as the *ezi* members are concerned, there's indeed no doubt about his position of authority and how he attained it. Since members of the *ezi* have a clear notion of the customs and traditions as well, they are equally knowledgeable about what may constitute fair or foul in his attempts to regulate their behavior and their affairs. Their expectation therefore would be that he would be even-handed in his direction of their affairs. If their perception of him in that regard is positive, it translates to 'substantive legitimacy' of his authority in the compound. If he does not stifle their participation—as he is expected not to—in the direction of their affairs it definitely earns his authority the prerequisite 'procedural legitimacy' in their perception. It is partly because of these that occupants of the position of *Onye-nwe-ezi* in pre-colonial indigenous Igbo societies strived to be upright in their exercise of the authority derived from the ancestors

to direct the affairs of their compound. An *Onye-nwe-ezi* who preferred to do otherwise ran the risk of exposing the 'bases of legitimacy' of his authority in his compound to ridicule and the negative perception of its members who would be encouraged to become indifferent and insubordinate to his directives.

### THE UMUNNA

The *Umunna* is the next level in the Igbo social authority patterns. Each *Umunna* is a lineage of kinsmen, their wives and children who reside in their own territorial portion of the village. Usually, members of an *Umunna* share the same descent from one male ancestor and his several wives. Each *Umunna* is usually composed of several *ezi* (compounds). The *Umunna* is headed by the *Opara-Umunna* who is usually the *Onye-nwe-ezi* from the most senior *ezi* in the *Umunna*. Since all the *ezi* that constitute an *Umunna* descended from one male ancestor, it is the *ezi* that was founded by the *Opara* of the ancestor of the *Umunna* that assumes the leadership position in the *Umunna*. But if after several generations the seniority pattern in the *Umunna* can no longer be effectively traced again, premier authority in the *Umunna* will reside in the most senior male. As it is the case in the *ezi*, the *Ofo Umunna*—(the symbol of legitimate authority) normatively acknowledged by the Igbo to exclusively emanate from the ancestors (Forde and Jones 1950) must be in the custody of the occupant of the office of *Opara-Umunna*. In Igbo society, the role of the *Ofo*, is salient to every Igbo.<sup>33</sup>

The *Ofo* that the occupant of the position of *Opara-Umunna* wields on behalf of members of his *Umunna* is a symbol of both his authority as the head as well as his function as the priest who performs various rituals on their behalf.<sup>34</sup> The *Opara-Umunna* "had both religious and social authority. ... He represents all the power and authority of their dead male ancestors. He offers sacrifices on behalf of the family, decides quarrels, allots land, and so on."<sup>35</sup> The position imbues very limited political authority and power on its occupants in Igbo society. Although he presides over the *nzuko* (assembly) of his lineage, which is often summoned into session to resolve disputes that arise between members, the *Opara-Umunna* does not formulate directives for the *Umunna*. His influence on directives derives from his opinions on questions of custom and tradition. His opinion is usually sought by the assembly before a decision is handed down on issues that involve the violation of custom or traditions that came before the assembly of *Umunna*.<sup>36</sup> He is not expected to and does not interfere in the affairs of any of the *ezi* (compound) that constitutes the *Umunna*. When-

ever it was determined that a serious taboo in the land has been violated by a member of the *Umunna*, the *Opara-Umunna* is expected to ensure that the necessary sacrifices are offered to the ancestors and the deities to restore harmony in the *Umunna* and the community between the living and the ancestors from whom all authority emanate. Igbo lineage affiliation is traced through the *Umunna*. The *Umunna* provides a crucial platform for objective deliberation and handling of issues before they reach the village assembly. It is highly unusual for an individual who lacks the support of his *Umunna* to attain a position of trust and responsibility in the village. Hence, in their figurative speech pattern, the Igbo liken the *Umunna* to the thorny palm fruit bunch that can only be lifted off the ground by someone with the aid of a pad – *Umunna bu ike nkwo, aju k’aji ebu ya*.

To prevent the rise of a dynasty and the disruption of authority patterns in the *Umunna*, the son of the *Opara-Umunna* does not succeed him. Instead, he’s succeeded by his brother if at his death the one happens to be the most senior male in the *ezi*. The prime position of the *ezi* that descended from the *Opara* of the first ancestor or founder of any *Umunna* is everlasting. In the event that it does not produce the most senior male in the *Umunna* at any one time, authority in the *Umunna* must pass on to the most senior male from another *ezi* in the *Umunna* without trumping the privileges of the prime *ezi*. Age alone does not bequeath authority on anyone. Authority comes with age and character.<sup>37</sup> Government at the *Umunna* level is based essentially on direct democracy<sup>38</sup> which helps to confer the right of participation on every responsible adult member in the formulation of directives in the *Umunna*. As it is at all levels of governmental authority patterns in pre-conquest Igbo society, in his leadership capacity, the *Opara-Umunna* lacks the legitimacy to flout any of the four dimensions of influence relations on grounds of his authority position. If a holder of the office goes against the grains of the expectations of members of his lineage, the preference was often to first call his attention to the fact through a dignified approach. Another elder or even someone close to him was often sent to bring his shortcomings to his attention. It was only in the event that he refuses to acknowledge those shortcomings that he loses the respect and loyalty of the *Umunna*. Committing such a taboo would definitely result to the negative perception of the legitimacy of the authority of an *Onye-Opara-Umunna* by members of the *ezi*. Such loss of legitimacy and prestige is akin to indirect removal from authority.

#### THE AMA

A group of *Umunna* that descended from the same ancestor usually constitutes an *Ama* or village, which is autonomous and sovereign in the con-

duct of its affairs in Igbo society.<sup>39</sup> Governmentally, the *Ama* is a typical Village Republic.<sup>40</sup> Shared common ancestry highly forbids marriage between members of the Village. Politics at the Village level is practiced in a direct democratic manner involving the participation of all adult males who convene as the *Ama-Ala* or *Oha-na-Eze* (the enlarged General Assembly of the entire community and its distinguished and titled citizens) in some areas to attend to the business of the village when summoned to do so.<sup>41</sup> The *Ama-Ala* convenes in the *Mbara* or the Central Village Square which is usually the Village Market Square and ritual center where the shrines of the Gods that the Village jointly worships are located.<sup>42</sup> The Village governmental processes, practices, power and authority are normatively invested in the *Ama-Ala*.<sup>43</sup>

Alongside the oracles (represented by their priests and priestesses) worshipped by the village, and the various age grades the *Ama-Ala* is an *ad hoc* institution that constitutes the Village Government with.<sup>44</sup> Although *ad hoc*, the *Ama-Ala* is still one of the major 'channels' of *Participation* for all adult Villagers; males and females alike. When it is viewed in the light of the E-G scheme, the *Ama-Ala* is a channel of *Participation*, which is both open and 'facilitated' for all adult members of the village, who make voluminous use of it.

Since villagers discharge their acts of participation in the direction and affairs of their Village as individuals as well as on the auspices of their respective *Umunna* whenever the *Ama-Ala* convenes, the members of each *Umunna* sit together amongst themselves in their section of the *Mbara* or the Central Village Square, which is often located in the direction to their own quarter in the Village. That way, they could consult amongst themselves in the course of debates. The Village leadership is composed of those who hold the *Ofo* (who in most cases are the elders who are also the heads of their respective lineage), men and women of wealth and prestige who have taken titles and "have risen spontaneously in the village and have developed their power and influence gradually"<sup>45</sup> over the course of time. Individuals who feature prominently at this level of authority in the village are often those who acquired titles of *Nze*, *Ozo*, *Ezeji*, etc. by virtue of which they became members of title societies or associations. They must have sufficiently distinguished themselves to become members of the *Okonko*, and other secret societies.<sup>46</sup> Villagers acquire those coveted titles and membership of the titles associations through their wealth. It is through membership of the title associations that an individual "acquired a special status as *ogaranya* (as opposed to plain *ogbenye* or poor man) and was entitled to enjoy more weight and authority in the councils of his people than if he were an ... (*ogbenye*)."<sup>47</sup> One should be mindful here of the processes as well as the criteria that qualified individual Villagers for leadership positions. It is because those processes and criteria are salient,

i.e. normatively stipulated and visibly recognized by all that those salient processes and criteria—are able and effective in playing into the legitimization of the authority of leaders of the Village, particularly at the personal level for Villagers.

However, irrespective of wealth and status, no one was denied the chance to 'say his own mouth' (an apt illustration of this metaphoric assertion can be found in Chinua Achebe's<sup>48</sup> *Home and Exile*) on matters that come before the *Ama-Ala*. The Igbo social authority patterns enable the reconciliation of the claims of uniqueness by each political unit with its quest for integration amongst the other units in the Village, Village-Group, and clan. That reconciliation is achieved both at the individual and the community levels through the agency of the "popular assembly that is small enough for everybody who wishes to be present to do so and to "speak his mouth," as they like to phrase it."<sup>49</sup> The norm of 'speaking one's mouth' on issues that come before the Popular Assembly of the Village underscores the crucial importance of the 'intensity, frequency and unrestricted' nature of *Participation* in pre-conquest Igbo society. It is not only that all prevalent 'channels' of *Participation* in Igbo society are 'open' and 'facilitated', it is also true that their 'openness' and facilitation are 'formally' provided for, 'normatively tolerated', and 'unsanctioned' for all members of society. Like the proverbial chicken in Igbo lore who absented herself from the Village Assembly on a certain day when it was convened to examine the crisis that was produced by the adoption of animal sacrifices by human beings, with the implicit commitment to her neighbors that she would abide by whatever decision that was reached in her absence, and ended up being designated as the permanent candidate for sacrifice at will by human beings, by the unanimous consent of the Popular Assembly of all animals, any Villager who absents him or herself from the *Ama-Ala* runs the risk of being self-exposed to the risks of becoming the victim of a decision in which he chose not to 'say his or her mouth'. Taking oneself off one of the important normatively-approved channels of *Participation* in Igbo society exposes one to a range of risks.

The range of issues that are subjects of directives includes disputes between individuals from the same *ezi* or *Umunna* that were not settled to the satisfaction of one of the parties, or between individuals from different *Umunna*. Issues of specific legislative importance touching on the nitty-gritty aspects of life in a community are equally tabled before the *Ama-Ala*. Once an issue is thoroughly debated by the *Ama-Ala*, all the *Opara-Umunna* or their designees would usually retire into a temporary conclave or *izuzu* in which all views that have been expressed by those present are reconciled and framed into a reasonable and impartial decision which is then tabled before the Assembly for acceptance by general acclamation or rejected by shouts of derision.<sup>50</sup> In situations when the *izuzu* returns with

an unpopular decision, the decision of the *Ama-Ala* will trump it to prevail. In which case, those in leadership positions are responsively mandated to abide by it without exception. If it is a legislative cause, the decision is sealed as the *iwu* or law of the Village by the *Ofo* holders who would raise their *Ofo* and strike it on the ground four times in unism.<sup>51</sup> An Igbo community would never allow anyone, including leaders to utilize an exigent platform like the *izuzu* to monopolize the dimension of *Directiveness* or exercise veto power over the Popular Assembly. Actually that is the symbolism that underscores the prompt rejection of an unpopular decision whenever one is returned by the *izuzu*.

It is therefore clear that the *Ama-Ala*, a popular 'channel' of participation for every responsible adult member of Igbo society, plays a central role in the formulation of directives in pre-colonial Igbo communities. In contemporary Igbo society, in spite of shifts in the practice of authority due to the arbitrariness that characterized de facto colonial rule and its unfortunate legacies, robust *Participation* is still one of the four normative dimensions evident in the influence relations that are inherent in the resoundingly democratic age-old social authority patterns that the Igbo evolved and relied on to organize their affairs. The directives that emanate from debates that take place in the *Ama-Ala* on issues that come before it at all times cannot actually be located at the top polar extreme of the *Directiveness* continuum. The reason for that being that regimentation is not a feature of the practice of authority in Igbo society. The true prevalent situation approaches what is characterized in the E-G scheme as 'minimal *Directiveness*', or "a tendency to issue directives only insofar as the existence of the unit clearly requires it."<sup>52</sup> It's a situation in which there is "a generally specifiable level, in the manner of 'functional requisites' or ... a level that varies with specific external pressures on social units and their internal purposes."<sup>53</sup>

The above characterizations of directives that result from decisions reached by the *Ama-Ala* would become clearer if they are further assessed in the context of some of the component parts into which *Directiveness* dimension is dissected in the E-G scheme. It's known already that the *Ama-Ala* is a popular channel of participation for all villagers, which functions on the principle of direct democracy. If one recalls that in fundamental terms, "direction requires the existence of orders (commands, imperatives, rules, statutes, etc.) emanating from superordinates"<sup>54</sup> in social unites, it may not be unreasonable to infer that the *Ama-Ala* does not necessarily regiment its directives. Hence, the 'coverage' of directives that emanates from decisions reached by this popular Assembly of direct democracy is neither 'comprehensive' nor 'restricted'. At the same time, one can infer that while the 'latitude' of directives from the *Ama-Ala* could have been

'specific', their 'supervision' couldn't have been 'close' since the absence of professional law enforcement in pre-conquest Igbo society was pervasive.

In the same vein one can infer that the absence of an institutionalized penal system in Igbo villages implied that the 'sanction threshold' of most directives reached by the *Ama-Ala* was hardly severe. However, the advent of the trans-Atlantic slave trade introduced a degree of severity in the 'sanction threshold' of *Directiveness* in Igbo society especially for violators of serious taboos who were promptly sold off into slavery. Often times it was customary for the *Ama-Ala* to call the attention of an *Umunna* to a serious infraction of one of its own. It was usually the responsibility of the *Umunna* then to take the big decision to sell a culprit off into slavery.<sup>55</sup> Some of the oracles, *Ibiniukpabi* of Aruchukwu and *Agbala* of Oka in particular, played crucial roles in that regard. People who were found guilty of grievous crimes that went before these Pan Igbo oracular originations were often sold off directly into slavery.<sup>56</sup>

The responsiveness of leaders of the village is usually commensurate with the intense participation of the generality of villagers in the governance of their village. In the absence of regimentation in the practice of authority amongst the Igbo both *Directiveness* and *Compliance* dimensions are driven by the degree to which the overriding value to submit is trumped by the perception of legitimacy. The generality of the people are inclined to adhere to the normative prescriptions that guide influence relations in their community. But on those rare occasions when the community is genuinely convinced that the leadership is intent on fostering an unpopular agenda at the expense of the community, the former often responded to the latter's attempts to influence their behavior with 'indifference.'

## THE VILLAGE-GROUP

A group of villages that usually share some affinity but intermarry compose a democratic government of the Village-Group in which each one, irrespective of size is equal. The Village-Group is "generally the largest political unit"<sup>57</sup> in the Igbo political system.

The villages that comprise a Village-Group are ranked according to the seniority of their founders who are the children of one ancestor. "The most senior in rank is believed to have grown out of the descendants of the first son of the founder while the most junior is said to have descended from his last son."<sup>58</sup> The *Ama-Ala* is also charged with the Government of the village-group. But unlike the *Ama-Ala* at the village level, this one functions as a representative Assembly. Every Village is represented in the *Ama-Ala* by its *Ndi Isi Ofo* (*Ofo* Custodians). However, supreme authority still lies in the *Ama-Ala*. Directives reached by the *Ama-Ala* are "enforced

within each Village by the age-grades and secret societies of each village.<sup>59</sup> Age organizations are vital components of the social authority patterns in the Village-Group. In the absence of professional law enforcement agencies, it was the age grades that were assigned the responsibility of enforcing compliance to directives passed by the *Ama-Ala*. But their enforcement responsibilities didn't transcend village boundaries. The constituting villages in the Village-Group guided their respective sovereignty quite jealously. Any member village, which felt that its interests were insufficiently protected in any decision taken by the *Ama-Ala*, would usually opt to ignore its enforcement. In situations like that, the restorative role of the oracles was triggered with preemptive measures to avert schisms that could degenerate to high intensity warfare if they were unaddressed.<sup>60</sup> Verdicts handed down by oracles were binding on all parties. Oracular verdicts hardly varied from popular expectations in communities for the reason that their agents gathered relevant information on dispute clandestinely from disputing communities as well as their neighbors<sup>61</sup> before disputes even come before the oracles.

In Igbo political units, the age organization "is a universal broad division of the male and of the female population into three categories or grades of Elders (*Ndichie*), Men (Women) and Boys (Girls),"<sup>62</sup> but the variation and complexity attached to it vary from one political unit and community to another. The Elders who are also the acknowledged link between the living members of their community and their Ancestors, who are still part of the community, are usually in-charge of government in each political unit. They do not exercise their authority in isolation from the Ancestors; hence, their link with the Ancestors is a source of legitimacy for their authority.

Influence relations in Igbo society are exercised in ways that promote "the process of regulating normal life among"<sup>63</sup> a people who see themselves as having a lot that bonds them together from the individual up to various group levels. Individuals and even distant units whose members lack any obvious lineage links were known to go as far as creating one through the covenant of *Igbandu*.<sup>64</sup> *Igbandu* is a ritual in which a family, kindred, or village draws and mixes blood from every member. The mixed blood is tasted by everyone of them to establish a symbolic blood relationship between them, a guarantee that they can never inflict harm on one another or their members. Participation in the affairs of every Igbo unit is the normative right of "all who were old enough to talk sense."<sup>65</sup> Apart from the asymmetry evident in the authority pattern, the authority relations function according to the belief that all members of the social unit "who are worthy are basically equal, differences in wealth notwithstanding."<sup>66</sup>

EXCEPTIONS FROM THE GENERAL PATTERNS: APEX  
STRUCTURED AUTHORITY IN FOUR IGBO POLITIES:  
OGUTA, ONITSHA, ABO, AND OSOMARI

From the generalist point of view there is ample evidence to warrant the location of the social authority patterns of the Igbo within the typical scenario discussed earlier in the preceding sections. However, there are still some specific aspects of the social authority patterns found among Northern and Northeastern Igbo groups that deviate somewhat from the general patterns. Such deviations include the presence of institutionalized monarchies involving a considerable degree of trappings of royalty such as court keeping, distinct forms of regalia and associated ceremonies.<sup>67</sup> The fact is that Igbo groups who operate monarchical political systems may have borrowed them from their non-Igbo neighbors.<sup>68</sup> This assertion is largely underscored by the fact that all monarchical Igbo communities live close to non-Igbo nationalities that evolved centralized monarchies. In fact, a careful scrutiny of the authority patterns in various Northern and Northeastern Igbo societies where monarchical political systems prevail would reveal that their kings are no more than premier members of the enlarged Popular Assembly (*Ama-Ala*) of their Village-Groups.<sup>69</sup>

Ikenna Nzimiro identified some of the differences in the social authority patterns of the Oguta, Abo, Onitsha and Osomari, four Northern and Northeastern Igbo communities that underscore the assertions. All four share some characteristic similarities as well as subtle differences in their respective political systems. It is not just the monarchical system of rule that the Northern and Northeastern Igbo groups adopted from their Yoruba, Bini, and Igala neighbors. They emulated the residential patterns that are associated with their non-Igbo neighbors as well. For instance, unlike the rest of the Igbo who live in *obodo* or *ikporo* (village), but like their neighbors, the Yoruba and the Bini, Northern and Northeastern Igbo groups live in differentiated and compact residential towns that are made up of quarters (*ebo*) that are in turn made up of wards (*ogbe*).<sup>70</sup> Each "*ogbe* divides into compounds (*nkpu uno*) which contain the members of an extended family or minimal lineage."<sup>71</sup>

In all four cases, the Chief of State presides over a constitutional monarchy that encompasses titled personalities, titled associations and age grades.<sup>72</sup> In Abo, Oguta, and Onitsha, the title of the Chief of State is *Obi*. He is called the *Atamanya* in Osomari.<sup>73</sup> Afigbo (1973) argues that it is probably because of the central roles that titles play in the designation of individuals to authority positions in these polities that the *Obishop* and *Atamanyaship* became the ultimate titles that can be taken by anyone in them.<sup>74</sup>

The office of the Chief of State resides in a specific lineage—*Ebo* (lineage) in Onitsha, Abo, and Osomari. In Oguta where the towns that constitute the polity are in their own turn made up of the *Ogbe*, the *Obishop* resides in a specific *Ogbe*.<sup>75</sup> However, in all cases, the office of Chief of State is still open to every worthy male from the royal line who proves himself so by his exemplary character and wealth. Wealth and character are the two principal criteria that must be fulfilled by citizens who aspire to join the title societies in these polities.<sup>76</sup> Membership of title societies in them is open to only freeborn citizens. Being a freeborn citizen is also a prerequisite qualification for election to the office of Chief of State. These deliberate provisions in the political system specifically exist to deter the evolution of autocracy in these communities.

Society in these polities is “organized on a basis of age and sex into male and female age sets, the women have their own system of Councils and a General Assembly which parallels that of the men, and there are a number of voluntary association membership which is sought by the socially and politically ambitious.”<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, society in each of them is ranked in a manner that depicts asymmetry in the prevalent social authority patterns and relations. However, that ranking is not indicative of stratification that favors some members of society at the expense of others. Take for instance the rank of *Nwadiani* or freeborn citizen. It is a sociologically non-discriminatory rank that includes titled and untitled individuals who are not of royal descent as well as titled and untitled individuals who are of royal descent. By royal descent we are talking about the lineage that claims direct descent from the founder of the polity.<sup>78</sup> Any *Nwadiani* who is in good social standing in terms of character and integrity, who achieves the withal to join the title associations would become an *ogaranya* or distinguished personality in society. In all four polities, the status and prestige of *ogaranya* earned the one membership of the political elite. The lowest rung of the status ladder in society is occupied by the *Ohu* (slaves and slave-born whose population is insignificant in Igbo communities) who are not worthy of citizenship and all the rights that it confers on the *Nwadiani*. Citizenship is therefore the exclusive preserve of *Ndi Nwadiani* (freeborns).

There are three categories of *Nwadiani*.<sup>79</sup> The first category includes all freeborn people who are descended from the founders of a polity. The second is composed of descendants of freeborn individuals who are called *Onoru* (the ones that stayed put) from other political units who became members through fission from their original units. The freeborn status of their ancestors from their place of origin is actually the principal qualifying criterion that earned people in this category full membership of the ward that their ancestors attached themselves to.<sup>80</sup> Like all members of their ward of fission, “they observe its rules of exogamy and are associat-

ed with its cults and ritual activities.”<sup>81</sup> The third category of *Nwadiani* includes descendants of the original inhabitants of the land who welcomed and accepted the founders of the polity. The office of *Ezeani* (Priest of *Ani* or *Ala*, the Supreme Deity of the land) resides with members of this category. As was mentioned a little earlier, the numerous rights and privileges that accrue through the institution of citizenship can only be enjoyed by the *Nwadiani*.<sup>82</sup> Marriage can only be contracted between freeborn citizens. As a matter of fact, “inter-marriage has united the three categories together in a closely knit web of kinship which has given them a strong sense of corporate solidarity.”<sup>83</sup> But it is only the *Nwadiani* in the first and third categories that can hold political offices.<sup>84</sup> In some of the polities, Osomari for instance, only the *Nwadiani* in the first and third categories may assume the *Okpalaship* in any *Ebo*. The reason being that amongst the Igbo, the *Okpalaship* is associated with both religious and political authority. In Osomari, the belief is that sacrifice to ancestors can only be successful when it is performed by “a true agnate.”<sup>85</sup> “This dichotomy between citizenship (*Nwadiani*) and non-citizenship (*Ohu* and today, sojourners) underlies the whole social framework in these societies.”<sup>86</sup> The categorization of society in these polities is devoid of sharp lines of stratification that segregate society into rulers and subjects. These are realities of a political system which is not conquest-based, and in which authority is not self-sustained and practiced through force and the domination of people.

Indeed, the normative restriction that bars freeborn individuals from other political units who voluntarily left their original wards and kindred to join another one in Osomari from assuming the *Okparaship* is strictly aimed at discouraging the incidence of conquest-based authority in the polity. Similarly, the constitutional stipulation by unwritten creed of customary laws, traditions and stipulations that guide governance that restrict eligibility to the office of *Ezeani* to only the category of *Nwadiani* who first settled the land is aimed at preventing the evolution of a dynasty and autocratic leadership.

*Ndi ohu* (cult slaves) are in a status of their own in Osomari. They cannot intermarry with the *Ndi nwadiani* and are therefore denied the ties that citizenship bestows on *Ndi nwadiani* in society. *Ndi ohu* cannot take titles, which consequently disqualifies them from becoming members of the political elite. They can join age sets but cannot hold leadership offices in them. Irrespective of their limited rights of participation in the direction of Osomari affairs, their eligibility for membership in age sets implies that they are not totally barred from all participation. Closer examination reveals that as it is in the rest of Igboland, it is basically the lack of kinship ties that disqualifies *ndi ohu* from accessing the channels of *Participation* in these polities.

Nzimiro's categorization of society in Abo, Oguta, Onitsha, and Osomari translates to the political elite class or state functionaries –the *Obi*, *Atamanya*, or *Eze* and various palace and ritual officeholders –and commoners (everyone who can belong to the prestige associations). The prestige associations constituted “an intermediate category as most titled offices are restricted to persons who are members of those associations.”<sup>87</sup> The E-G scheme designates these two categories of people as super-ordinate actors or Super-actors and subordinate actors or sub-actors respectively.<sup>88</sup> But in terms of ‘asymmetric relations’,<sup>89</sup> in these three polities, the commoners submit to the authority of the political elite in such a manner that makes it impossible for authority to extend itself to the point of autocracy. The remarkable difference between Northern and Northeastern Igbo communities and the rest of the Igbo is a clearer delineation and definition of the authority patterns in the former. However, that delineation does not necessarily imply that society in the former are sociologically stratified. The clear lines of asymmetry in Northern and Northeastern Igbo polities do not lock commoners out of the channels of *Participation* in the authority patterns. Their channels of *Participation* are *open* and *facilitated* for all.

There are several other principal factors deeply rooted in the fabric of Igbo society that render the lines of asymmetry between commoners and the political elite in these polities quite thin and flexible. Status and social mobility in Igbo society come through achievement. Hence in these polities, commoners are potential members of the political class since all resourceful citizens could accumulate the requisite wealth to acquire titles that qualified them to join the coveted political elite category. As in other parts of Igboland, the path to leadership and authority in these four polities is normatively prescribed and recognized as well as open to all.

The military, legislative and judicial affairs in each polity are the responsibility of public officials. The palace officials work hand-in-hand with the Chiefs of State, while the ritual officials discharge the ritual affairs of the societies. But as it is in the rest of Igboland, “law, morality and religion provide sanctions for controlling human conduct which supplement one another and are combined in different ways.”<sup>90</sup>

The Chief Of State in each of these four polities combines the secular and some ritual responsibilities of the state in his person and office.<sup>91</sup> This is in the sense that he officiates during ritual ceremonies while the *Ezeani* presides. The office of the Chief of State is analogous to the position of the *Okpala* at the lineage level, which confers on its occupant the authority to discharge secular and ritual responsibilities and obligations on behalf of members of lineage. As in every Igbo polity, in these four polities, all authority derives from the ancestors and is sanctioned by the Gods that communities worship.

Normatively, an authority position does not entitle anyone to make economic claims on his fellow citizens. No one pays or receives taxes or tributes from others. This assertion raises the question of how the Chiefs of State in these polities raised the “surplus” that supported their court. The ability of an individual in terms of his wealth, to shoulder the huge material requirements of being a public figure was one of the qualifying criteria for their office. Individuals accumulated wealth through their personal industry, and wealthy individuals acquired membership of titled associations to become members of the political elite. Every individual was therefore the master of his own economic destiny. But members of the political elite—the Chiefs of State, state functionaries, and other distinguished individuals in society were able to attract voluntary labor from well-wishers to supplement the labor of members of their immediate family for their cultivation-agricultural work on the basis of their prestige.

## CONCLUSION

In sociological terms, the foregoing analysis encapsulates the socio-political situation as regards the practice of authority in pre-colonial Igboland. Land cultivation, the mainstay of Igbo economy, provided the basis for the development of extensive long distance trade between the Igbo and their neighbours who inhabit the southeast portion of the lower Niger basin.<sup>92</sup> As early as 1508 Pacheco Pereira, a Portuguese trader who ventured to the coastlines of the Niger basin had made entries in his diary about the active trading involving the inhabitants of those parts.

Kinship ties that are developed principally through marriage within and between the various political units in pre-colonial Igboland were utilized extensively to evolve and sustain some of the ubiquitous non-governmental authority patterns that facilitated the harmonious existence of the Igbo in their thick rain forest environment.<sup>93</sup> In those situations when natural kinship ties could not evolve between different Igbo units, traditional Igbo religion was handily employed to promote the necessary economic ties between different political units in Igboland. The Oka Igbo cashed in on the Pan-Igbo influence of Agbara, their own oracle to ply their skills as smiths, diviners and physicians all over Igboland in the long distance trade. This was particularly true of the Aru Igbo who itinerant long distance traders. When they were faced with the difficult challenge of developing kinship ties with other Igbo groups that they encountered in the course of trading, they cashed in on the Pan-Igbo influence of *Ibiniukpabi*, which enabled them to carve a dominant niche for themselves in the long distance trade that flourished between the Igbo and the other nationalities that inhabit southeast lower Niger basin. At the time when the need

for agricultural labor by European settlers in the New World injected a demand for Africans who were bought and transported across the Atlantic as items of trade,<sup>94</sup> the Aru Igbo handily erected efficient trust networks that made them effective slave dealers.

Is it then unusual that the Aru Igbo were unable to exploit the Pan-Igbo influence of their oracle to seek political hegemony over Igboland or at least parts of it? Although Ottenberg seemed to have been tempted to speculate that the oracle organizations may have led to the evolution of a large and centralized political organization in Igboland, one is compelled to argue in the context of this discourse that the inability of anyone or group to evolve or impose such a system of rule on the Igbo may have stemmed partly from the geography of the Igbo homeland.<sup>95</sup> It is inconceivable that a geographical environment that partly dictated the evolution of village-based democratic polities could have suddenly encouraged their transformation into one single political organization by any one Igbo group. It could have been unusual therefore for the Aru Igbo to transcend their typical Igboic political system which lacked strong hierarchical characteristics and power centralization<sup>96</sup> to evolve a predatory system of rule that was capable of controlling and exploiting other Igbo groups. Indeed, in spite of their acclaimed acumen to harness the Pan-Igbo influence of *Ibiniukpabi*, to carve a central role for themselves in the economy of south-east lower Niger basin, the Aru Igbo or even any other Igbo group at that, lacked the capacity to transform themselves into over-lords in pre-conquest Igboland. There is no evidence that they attempted to impose their choice of political authority, or transform political units into unitary polities or try to raise a standing army within or from outside Igboland through the influence of their oracle.<sup>97</sup> Over all, the Igbo operated their age-old set of democratic authority patterns as a distinct people.

#### INDIGENOUS RELIGION AND THE PRACTICE OF AUTHORITY AMONGST THE IGBO

Although Igbo political system is not theocratic, indigenous religion played a central role in the organization and direction of the social, economic and political affairs of Igbo society. Even then, the Igbo political system is rooted strongly in the democratic proclivities of the people. In the context of the E-G scheme, the dynamic socio-political interplay evident in those proclivities can be associated with all aspects of the *Participation* dimension. Those proclivities include the penchant of the Igbo to embrace the normatively existing channels of *Participation* in their political system and utilize them voluminously, i.e. with frequency and intensity, through a variety of modes. Rooted deeply in Igbo history and natural

environment, indigenous religion mirrors all aspects of Igbo life and gave effect to the norms that guided the practice of authority in all aspects of Igbo social, economic and political organization.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, traditional Igbo religion's "eclecticism...was comparable to the fluidity of [Igbo] political institutions and settlement patterns."<sup>99</sup> Igbo religion is neither centralized in structure nor hierarchical in mode. Although there are priests and priestesses, every Igbo adult was sufficiently qualified to and officiated in the religion. Hence, everyone was sufficiently knowledgeable about the consequences that resulted from the violation of norms that guided the existence of communities and their members. The eclecticism and adaptability of traditional Igbo religion ensured "concrete and measurable benefits"<sup>100</sup> for the individual and the community. It was usual for individuals or communities to try a cult or divinity and discard it for another if it was found wanting.<sup>101</sup> The centrality of religion amongst the Igbo partly accounted for why subordinate members of society were unafraid of availing themselves of all facilitated channels of *Participation*, while their leaders were obligated to be responsive in the course of discharging their sundry duties as custodians of authority in society.

Normatively, institutionalized religious, non-religious agencies and organizations were recognized anchors of the *Directiveness* dimension in pre-conquest Igbo society. Such agencies and organizations included oracle and professional organizations, all of which functioned in clearly practical ways to direct independent Igbo political units towards social and economic integration.<sup>102</sup>

The Igbo are not the only people whose religion played a central role in their affairs at both the micro and macro levels.<sup>103</sup> Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and countless contemporary sociologists and scholars including Clems Brooks, Philip Gorski, Darren Sherkat and Christopher Ellison, Sidney Verba et al Arland Thornton have all weighed in on the subject from different perspectives.<sup>104</sup> It's unique that amongst the Igbo, "religion and law are so closely interwoven that many of the most powerful legal sanctions are derived directly from the gods (sic)."<sup>105</sup> That does not in any way imply that the prevalent system of rule in pre-colonial Igboland was theocratic. It is not just in the realm of the law that one observes a close relationship between Igbo religion and system of jurisprudence. Any meaningful discussion of pre-colonial Igbo 'political forms' cannot isolate indigenous Igbo religion.<sup>106</sup> Those agencies and organizations that "functioned to provide a degree of integration"<sup>107</sup> for the various independent Igbo groups did so mostly on the auspices of religion; and at three different levels:<sup>108</sup>

- (i) the level of the relationship that existed between 'independent Igbo units' that inhabit an immediate geographical area,

- (ii) the level of “long-range contacts of professional specialists”<sup>109</sup> such as physicians, diviners, smiths of all types, rainmakers, etc. and
- (iii) the level of oracles and their organizations.

In pre-conquest Igboland, independent political units in the same area often developed practical links with one another. For instance, there were some relationships that originated “out of the ties of individuals to one another and out of relationships between social groupings in neighboring units.”<sup>110</sup> There were instances when some units that either claimed the same ancestral origin or a similar pattern of migration at the time when they settled their respective districts resolved to initiate an alliance for trade or even for defense between them. Such alliance often survived in perpetuity.

In other instances when there were no substantive formal alliances between independent political units, their members still co-existed peacefully in ways that permitted them to interact economically and socially.<sup>111</sup> In the event of an outbreak of hostility between two units, another unit often stepped in to restore peace between them.<sup>112</sup>

There were interactions that produced the evolution of viable trade and commerce between units that were although politically autonomous but could not by any stretch of the imagination be said to have been economically self-sufficient. Professional religious specialists such as rainmakers, physicians, diviners, etc. visited villages away from their own to attend to their clients, who felt free in turn to visit them for consultation when the need arose.<sup>113</sup>

All over Igboland, some of the aforementioned religious “professional specialists without the extensive backing of formal social organizations”<sup>114</sup> who fall into this second category of agents promoted links between independent units for the reason that they traveled far beyond their immediate units to attend to their clientele and engagements. The kinds of links that they fostered between units were primarily at the level of their individual clients who they either traveled to attend to or received from long distances. Such “professional men were free to travel long distances and to follow their occupations, not because of their power or the authority of their own independent unit or the social groupings within it, but because the goods [and services] that they traded were much desired or because of their associations with the supernatural world.”<sup>115</sup> Factually, this explains why the trading Aro Igbo successfully travelled all over Igboland and even beyond amongst their neighbors in the lower southeast Niger basin and won the acceptance of their host communities who allowed them to sojourn in their midst and form what became known as settlements.

The oracles constituted the third category of agencies and organizations that functioned to link independent political units. "There were perhaps half a dozen oracles of significance"<sup>116</sup> which arose among the Igbo to help people to fulfill "traditional functions"<sup>117</sup> such as "telling the future or holding discussions with one's departed relations or for dealing with psychological problems associated with barrenness, sudden and premature death, ... disposing finally with unrepentant criminals"<sup>118</sup> and other social misfits in Igbo communities. The more prominent of these oracles are the *Ibiniukpabi* of Aru-Chukwu, the *Agbala* of Oka (Awka), the *Igwe-ka-Ala* of Umunneoha, and the *Amadioha* of Ozuzu.<sup>119</sup> The other two minor oracles were at Ogwu (Awgu)<sup>120</sup> and Ogbunko (Obunko) of Ogbunike.<sup>121</sup>

These oracles were instituted by different Igbo communities but earned the respect of all sections of the Igbo because of their association with the pantheon of Gods whom the Igbo worship.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, the oracles constituted "an institution which transcended the particularism of individual groups"<sup>123</sup> that established them. Customs and tradition are components of laws in Igbo society. For all intents and purposes therefore, in Igbo society, *Directiveness* is closely interwoven with religion and entailed an association and inter-relationship that encouraged responsiveness from leaders and exacted compliance from members of the larger society. "Suffice it to say that the life of an Ibo (sic) village was permeated by the supernatural; supernatural sanctions were the most potent guardians of [the] social order."<sup>124</sup>

Over the course of time these oracles and their organizations became largely associated with trade and commercial activities in Igboland as well. Their association with the growth of trade is to such a high degree that a meaningful discussion of their linkage functions among the Igbo can be better accomplished in the context of the economic development of The Igbo and the economy of space and time cannot permit a detailed discussion of their role in the development of particularly the European slave trade in Igboland.

In sum, all Igbo "units remained a relatively balanced grouping of independent political structures, which never developed, into a large formal organization ..."<sup>125</sup> but which, partly because of the role of the religious and non-religious agencies and organizations, continued to reap positive performance from their respective institutions at the social, economic, and political spheres.

Traditional religion furnished the Igbo with the concept of *chi*, a crucial element of their social organization. The personal *chi* of an individual represents "a refraction of the universal force, a personification of his allotted role in the universal motion towards the ultimate goal"<sup>126</sup> that can be justifiably characterized as the parallel of the concept of election or the

'spirit of capitalism' which Weber espoused so much on in his study of Calvinist Protestantism.<sup>127</sup> Although the concept of the personal *chi* may not be associated with the rise of capitalism, its economic determinism in the Igbo worldview cannot be over-emphasized at all. Sociologically, it enables the individual Igbo to engage, embrace and accommodate change and innovation in his or her personal capacity without losing the traits that determine his Igbo identity. An individual's fortunes are determined by his *chi*, "and mischance is due to his absence or oversight."<sup>128</sup> The concept is devoid of the kind of fatalism which could deter initiative and drive for economic success in the individual. Hence, the belief amongst the Igbo that it's the individual who must take the initiative while his or her *chi* acquiesces,<sup>129</sup> which is encapsulated in the wise saying: 'onye kwe, chi ya ekwe' –when an individual affirms, his personal *chi* reaffirms. This concept underscores the legendary proclivity of the Igbo to respond "rapidly to outside stimuli"<sup>130</sup> or "receptivity to change."<sup>131</sup>

#### IMPLICATIONS AND IMPACTS ON POLITICS IN NIGERIA

British intervention in the politics and affairs of the inhabitants of the Niger basin led the scenario that brought them under the political sway of Nigeria, a supra-national state in every sense of the word. The effects of that fact on the Igbo and their politics have been tremendous. The peculiarity of the Igbo social authority patterns that translate to who they are as a people has resonated in the course of politics in Nigeria from the processes of its inception and up until contemporary times.

In the outset, one of the major implications of the democratic peculiarities of the Igbo social authority patterns is that Igbo resistance to British intervention and colonial rule was stiff and protracted. That made the British to define and label them as truculent and as a result adopt an aversion for their social authority patterns throughout their course of their state building and colonial rule in the Niger basin. Proof of that can be found in the loop-sided manner with which the British not only related to them but also in the way that they formulated and implemented the three core state building policies, i.e. the Indirect Rule, the colonial education, recruitment of indigenous men into the military, and of course the Amalgamation, that brought Nigeria into existence. It was a loop-sidedness that favored the Hausa-Fulani specifically on the grounds that their inherently autocratic social authority patterns are in the over all, congruent with the set of social authority patterns on which colonial rule was based and operated.

## POSTSCRIPT

Having unpacked the complexity and intricacies of age-old social authority patterns of the Igbo, we are now in the best stead to avoid committing ourselves to errors that condemn us to prescriptions and definitions of us by our detractors and foes. In a situation where unity as a concept is upstaged to represent the Golden Grail, the Igbo must be wary of allowing themselves to be sucked into its adoption as a guiding principle in their quest for self-determination and restoration of their independence as a people. They should rather quest for the unity of purpose instead. This is particularly because unity as the Golden Grail translates to unitary political arrangement and practice of authority and all their terrible anti-democratic implications that characterize it. Igbo Renaissance must acknowledge and accommodate the peculiarity of Igbo social authority patterns in all of their intricacies and complexities. Else, it will amount to the Nigeria project redux.

## NOTES

1. Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the Biafran Cause," in Chinua Achebe, ed., *Morning Yet On Creation Day*, 1975), 137-147 (New York: Anchor Press, 1975), 72.
2. *Ibid*, 142,
3. Obiechina in Achebe, "The African Writer," 142.
4. Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), ix.
5. *Ibid*, 6-18.
6. H. Eckstein and T. R. Gurr, *Patterns of Authority: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry*, (NY, London, Sydney, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), 56.
7. H. Eckstein, "Authority Patterns: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry," *The American Political Science Review* 67, (1973): 1142-1161 (1153).
8. Eckstein, H. and Gurr, T.R. (1975) *Patterns of Authority: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry*, NY, London, Sydney, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons 53
9. *Ibid*, 60
10. *Ibid*, 71
11. E. C. Ejiogu, *The Roots of Political Instability in Nigeria: Political Evolution and Development in the Niger Basin* (England and USA: Ashgate Publishing, 2011).
12. J.C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966)
13. Anene, *Southern Nigeria*, Isichei 1973 and E. Isichei, *A History of Nigeria* (London Lagos New York: Longman, 1983).
14. Anene, *Southern Nigeria*, Isichei 1973
15. C. W. Newbury, "Trade and Authority in West Africa from 1850-1880," in: H. Gann and P. Duignan, (Eds.) *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, Volume 1, The History and Politics of Colonialism 1870-1974* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1977.
16. Adiele E. Afigbo, "The Political Systems of the Igbo," *Tarikh* IV, (1973): 13-23.
17. M. Mann, "The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing," *New Left Review* 1, (1999) 26
18. Ejiogu, *The Roots*.

19. K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885: An Introduction to The Economic and Political History of Nigeria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956)
20. P. Anderson, "Editorial," *New Left Review* 5-0 (2002): 5
21. D. Forde and G. I. Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).
22. S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Intergroup Relations," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 14, (1958): 295-317.
23. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 295
24. Forde and Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples*.
25. G. I. Jones, "Ecology and Social Structure Among the North-Eastern Ibo," *Africa* 31, (1961): 118.
26. V. C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 39.
27. P. O. Nsugbe, *Ohaffia: A Matrilineal Ibo People* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1974), vi
28. Ibid.
29. Uchendu, *The Igbo*, 40.
30. Uchendu, *The Igbo*.
31. Uchendu, *The Igbo*.
32. Afigbo, "The Political Systems of the Igbo."
33. Eckstein, and Gurr, *Patterns of Authority*, 69
34. Uchendu, *The Igbo*.
35. Ibid.
36. E. Isichei, "Ibo and Christian Beliefs: Some Aspects of a Theological Encounter," *African Affairs* 68, (1968): 127-8.
37. Uchendu, *The Igbo*.
38. Ibid.
39. A.E. Afigbo, "Trade and Trade-Routes in Nineteenth Century Nsukka," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, (1973).
40. Uchendu, *The Igbo*, 39
41. Afigbo, Trade and Trade-Routes.
42. Uchendu, *The Igbo*.
43. D. Forde and G.I. Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).
44. Afigbo, "The Political Systems of the Igbo."
45. Uchendu, *The Igbo*.
46. Uchendu, *The Igbo*, 41.
47. Jones 1962
48. Afigbo, The Political Systems of the Igbo 15.
49. Achebe, *Home and Exile*, 14-15.
50. Achebe, *Home and Exile*, 15.
51. Uchendu, *The Igbo*, 40.
52. Uchendu, *The Igbo*. Certain numbers are symbolic in Igbo numerology. The even number four (ano) is symbolic amongst the Igbo for the reason that it denotes the first days—Eke, Orié (Oyé) Afo, and Nkwo—in the Igbo market week (izu). Four denotes a full circle in binary count. In the Igbo market week, each of the big market days is followed by its small companion. Thus, Eke Ukwu (big Eke) is followed by the Eke Nta (small Eke), etc. That's why the Igbo say: Ubochi di ano, zuo asato (There are four days that make up a full eight-day market week).

52. Eckstein and Gurr *Patterns of Authority*, 54.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. See J. S. Harris, "Some Aspects of Slavery in Southeastern Nigeria," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 27, Number 1. (1942): 40-40.
56. G. T. Basden, *Niger Ibos*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. 1938), Afigbo 1971a, Ottenberg 1958
57. Afigbo, "The Political Systems," 17.
58. Ibid.
59. Afigbo Trade and Trade-Routes, 20
60. E. Isichei, *The Igbo People and Europeans: The Genesis of a Revolution-to 1906* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1973).
61. C. K. Meek, *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1937).
62. Jones 1962: 194.
63. Afigbo, "The Political Systems." 20.
64. Ukwu 1967
65. Afigbo "The Political Systems," 20.
66. Ibid, 21.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ikenna Nzimiro, *Studies in Ibo Political Systems: Chieftaincy and Politics in Four Niger States* (London: Frank Cass, 1972), 21.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Asagba (Anglicized as Asaba) is another Northern Igbo polity that evolved apex-structured political system. In Asaba where the Chief of state is given either the Obi or Eze title, studies reveal that both titles were phased out sometime in the nineteenth century. Isichei's (1969) research reveal that both titles were the highest that anyone could take in Asagba society. She speculated that both went into oblivion when no one could afford to take them in a long time. Her findings underscore Afigbo's assertion. Afigbo (1973)
75. Nzimiro, *Studies in Ibo Political Systems*, 21.
76. Ibid
77. Ibid, 21
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid, 23
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid, 24
84. Ibid
85. Ibid, 25
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid, 37
88. Eckstein and Gurr *Patterns of Authority*.
89. Ibid, 8-20

90. Nzimiro, *Studies in Ibo Political Systems*, 37
91. Ibid.
92. S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Receptivity to Change," in Bascom, W.J. and Herskovits, M. J., (eds.) *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), Hodder, B.W. and Ukwu, I.U. *Markets in West Africa: Studies of Markets and Trade Among the Yoruba and Ibo*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1969).
93. K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885: An Introduction to The Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).
94. Ottenberg 1958, Isichei 1973, Johnson, R.B.J. The Niger Delta Pastorate. *Niger and Yoruba Notes* 10, (1904) 52-54; Talbot 1926, Forde, D. and Jones, G.I. *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).
95. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles."
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Thomas, N.W. *Anthropological Report on the Ibo-speaking Peoples of Nigeria*, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1914)
99. Isichei, E. (1970) Seven Varieties of Ambiguity: Some Patterns of Ibo Response to Christian Missions. *The Journal of Religion in Africa* III, 1970: 216
100. Ibid, 215
101. Jones, G. I. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study in Political Development in Eastern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), Isichei 1970, Achebe 2000
102. Ottenberg "Ibo Oracles."
103. Meek *Law and Authority*.
104. See E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957); C. Brooks, "Religious Influence and the Politics of Family Decline Concern: Trends, Sources, and U.S. Political Behavior," *American Sociological Review* 67, (2002): 191-211; P. S. Gorski, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Bureaucracy. *American Sociological Review* 60, (1995): 783-786, P. S. Gorski, Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700. *American Sociological Review* 65, (2000) 138-167; Sherkat, D. and Ellison, C. Recent Development and Current Controversies in the Sociology of Religion. *Annual Review of Sociology* 25, (1999) 363-94; S. Verba, K. Schlozman, and H. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); A. Thornton, "Reciprocal Influences of Family and Religion in a Changing World," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47, (1985): 381-94.
105. Meek, *Law and Authority*, 20.
106. Isichei 1969:121.
107. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 295
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid, 295.
110. Ibid, 297.
111. Ibid, 297.
112. Meek *Law and Authority*.
113. Green 1947.
114. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 298.
115. Ibid, 299.
116. Ibid, 299.
117. A. E. Afigbo, "The Consolidation of British Imperial Administration in Nigeria, 1900-1918," *Civilisation* 21, (1971): 436-458.

118. Ibid.
119. P. A. Talbot, *Tribes of the Niger Delta* (London: The Shelton Press, 1932).
120. Meek, *Law and Authority*.
121. Basden *Niger*.
122. Meek, *Law and Authority*.
123. Isichei 1969, 127.
124. Ibid, 129
125. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 296.
126. Nwoga 1971, 119
127. M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1904).
128. Isichei 1969: 125.
129. B. I. Chukwukere, "Individualism in an Aspect of Igbo Religion," In: M.J.C. Echeruo and E. N. Obiechina, (Eds.) *Igbo Traditional Life, Culture and Literature* (Owerri, Nigeria: Conch Magazine, 1971), 113
130. Isichei 1969, 130
131. Ottenberg, "Ibo Receptivity."