

An Analysis of Selected Igbo Names

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Abstract

This study examines the symbolic and cultural significance of Igbo family names, conditions under which families name their children, motives, narratives, cultural and spiritual implications including reasons for the erosion. In order to exhume the place of Igbo culture in their given names, the researchers adopt the Onomastic Theory and Postcolonial Theories bringing out the revered Igbo child naming ceremony intricacies and its undoing. The primary data for this study recalls the olden Igbo traditional method of naming their children after their four market days: Nweke, Orieji, Nwafọ, Nwankwọ, other names and their meanings. This becomes necessary because many a time's people ask, what is in a name. But for an average Igbo, there is more to one's name, its relevance in Igbo tradition and culture speaks volume. The secondary data are from books, journals and internet sources. It further dissects the name "Ozoemena" an Igbo family that reflects the background of a household that witness high child mortality. In the course of this work, it establishes that the missionaries with its attendant effect of westernization erodes this Igbo tradition. The present Igbo sees most of these names as mundane, archaic and have links with deities and baptise their children after Saints, given English names that is at variance with Igbo culture. This embrace places the Igbo as an endangered race and at the verge of extinction. This work calls for a renaissance of Igbo cultural names which first identifies whom they are and to save them from identity crises.

Key words: family, identity, Igbo, names, missionaries.

Introduction

Onomastics is the intellectual endeavour which studies names (Nicolaisen, 2015: pg. 223,) and in the words of Nuessel (2006, pg. 665) "names give us identity and it is an important ritual worldwide". Name is a word used to place or identify both living and non-living things in their proper perspective. Among human beings, name is a personal identity given to one by the parents from early childhood and adopted by everyone for proper identification and distinction. This personal identity comprises given names and the family names that uniquely distinguishes the bearer from others. Just as Udechukwu (2016: 90) posits, "there is hardly a person in the world without a name". According to Oxford Dictionary, name is "a set of words by which a person or thing is known, addressed or referred to". Oxford Dictionary describes name as "the word or words that a person thing or place is known by" while Baobeid (2023: pg. 1) describes name as that

which “give us a sense of who we are”. According to Russell (2014) “it is the only way we can easily get attention”.

But since the coming of the missionaries the adoption of names of Saints and English names has put to question the Igbo identity. The missionary’s imposition of English names to their new converts especially names of Saints bring about the relegation of Igbo native names an epitome of whom they are. The white men make it imperative to give their converts English Name during baptism. Their reason for the imposition of the foreign names to their converts are not farfetched: it shows the people are conquered at the same time depicts superiority of the white man to their conquest. To further show their supremacy and advancement, the Igbo culture and tradition are seen by their converts as fetish, mundane and that which propagate paganism.

The import of someone’s name is immeasurable and cannot be wished away. No wonder Onumajuru (2016: 308) says “Igbo name is a story book or a dictionary itself”. That is why several reactions trail the Shakespeare cliché “what is in a name?”. One of such critics Madison (2014: 4) in response to Shakespeare rhetoric declares; If you ask me to describe myself in a world, I would say I am my name, my name is me. The two are interchangeable Juliet or Shakespeare rather, was wrong; names are everything like most college students.

Also Isler (2022) aligns with Madison when he says “...names do indeed carry meaning”. According to a publication in Guardian (2017) about naming rites in Onitsha, “they embody a collection of people’s rich heritage and provides a window into our value, systems and life philosophies”.

Before the Western invasion and subjugation of the Igbo villages in the guise of religion, every Igbo man and woman according to their birth day, must first has a name tag of the market days: Eke Orié Afọ and Nkwọ depending on when it falls into. The particular market day a child is born determines the name to be given. These four market days (otu izu) that signify Igbo calendar cut across different names for the female and male Igbo offspring. This act is the Igbo way of commemorating the market day their children are born which is significant to them. Ogbonna (2019) recalls that “In the olden days, people were named with respect to the day that of the week that they were born. e. g. Nweke, Nwoye, Mgboye”.

Among the Igbo there is a sharp difference between the choice of names couples that got married but unable to conceive for a good number of years would give the child and the ones that conceive immediately after marriage. Same is applicable to a man that had girls and later had a boy child. You will hear names like “Nwokeabata” meaning a boy child has arrived and “Amaechina” and “Uzọechina” my lineage will not be cut off. Families that witness child mortality will give their children names such as “Ozọemena” may it not happen again, “Nnọrọm” come to stay and “Binyelum and Nonyelum” stay with me including “Onọchie” meaning I have got a replacement. An Igbo man that is surrounded by evil relatives gives his male children such names like “Esimolezennadi” how do I escape household enemies”, “Nnadibuagha” your relatives are your undoing., “Aghadinuno” there is war in home front. When one hears the above two names, it is an indication that the father is not at peace with his kinsmen.

Igbo couple that give birth to female children successively ends up coming up with names such as "Nkemuejina" anyone I conceive. The name "Nkemuejina" a short form of "Nkemuejinabunwa" meaning anyone I conceive is child, "Nwaanyibunwa" girl is equally a child and "Nwaanyidimma" girl child is good. Name as such as the above give solace to Igbo couples faced with the difficulty of not having a male child that will succeed the father. The names are also ways of shaming and silencing their relatives and traducers that mock and see their family as that whose lineage will be cut off. According to Igbo culture and tradition, any family without a male child goes into extinction as their female children will grow, get married with no body to keep the family name afloat.

Every Igbo market day: Eke, Orie, Afọ and Nkwọ has male and female version of names representing them. For those born on Eke market day, such names like Ekedum, Nweke, Ekemara are for the males and Mgebeke for their females, Oyegbulam for the males and Nwanyjorie/Orieji for the females. Their males are called Afọka the females Mgbafo while Nwanyinkwọ and Nwankwọ, Nkwọemezie are for females and males.

This work brings to bear, the rich cultural heritage in Igbo given names which serves as their dictionary and documentation of history before the conquering of their land by the white man, the Igbo man's foresight before the coming of the missionaries, the erosion of what makes the Igbo whom they are, and a call for the Igbo to return to the use of their native names bearing in mind that those foreign given names are in no way better than their native names.

Literature Review

There exist several scholarly works on names. Key concepts in Onomastics, including name structure and meaning (Ubahakwe, 1991; Nkamigbo, 2019) as well as Postcolonial Theory (Ashcroft et al., 2002) with emphasis on cultural hybridity and identity. As in the work of Al-Sayyed (2021, pg. 154) the Importance of personal names is represented in the onomasticians' efforts of highlighting the etymology of names, and the way they are used in different cultures as well as the reasons behind choosing names and abandoning others. Names may be regarded as an onomasticon which, like a lexicon, may range from all names embedded in any culture or language to the personal inventory of names known to one individual (Nicolaisen, 2001; pg. 10859).

According to Nicolae (2019, pg. 3) Casual theories of reference describe how acquire specific references (especially logical terms proper names, and natural terms) based on evidence". In the words of Denhart (2009) names communicate much more than a label, but equally depicts who the individual is both to his family and to others. Gerrig and Banaji ((1991) observe names as being template that develops a self-image of a person which indicates a person's position in status hierarchies of gender, his/her race, and social class.

Onah and Gudaku (2023) clarify that it is only human beings that have the gift of naming individuals with specific names. In other words, naming pattern used by human being is unique only to the human species. Olatunji, Mohammed, and Abdul-Rasheed (2015) expatiate that in Africa, a name sometimes signals gender, ethnicity, and class; they may connote personality characteristics and often reflects of the person's cultural dynamics. Orji (1999: pg.102) states that: the baby was given a name depicting the market day on

which it was born. If it was a baby boy born on ‘Eke’ market day, he was called Okereke (Okoro-eke) If it was a baby girl, she was called Mgbeke (Agboghọ-eke). while Yusuf, Olatunji and Issa (2014) explain that some names could also reflect the kind of deity worshiped in a household. Dickson (1996, pg. 11) opines that the name one chooses reflects many things about his character and personality, “that one is not aware of”. This underscores that naming is an identity marker.

Mbarachi and Igwenyi (2018) posit that naming is a cultural construct of identifying a person through employment of cultural strategies in the given society and its realization through language. Balogun and Fasanu (2019) say among the Yoruba, the type of names that is/are given to a new-born child is often determined by the circumstances into which the child is born. Also the Igbo in absence of documentation uses names for record purposes especially remarkable ones. Citing other conditions, Newton (2022) says names are usually given to commemorate events of history, sometimes the memory of something of importance or, somebody of importance or, most times names of religious warriors, political warriors, explorers of the past and present and to dates of the week, month or even year.

Aygekum (2006) describes the Akan names of Ghana as sociocultural tags that have meanings and performs sociocultural functions. He attributes religious names (Christian and Islamic) as the outcome of imported religions in Ghana. Moahi (2022) corroborates that nowadays it is far from unusual for Africans to name their children according to their religion...Christians often adopt names from the Bible such as Joseph, Mary and Adam. These European and Christian names do not mean much or anything at all in the African context (Houndjo, 2022). Guma (2001) observes that names mean more than words used for identification purpose giving credence to Mbarachi and Igwenyi (2001) opinion that often times name reflect the circumstances of a child’s birth, the parent’s perception of the child, their ideology of parenting, their expectation of both the parents and the extended family members on the role the child is to play in the family, the community as well as the society.

Onumajuru (2016, pg. 308) posits “this name is derived from the deity of the market day in which the child is born”. According to Igbo tradition, the naming ceremony of their new-born is done 8 days from the day the child is born which they call “izu naabọ” It brings together the two families (the in-laws) within a stipulated period of 8 days after the child’s birth. Orji (1999, pg. 103) ascribes this as the duty of parents of the child. His in-laws i.e. the parents of his wife are also summoned they come with some of their friends and well-wishers

Quoting Anekwe, Nwoye (2014) explains that “the naming ceremony, *iba nwa aha*, marks the official presentation of the child to his or her human agnate community”. The Igbo four market days are the heartbeat of its people being their economic, social and tradition melting point. Each and every Igbo community adopts one of the market days as their major day of economic activities. In the words of Nwagwu (2025) “these market days have not faded into history but continued to influence daily activities, trade...” going down memory lane, Ngakudi (2018) is of the view that “Chukwu created four days: Eke, Orie, Afọ, Nkwọ. This is why the number “four” is sacred to the Igbo”

, Aduba (2014: 26) explains in Onitsha, “Aghadiegwu Age Grade Society (1938-40) is to remember the last holocaust World War 11 (1939-45) even though the Age Grade Societies demarcated into years of birth”. Other clear examples of such names are “Agha nyereuche” war gives sense age grade “Aghaegbule” war will not consume us “Udokamma” peace is the greatest and “Aghadinjo” war is bad as Emechebe (2015:27) also points out each Age grade chooses a name that depicts emotional attachment to a particular cause. this may be a representation of the common character of its members or the epical period of its formation.

As in the words of Baobeid (2023: pg. 1) “name carries deep personal, cultural, familial and historical connections”. Names among the Igbo serve as a memorial of their loved ones. This is why certain names as Nnenne, meaning mother’s mother and Nnanna Father’s father are popular among the Igbo. The names are in remembrance and honour of their dead parents. Others include Nnamdi meaning my father lives because the Igbo strongly believe that their dead relatives as ancestors are ever with them in the spirit world still being part of their daily affairs.

The Igbo are not alone in this belief. According to Madison (2014): 1) The Ashkenazi Jews have a tradition of naming new babies in honour of deceased grandparents or other close relatives. As I am a Jewish by my father’s side, the first later of my name is in honour of my paternal grandfather. Madison proudly concludes “... I really like this concept and have always felt a special connection to the grandfather I never met”.

Arinze (2001: 23) asserts “names are not just abstract terms couched in indefiniteness, they are not mere labels. But they are pregnant with meaningful and symbols import”. Igbo use names to send message, reprove and approve as in the names “Aghadinuno” signalling household enemies, “Ndidiamaka” patience is golden, “Igwebuike” unity in diversity, “Somadina” may I not live alone, “Ezindu” good living among others.

This study will unravel the deep sociocultural Igbo names with deep meanings that Igbo prefer to answer in English against their own, other names that tell much about their history, background and belief that have no bearing with their new found religion.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs dual theoretical views – Onomastic theory and Postcolonial theory both delve into the naming guide among families that base on identity, culture and historical experience.

Onomastic theory a derivative from the Greek word ‘onoma’ meaning names with its various branches toponym: a study of proper names of places, anthroponym: personal names of people, literary onomastics and socio-onomastics. This study focuses on anthroponym as studies personal names of people. Within this framework, names are not merely labels but meaningful symbols that communicate identity, values, roles, and relationships (for example Onukwube- “let tongues wag”) a name that interprets birth circumstances. This theory reflects Igbo societal roles that often reflect their complex familial narratives, religious beliefs, and historical circumstances.

Postcolonial Theory, by Edward Said (1978) Postcolonial theory looks into how colonial influences cultural expressions, including naming practices. pre and post colonialism,

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many Igbo families adopted Christian or Western names, sometimes in place of or alongside traditional ones. This shift influenced by colonial and postcolonial experiences illustrates both cultural adaptation and loss. However, many families also use naming as a form of resistance and preservation, choosing names that assert Igbo identity and reclaim indigenous heritage. For example, a resurgence of names with meanings tied to ancestry or deities (e.g., Nkemdilim- “let what is mine stay with me”) represents a postcolonial reclaiming of voice and identity. Naming therefore is not only personal but political, reflecting the tension between colonial legacies and cultural sovereignty. So the integration of Onomastic and Postcolonial theories that points to the fact that Igbo names are not just cultural artefacts, but also a dynamic expressions of identity negotiation within a postcolonial African society.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in interpretivist and ethnographic traditions, which are well-suited to exploring the symbolic and cultural significance of names in Igbo families. Data were gathered through semi-cultural, in-depth interviews with Igbo parents, elders, and cultural custodians across various communities in South-eastern Nigeria. The interviews used for this study are listed in Appendix B which explored the meanings, motivations and narratives behind given names, as well as their perceived cultural and spiritual implications with emphasis on a particular family (Ozọmena) an Igbo family that suffered high child mortality of which one of the researchers is from the lineage. In addition, participant observation was undertaken during naming ceremonies, family gatherings, and community events to observe the ritualistic and performative aspects of naming practices in their natural social context. A textual analysis of collected names-from oral histories, family records, and birth documentation-was conducted to identify recurring theme. And the Postcolonial Theory, which questions the bequest of colonial naming forms and the cultural reassertion symbolic patterns, and shifts from Igbo names which often carry strong spiritual and cultural meanings as shown in Appendix A influenced by colonial and postcolonial experiences. The data were analysed thematically of indigenous identity, Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant anonymity through pseudonyms, and respective cultural protocols related to naming traditions.

Appendix A: Igbo Names and Their English translation

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Objective of the Study

1. To examine the cultural meanings in some used Igbo names.
2. To identify family patterns with regards to gender, religion and societal values in name giving.
3. To evaluate how missionaries influenced given names among the Igbo (reasons for abandoning cultural names)
4. To discover how Igbo names, reflect cultural negotiations in the postcolonial period

Ozọemena Family

Ozọemena happens to be a son of consolation to the Ikeobodo family in Umuokpulukpu Village Umuzeanum Kindred formerly known as Umugaezi Umuomaku in old Aguata Local Government Area now in present Orumba South L.G.A. in Anambra state South East Nigeria. They are descendants of Umuzeanum made of today's three family trees "amanaato": Ozọemena, Chukwudile and Mbele.

The name "Ozọemena" connotes may it not happen again which shows that a bad omen has been repeating itself and a declaration is made through such a name to bring an end to it. There is a certain man called "Ikeobodo" meaning the warrior/power of his people. The family was unable to have any surviving child as they usually die at infant stages (child mortality). After much trial God answered the prayers of the family, Ikeobodo's wife conceived and had a son. The son was named "Ozọemena" meaning may it not happen again. This name "Ozọemena" is a declaration because Igbo strongly believe that there is power in Spoken word of which the Igbo answer such name like "Ikedịnonu". Ozọemena later had other siblings "Ikevuna" male and "Udụihu" a female.

Later in life, "Ozọemena" became a man and married two wives, Erimma Udeaku from Amesi in Aguata local Government Area, Anambra state and Ogodimma. It took his first wife Erimma several years before she could conceive. Erimma gave birth to two female children "Nwaanyiegbu" and "Akualuoo" their husband "Ozọemena" later died without having a male child. His brother Ikevuna though did not perform the traditional "Nkuchi Nwaanyi" had knowledge of Erimma, and a son was born in his brother's stead. The child was named "Uzọechina" meaning may my lineage not go into extinction. Some parts of Igbo have a similar name under such circumstances as "Amaechina". It did not end at that, was given a second name, "Onyeanyisim" may I not be mocked/ridiculed.

The same path of Ozọemena childlessness trailed Uzọechina as his wife of many years Celina Udude from Ekwulobia was unable to conceive which made him go for a second wife being an only son. Uzọechina's second wife "Onuadiogbenyearo" from Umuomaku in today Orumba South in Anambra state conceived and gave birth to a baby girl named "Chiaagolum" God has vindicated me. The wife gave birth to other female children named in this order "Njideka", having them alive is the greatest. "Ifeyinwa", nothing equals a child, "Ogochukwu" Gods philanthropy, "Omerebere" God's mercy and eventually a twin a male and female. The male child is named "Obunike" is it by power? while the female is "Nnebuchi" meaning mother is god. Others are, "Atuchukwu" God has no rival, "Esimolezennadi" meaning how do I escape my kinsmen? While their last child is "Obianuju umunne" a child that with many siblings.

The chronology of the family Ozọemena from Umuomaku replicates that of Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe (1984: pg. 54) where he paints the picture of Ekwefi Okonkwos wife whose crowning glory of giving birth always turns to agony when he writes that:

Her deepening despair found expression in the names she gave her children. One of them was pathetic cry, Onwubiko- 'death, I implore you' but death took no notice. Onwubiko died in his fifteen month. The next child was a girl,

Ozoemena - ‘may it not happen again’. She died in her eleventh month, and two other after her. Ekwefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma- ‘Death may please himself’.

Also through the extended family “umunna” kindred could be seen where names given to their children portrays altercation between kinsmen “nwannadi” the modern day cousins. The rivalry among kinsmen is very pronounced through the names the Igbo give to their children as may be seen between Samuel Mbelle and John Chukwudile. Both men had early encounter with the missionaries and the Colonial masters as their g Ozoemena given names imply. Sam Mbelle was an Interpreter to the Whiteman Court (warrant chief). His first marriage was without any child. His kinsman John Chukwudile had a son and named him “Ezejiohu” a king with mouth apparently to ridicule his kinsman Samuel the Whiteman interpreter for his inability to have a child despite his hallowed position.

Samuel Mbelle later married a second wife Alice from Achalla Umuchu who bore him a son. The child was named “Nwaebee” meaning a child’s cry is heard in my compound. Samuel had another son and named him “Iwuezugbo” meaning law has been complete. The scenario between Samuel and John which exists virtually in every Igbo community prompt such names as “Ilodihu” enemy is within, “Nnadihuagha” kinsmen are problematic and “Esimonezenadi” how do I avoid my kinsmen? The story of the family and that of his kinsmen succinctly appears in Chukwuderaa (2021) views;

When it comes to the naming of Igbo children, names are assigned to either express gratitude to the divine, proclaim the greatness of the child, affirm the greatness of the family, express optimism about the future, or bemoan the misfortune that preceded the birth of that child while praying that another disaster does not happen.

The chronology of the “Ozoemena” family is clearly seen through the names of the children even up to the third generation. The chronicle of the family names including the ones given to their children reflects the fears, rivalry, hopes and intrigue that associate with typical Igbo family that indeed need no further explanation. As Okika (2020) rightly posits “one important thing about naming a child in the Igbo culture is the reason behind the scene”. Igbo names serve as a mirror to things that happen in the lives of the parents, kindred, communities and beyond for record purposes.

Igbo Naming Ceremony

Naming ceremonies of Igbo children is an elaborate in-house affair. It is a day of joy that comes eight days after the child’s birth bringing together once again the two families: the man and the woman’s families (the two in-laws). Arinze (2001: 70) explains that “the naming of children is therefore an important occasion which is often marked by ceremonies in many societies”. The family of the man will beforehand send a reminder to their in law on the day set aside for the naming ceremony because it’s statutory that it should take place on the eighth day after the child delivery.

Within this period, the mother is still observing certain privileges and restrictions that go with delivery. The privilege is known as omugwo a period she is meant to be under the

care of her mother: eating, resting and breastfeeding the baby. During this period, she is restricted from going out, mixing up with the public and most importantly not cooking for the husband until she is purified. This is in Ilona (2007: 90) expository, the Igbo carry out the Biblical rules requiring newly delivered mother to be excluded for a number of days: to be purified. This custom has given rise to the Institution of *omugwo*, whereby the mother of the new Mother relocates to the house of the new mother and Does the cooking for her daughter's household until her Daughter leaves the *nsọ* state after 40 days.

Among the Igbo it's a taboo for a woman under her period (menstruation) to cook or get closer to any titled chief as in Aduba (2014: 32) "Agbalanze are only defiled when they are touched by any female during menstrual period". Nwadiokwu (2016: 43) gives more insight on the mother's post-natal confinement "*omugwo*". After 3 months she and the child among other relatives will go to market. The going to the market will mark the end of the confinement.

The naming ceremony takes place at the man's compound precisely inside the *obi* or sometimes in front of the *obi* depending on the weather. Orji (1999: 103) sheds more light:

This was the duty of the father of the child. His in-laws i.e. the parents of his wife were also summoned. While coming, they brought along with them some of their friends and well-wishers. When all the expected people assembled, the mother of the child was called to bring the baby.

It doesn't require much crowd as mainly the parents of the nursing mother and if possible another member of their immediate family or his best friend are required while the in law, the man's father and few of his relatives will be present too.

Among the Igbo, any man whose father is still alive cannot directly give names to his children. Orji (1999: 103) explains "the eldest man in the community then carried the baby on his laps looking at the baby's face and said the usual proverb..." Just as it goes in kola nut breaking and being a king; a man cannot break kola in the presence of his father nor become a king while the father is still alive, it's an aberration in Igbo land (Nwata *ịwa ọjị n'ihu nna ya na ị bụ eze ebe nna ya dī ndụ*). It is on this premise that the father and mother of the new born will only be an observer as long as the process lasts. Same is applicable to their mothers (mother of the man and the woman) because women do not give names to either their direct children or grandchildren during Igbo Naming ceremony. Naming ceremony among the Igbo is purely men's affair, elderly ones for that matter. Women are mere spectators especially the mother of the child whose presence is mainly to breastfeed and calm the child down as long as the event last.

Igbo kola nut is the significant object for the child's naming ceremony. Kola nut serves many purposes in Igbo culture and tradition child naming being one of them. The father of the house uses kola nut he receives from his wife to welcome his visitors a sign of acceptance, love and goodwill. While his guests are sitting, he presents the kola nut to them and hands it over to his in-law who in turn gives it back to him with the saying, "*ọjị*

eze di eze n'aka" the host has the power to preside over the kola nut breaking. As in Landy's narration (2029) "the ceremony begins with breaking of kolanut by an elder family member in the paternal lineage". The host having the power to officiate over the kola nut breaking can magnanimously give one his kinsmen powers to do so on his behalf. After the breaking of the kola nut protocol one lobe will be kept aside for the naming ceremony, while the youngest male in their midst will go round with the kola nut and ensure that everyone takes part in its eating.

After serving and eating the kola nut, the naming ceremony proper begins with the father of the house (the chief host) grabbing the reserved clove, place it on the child chest and gives the child his choice name. With the same clove, the father of the child's mother will follow suit, placing it on the child's chest and names the child their preferred name. Explaining the process of giving a child name in Umuomaku, Ajegbonwu (2010: 4) say: igu nwa aha is also the town culture or itukwasị oji, a kola-nut will be placed on a child's stomach and the elder of the family will call the name in regards to that child's name.

This is part of the reason the Igbo aside their surname (family name) have two names one from the paternal grandfather and another from the maternal grandfather. In accordance with these conditions Ilona (2007) lists "our children were named from some events, some circumstances, or fancied foreboding at the time of their birth". While all these are going on, the faces of both the child's parents and everyone around will be beaming with smiles repeating the names giving to the child. From that day onwards that child will be known and called by the names given by the paternal and maternal grandparents in the presence of some kinsmen and family friends who serve as witnesses.

The last stage of the naming ceremony is dinning and wining. The host family led by the mother will now go inside and start bringing out foods prepared for the event. The father of the house will ensure that special palm wine is served to his in laws and friends that came to witness the occasion. While the sharing and eating of the foods are going on, jokes and banters will be the order of the day. The presence of enough palm wine will determine how long the visit lasts. This is because drinking palm wine goes with jokes and at the same time prolongs ones stay at an event while its absence brings about being hasty to go home.

Conditions Under Which Certain Igbo Names Can Be Given

Ubahakwe (1982: 30) classifies conditions of giving Igbo names into 12 categories "God, Virtuous Qualities, Kinship, Natural phenomena, Social Entities, Calendar, Titles, Non-virtuous Qualities, Natural Physical Objects, Parts of the body, Material Assets and Occupation". Among the Igbo of old, their chief occupation is farming. Their occupation as farmers requires many hands to have a bountiful harvest because one's wealth is measured by the size of his barn. In order to meet up with the challenges of the day, the Igbo resorts to polygamy so as to have enough hands in their farms. Aduba (2014: 47) x-rays Igbo family: On polygamy, it was a mark of great honour to be married to many wives. It was one of the yardsticks for measuring a man's worth in the society. It was a mark of greatness then to boast about the number of wives a man had.

That is why such names like "Mmadubuko" meaning you brag with human and "Igwebuike" meaning numerical strength are common among the Igbo. Other names like

Mmaduakọnam “may i not lack people around me, and “Mmaduka” human being is the greatest speaks volume of the Igbo quest for bigger families.

In most cases, luck may not smile on some of them despite marrying many wives which negates the Igbo name “Ifeyinwa” there is nothing like child, “Nwadimma” child is good and “Nwadi mkpa” child is important including “Nkemakọnam” may i not lack mine. The fortunate ones proudly answer “Ilulogaaraonye” meaning when your wishes come to pass and such a person will be described as “Onye o gaziere nwe mba” meaning fortunate ones talks tough. Par adventure that a child was later born after much search, names like “Obialo/Obiajulu” my mind is at peace, “Amaechina”, “Uzoechina” May my lineage not cut off, that is when it’s a male child. If the child happens to be female, she will be given name like “Chiaagorom” my God has vindicated me. When a girl child is born successively names such as “Nkemejina” any one i conceive and “Nwaanyibunwa” a girl is a child. When female children keep on coming, the Igbo will subtly communicate God their wishes with the name “Nwadiogwa” children need to be blended.

Igbo family with many male children and later give birth to a girl child will name her “Nwabiaranamma” or “Nwamarabia” suggestive that her arrival is well timed and appreciated. Names like “Odi na” has he survived, “Mgbeole” within a short time such names will be seen in families that records high infant mortality rate. Those that were the only son when eventually married and conceive a male child in Igbo family name their sons “Onyeibo” companion of his father, “Somadina” may i not exist alone, “Nodebe” stay by my side. Where there are many females and a boy child arrives his name will be “Nwokeabata” a male child has arrived. A child born in a large family answers “Nwanonigweumunne”/ “Obianuju” meaning a child with many siblings, “Azubuike” my back is my strength. Name such as “Izunwaolu is given to the only sons of their parents and “Ikeotuonye” one man’s efforts. They are referred as “otu mkpuru anya ji ishi ugwo”

Among the Igbo, a family that is known for poverty, faced with hostile kinsmen and later has fortune answers name like “Onyeguri” have we been reckoned with? The names show that the family has overcome vicissitudes of their lineage. Those whose lineage maintains affluence answer “Ngonadi” meaning where it has been.

Through certain names like “Esimolezennadi” how do I avoid my kinsmen, “Nnadi buagha” Kinsmen are tormentors the Igbo bemoan the acrimony that associates with kinsmen popularly known as household enemies. Others include “Ulovuihe” homes accommodate a lot, “Ashiulo” household hatred. Where two in-laws are not in good terms, the Igbo end up given their child a name that tells the relationship of both families like “Ashiogo” hatred of in-law, “Ndiembiri” may I endure to live.

The Igbo use names to query the essence of man’s existence on earth, portrays the essence of life and the import of healthy living, their hopes, contractions and spirituality including modesty. Such names like “Onyeka” who is the greatest, “Mmaduka” Human are the greatest, “Egodimma” Money is good, “Egozaoku” money does not answer call, “Eziafakaego” good name is better than riches and “Akuezumkpa” money does not solve all problems, “Ejindu” do you hold life, “Mbakaogu” altercation is greater than fight, “Mgbeafuluba” until wealth comes and “Uwaezuoke” nothing is sufficient.

Discussions and Finding

Whenever the effects of Whiteman's invasion of Africa nay Igbo villages in the name of colonialism and its twin sister religion are being counted, the present sharp contrast in the Igbo naming of their children comes to mind. Nnachi (2015: 51) traces the Igbo woe to "the colonialist's psychological war. The war came like no war at all until it was bated with sugar coated Western Education". Obiakor (2013: 24) also observes that "the horrid myths about Africa and Africans were created by early missionaries" Igbo names inclusive.

The Igbo before the coming of the Whiteman no doubt believes in God (Chiukwu, Chukwuokike, olisa kere uwa, these they express in several ways including in the naming of their children as in the name Ekechukwu meaning God the creator, Olisaeloka thoughtful of God, Ekejindu/Chijindu God holds life and Chinagorom my Lord vindicates me. Nnachi (2015: 61) points out the Igbo believe that there are minor gods who must serve chukwu-ukwu: The Almighty God, they believe Chi-ukwu issues instructions and powers to the numerous gods for administrative purposes only.

The genesis of the erosion of Igbo culture as it relates to Igbo names encapsulates in Abasili (2012: 8);

Christian missionaries in their quest for Igbo convert to Christianity embarked on denigration of the local culture and tradition. The missionaries systematically brain-washed the natives and subtly coerced them (with their economic material and intellectual advantages) to perceive their age-long cultural and traditional practices as 'devilish', 'paganish' 'barbaric' and 'negative'.

As a result of the above, Ejimadu (2015: 11) observes that "the cloning effect of the dominant cultures of the world have not spared the Igbo culture" there occurs a paradigm shifts in the thinking and reasoning of the Igbo including the choice of names to their children. The Igbo resort to naming their children after the Disciples, Saints, Christian festivities and the Whiteman calendar days as against their Chi, their ancestors, material assets, philosophy, emotion, title, social, occupation and the holy market days Eke, Orie, Afo and Nkwọ. Giving their children names such as Stephen, Mathias, Job, Gabriel Sarah, Mary Sunday, Saturday Ephraim in place of Ezeike, Nwanyiorie, Okeke, ezeji, Mmaduka, Ugwu, Ogwudire, Iloabuchi/Iloabueke, Ogodimma and Onwubelu as in the prophesy of Ekeh (2013; 11);

...by continuously engaging ourselves in the culture and tradition of the western world to the neglect of our own, this will continue to destabilize our system of tradition. Before long, everything about our tradition will not be seen anywhere in the book. That is what the White men are trying to do.

With the advent of Christianity and its embrace by the Igbo, most families see their given names as fetish, paganism that has to do with deities, denounce them and choose the

western idea of what names should be: Saints, Disciples and Christian festivities giving credence to the effect of colonization by Okafor (2013: 17) and when they colonized, naturally they also colonized the culture and traditions of the people, imposing their way of life, their interest, their politics, their social system and even their religion.

Also in the words of Eruchalu (2018) “many Igbo parents due to their education, jobs and exposure, Christian orientation and others no longer pay attention to Igbo language and culture”. Unfortunately, Some Igbo in the words of Udeolisa (2010: 199) “have ignorantly taken the foreign names which meant beastly or evil” as in Linda which means serpent and its likes. Nnachi (2015: 51) observes “there are more foreign names, some of whose meanings we know not many people want to answer Nweke instead Jacky or Jones”. The Igbo attitudes of imitation of others to the damnation of theirs also give room to the denigration of Igbo culture and tradition inherent in Igbo names in preference to the White missionaries English names. An attitude Ejiofor (2013: 52) condemns in its entirety; People say that our people like imitating things that are foreign. But whatever be the reason, it is not right and we should get away from that type of life and begin to love our culture and patronize our language.

The absence of cultural names poses problem of identity to the Igbo on where they are coming from, their yesterday, today and tomorrow which negates the principle of your culture, your identity. Quoting Ugorji, Ogbu (2012: 44) says: The White missionaries who came to Africa played a major role in propagating European cultural imperialism. Besides the disdainful dismissal of most African Cultures as pagan and superstitious, they helped create an atmosphere of contempt for Africans.

The change in the naming narrative among the Igbo further take an atrocious dimension whereby some to a larger extent have no proof of their Igboness with both their first name and subsequent ones having proof of their affinity with Igbo. Some Igbo answer Philipa Michael, Diamond Praise, and Joseph Isaac, thereby having no trace of Igbo language to identify who they are and where they are coming from even their next destination. Obuasi (2013: 15) Quoting Ohiri-Aniche states that “holding our language in disdain and being ashamed of it has resulted many of us feeling “neither wholly European nor wholly Nigerian...may Igbo language not die”. Such a people that fall into this category are already the lost tribes of Igbo race. “Chukwudera (2021) attributes this to “change in the religious orientation of the Igbo people”.

Iloka (2010: 1) attributes the complex to the “pursuit of western civilization culture as bane of indigenous culture, our people have deserted our culture, people don’t know their history”. Come to think of these, aside the Saints, Christian festivities, Disciples and Gregorian calendar, most of the Western names have its Igbo replica. Examples abound in names Diamond-Ọlaocha, Gold-Ọlaedo, Praise-Otito, Grace-Amara, Bush-Ọhĩa, Godwin-Chukwuemerie, Patience-Ndidi, Gift-Onyinye, Glory-Ebube, and Wisdom-Amamihe. In the case whereby some try to answer their Igbo names, some sort of complex still set in Obuasi (2013: 15) points out that “the youth will change their names to sound ‘English’; Iyke, Chuks, Obyno, etc”. Truly the effect of colonisation is still haunting the Igbo because it’s he that plays the piper that dictates the tune.

The Igbo high regard in the supremacy of God is seen in their daily pouring of libation and breaking of kola nut thanking God for what He has done in their lives, what he is doing and the one He will do in future by inviting Him and their ancestors to partake in the communion. But today the once age-long practices, the Igbo identity and being are no longer traceable a development Ejimadu (2015) attributes to “the dominion of the heritage and culture of this beautiful land has come under grave assault since the dawn of colonialism”.

The Igbo hinges their successes, failures, aspirations, life and their entire being in the God Almighty Chiukwu, their personal chi the Arch Angels and the Ancestors the Saints. These three play important role in Igbo spirituality and have a place in Igbo names and their philosophical sayings Mgbechikwere, Chigere, Chikere, Ejighikemeuwa but all these names are taking over with foreign names that do not have connection with Igbo spirituality and belief.

Suggestions

The Igbo disconnect from their first identity which is their native names and cleave on foreign names that have no link to their sociocultural life calls for a strong condemnation and reappraisal. The various religious organizations and schools have a crucial role to play on this. Firstly, the church doctrine of using names of saints for baptism should henceforth stop. Non assimilation of Fitzpatrick (2012) belief that there is a spirituality that binds African people together, and guides their physical existence; the essential ingredient and essence of everything, including humans, is spirit, and for Africans your name is your soul-your name has celestial powers and embodies spirits show that Igbo by discarding their native name has lost their root. It is under this premise that Igbo says “aha onye na edu ya”. Government should enact a law that will make every Igbo person to uphold his/her native name above any other given name. Amongst all, the Igbo should emancipate themselves from self-colonialism and self-conquest by appreciating themselves, their root and what their forebears’ bequest them; one of them being their name their identity.

Conclusion

From all indications, the Christian religion has taken away the fabrics of identity of the Igbo in all ramifications. Chiefly their native names: the pride of the Igbo through which families express their inner most feelings with God, their chi, man and nature including their hopes and aspirations. The Christian baptism however replaces the onetime communal culture of the gathering of the two families to share their common joy and emotion traditionally a reason Iwuchukwu (2016: 69) attributes to the fact that “some Christian denominations see the traditional child naming ceremony as sinful” according to Udeolisa (2010) “many go into Christianity, taking foreign names they don’t understand while forgetting the worth of Igbo native names”. The Igbo needs rediscovery of its cultural esteem strip by the missionaries’ base on the suggestions of Abasili (2013: 10) “the practice of Igbo cultural values and Christian values will make an Igbo person a better Igbo-Christian” which boils down to acculturation. As in the words of Obasi (2013: 15) “our language is our power” the culture and traditions of the Igbo through giving names will be preserved for the generations unborn. The missionaries disdain of Igbo culture and tradition give birth to racism and its attendant effects of modern slavery and

unwarranted supremacy over them. Ogbu (2013: 44) declares that “no single culture is better than the other. So there should be no disdain of cultures. There should rather be dialogue of cultures so as to accommodate everyone”. Culture preserves and promotes affinity and should be encouraged by shunning any act capable of truncating its growth and embrace. Arazu (2013: 47) makes a similar call thus: We have a culture here before the Europeans came. Everything good in it must be preserved if we must grow properly. But if we throw everything away and just embrace European culture as we have done in the past, then we are heading for ruin.

In the mission of recognisance of Igbo culture and tradition that will give rise to the entrenchment of Igbo names Ejiofor (2013: 53) says “the church and the government are critical institutions in this project” because according to Landy (2020) “initially, the church tried to insist that only saints name was used”. Beyond the church and the government as in the words of Okafor (2013: 17) including “to all Africans wherever they are: to recognise that they are what they are and cannot be otherwise” most especially the Igbo. The Igbo should rise up to the occasion and reclaim their lost glory by heading the call of Ifeachor (2015: 56) We must allow the philosophy of “Afamefuna” to be the propelling force. It is given that names helps in no small ways to propagate the culture and tradition of Ndiigbo. Therefore, our offspring must be given Igbo names as a subtle but potent way of giving them identity and preserving our lineage bearing in mind that self-defeatist is the surest means of unwitting self-colonialization.

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Appendix A

List of Some Igbo Names and their English Meanings

Igbo Names	English Meaning	Igbo Names	English Meaning
Abunonu	lip relation	Akudo	cool wealth
Adiuba	we are many	Akuzumkpa	money cannot be sufficient
Aghadinuno	There's war in home front	Akunna	father's wealth
Aghaebita	war does not end today	Akunne	mother's wealth
Aghanyereuche	war gives sense	Akunyili	money subdues
Ahannaefuna	may fathers name not cut off	Anulika	joy is the greatest
Akuabata	wealth has arrived	Ashiogo	hatred of in law
Azumdialo	I have people		
Chinagorom	My God vindicates me	Chivuko	God is my pride
Chianumba	God hears no reprove	Egozaoku	Money does not answer calls
Egodimma	Money is good	Nodebe	Be by my side
Ejikemeuwa	life is not by strength	Nwadiogwa	Variety of children
Emenanjo	Do not commit sin	Nwadinma	Child is good
Enyinnaya	Fathers' friend	Nwakaife	Child is the greatest
Erimma	String of beauty	Nwamarabia	Childs arrival is timely
Esimolezennadi	How do I avoid household traducers	Nwaolu	Loner
Ezeji	King of yam	Obiajulu	Rest of mind
Ezinu	Exemplary life	Obiapusi	Headship will not be cut-off
Ibebuike	People are strength	Obinali	Heart endures
Ifeadijo	Light has come		
Ifedimma	Something good	Ogbenyeanu	Poor will not marry me
Ifemelumma	Something that is done well	Ogonna	Fathers in-law
Ikemefuna	May my strength not diminish	Ofoaonyejia	Authority knows its beholder
Ifeoma	Good thing	Obunike	Is it b power
Ifeyinwa	Nothing can be compared to a child	Ogodimma	In-law is good

Igwebuike	Strength in unity	Ọgomegbunam	My goodness will not kill me
Iheakanwa	Nothing surpass child	Ọhia/Ọfịa	Bush
Iheakanwanne	Nothing surpass sibling	Okelue	My share has come
Ijeoma	A good journey	Okelum	My share has located me
Ikeobodo	Community strength	Okenna	Fathers inheritance
Ikevuashi	Success attracts enemies	Okwudinka	Creative/stylish word
Izunwanne	Sibling's confidant	Ọnọchie	Replacement
Izunwaolu	Loner	Ọnụora	Peoples wish/verdict
Kasiemobi	Console me	Ọnwụkaike	Death is the greatest
Nkpurumma	arrays of beauty	Onyeanusim	Do not mock me
Nduka	Life is the greatest	Onyesonga	Who depicts prison
Mmaduabuchi	Man is not God	Ọnụadiogbenyealo	Poor person speaks with fear
Mmaduka	Human is the greatest	Ọnukwube	Let mouth wag
Mmaonu	Beauty of mouth	Omerebere	Merciful child
Njideka	Survival is key	Ọnụmajuru	Let anger subside
Nkechinyere	Any one God gives	Ọnwujariiri	Death brings lamentation
Nkemejina	Anyone I conceive	Ọnwumere	Death is the cause
Nkolika	Dialogue is the best	Onyeannam	do not mock me
Nnadibuagha	Relatives are rivals	Onyeka	Who is the greatest
Nnajiogo	Authority of father	Ositadimma	If it gets better today
Ọsondu	Life struggles	Ubendu	Lamentation of life
Uchenna	Gods wishes	Udochukwu	Gods peace
Udokamma	Peace is the best	Ụmunnakwe	If it pleases my kinsmen
Ụmunnabuike	Kinsmen is strength	Ụwaezuoke	Life is not balanced

Appendix B: Interview Guide:

This interview guide is designed to collect qualitative data on naming practices among Igbo families while the questions aim to elicit cultural, historical religious, and familial influences on the naming process.

1. In your thinking what and what do you think that determines certain Igbo names?
2. Why is it that most Igbo detest bearing their native names?
3. Can you tell us the names of your children and their meanings?

4. What informed your choice of their names in the first instance?
5. Did any of their names inspired by the family traditions names, events or otherwise?
6. Did Christianity/westernization influenced your children's choice of names?
7. Are there family names that are still maintained?
8. Do you think that Igbo names are used to propagate Igbo culture?
9. Are there some Igbo names you will not give to your children if yes why?