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THE IGBO ARE REPUBLICAN AND EGALITARIAN IN NATURE: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH.

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Abstract
This paper is a philosophical review of the egalitarian and democratic nature of the Igbo people. From the findings made, the Igbo people are an ethnic group or a cultured community in eastern Nigeria. Enjoying a cultural history, which is characterized by peaceful coexistence and justice in their original way of life, and to a great extent, industrious and truthful. The Igbo political system is a representative one since it supports equality before the law. The system also operates a decentralized leadership system where the power of decision making is not from a particular person not minding the position of such persons in the leadership. Powers are separated among the Igwes, ozo title holders, okparas, umuadas among others. Any decision to be taking has to involve the masses via the group mentioned above. Before any conclusion is made on any issue, there will be group by group debates on a particular subject until a consensus is reached. Though in recent years, there are several impunities within the Igbo leadership system. Among others, it was recommended that various members who had dubiously taken leadership position should leave and resign from such position, to preserve the republican and egalitarian nature the Igbos are known for.

Keywords: Igbo Society, Republican, Egalitarian, Igbo Cosmology, Philosophical Approach.

Introduction

The Igbo control the former eastern province territory and most of the former Mid-Western Region (now a Geopolitical Zone in the South East). Unlike other peoples, the Igbo had such a deep and hierarchical pre-colonial management structure. The Igbo is said to be more decentralized than any other significant organization in politics. The culture focus on individual performances which impact rank status is equally high. The Igbo's fundamental social structure was a single extended family or relatives, composed of a few families, and the community group is the main political entity in general. Usually, Igbo did not have rulers or leaders. They were running a representative governance program. The Oha-na-eze, Council of Elders, the Family; the Age-Grades and the Umuada were granted administrative, legislative and executive powers (Ifeyinwa 2016; Ezeagwula, 2012).

Out & Nwagboso, (2012), however, stated that in Igbo political system are essentially four levels. They include; the family that is under the father's headship and made up of the family's nuclear members that are usually large depending on the number of women a man has married); Kindred; a smaller social unit made up by the father or Okpara, the head of the

nuclear family; the village which is composed of siblings and a cluster of siblings and headed by Okpara as the eldest siblings. With respect to Igbo peoples' sub-cultural territories which has been referred to, lines, presence of age categories and strong, named and secret societies have existed. Individuals with the name Eze or Obi often displayed a different degree of authority and power, but not independent of the people and, in particular, of the villagers he would organize. Men held most of these leadership positions. In what was characterized as a "single-sex political structure" with sexuality complementary systems, there however were also women's structures and individual leaders and women's title in some places. Others premised on individually attained position and acquisition of authority and in particular, the ozos were limited to elders and often of certain lines.

In the past, other academics tried to characterize Igbo's political structure. Therefore, some scholars have classed the region as one of West Africa's stateless regions. Some people felt that Igbo's system of government evolutionary development was quite fascinating and that both colonial masters and some knowledgeable Igbo scholars were therefore grossly misinterpreted, misunderstood and mischaracterized. Some scholars categorized the political structure of the Igbo under a segmentary structure by the wrong description. The Igbo paradigm is seen as authoritarian democracy, medium republicanism, and non-centralized democracy. Such arguments and others did not describe the democratic structure of the Igbo; rather, Igbo citizens have various styles of democratic leadership (Dioka (2014).

According to Okodo (2016), the Igbo execute a form of leadership that involves people of an incontestable character. Recently, however, Igbo's leadership system has been maintained by many flaws. Some people have dubiously made their way to political roles, put directives and behaved unaware of the effect on the program, citizens and future generation. No one seems to know about its effect on the growth of the economy and environment as well as social interactions. Instead, people are leaving descent unconcerned for their businesses. In Nigeria and Diaspora, many people have always regarded Igbo as a country without any constitution, rules or regulations. While Igbo people are not organized under the same leadership as in other community groups, such as Yoruba, Hausa, Edo among others, which is the cause of their all-time affirmation, they are uniquely democratic in style. In line with the above assertion, this paper aimed at examining the Igbo people's republican and equalitarian nature.

Democratic nature of the Igbo Political System

According to Okodo (2016), although the Igbo people have their kind of governance that is special to them, they have not united themselves under one umbrella as seen in some other groups such as Yorubas, Hausa, Edo among others. Igbo people are organized based on the towns. He stated that Igbo affecting issues are often decided in the village square and in a cooperative way that abhors authoritarian style. Everyone's view is conscious of the essence of democracy practised in Igbo Region. Prior to making the decisions on action to be done, a consensus must be achieved. The Igbo administration, which has been observed by Okodo, is decentralized as family members and lines belonging to the same family usually associate with and constitute what we might call village groups. No central or coordinating authorities held the village groups around each other. Both were linked to the units surrounding it, not by political but by social ties. The chieftaincy titles have a good base for Igbo people's acceptance.

There was no unified leadership system as far as Igbo leadership was concerned. In families, kindred, villages and towns, Igbo people united themselves. The head of the household, though, was the youngest of the household, but the older members were still the representatives at the other levels of the tribe, like any other person who was considered suitable to be the head of all. There has been an Igbo community just in the sense that people were speaking the same language who were inhabiting a regional region, who has had the same culture, religious ideology, economic and social structure. There has not been a central authority, agency or jurisdiction in the entire world. Each village consists of several independent villages in all respects, each consisting of several villages and several families known as the 'umunna' (Ogbalu 2015).

According to Okodo (2016), each community will have its traditions and customs that direct the actions of its members. They did not owe someone or community any responsibility or obedience. They do what they feel will be for the interests of the members of the community and their legislative, social, religious and cultural organizations are completely under control. Okodo identified that "There are numerous political groups that regulate Igbo land in organizations that reflect this priceless democratic system in the Igbo. They seek trials with their families, lead to improvements in their families and cultures. "Men and women of different races, genders, secretive societies, among others, are called groups. The Igbo political structure still exists in such communities. The concern is, however, that in Igbo Land leadership is quickly weakening. The several facets of injustice in the societies are due to this. This can sum up the culture of reckless abandon, which keeps unchecked power alive in society by trying to deny survivors the direct exposure to truth and by preventing the repressors from being historically interpreted, and which denies the victims and families due recognition and compensation.

Family leadership as a prove of the republican and egalitarian nature of the Igbos

Dioka (2014) says that the family is the smallest political entity in the Igbo region. Family in general means a great deal to an Igbo man. It includes everything that has a connection with blood and is very different from the western family concept. Those in the established family include men, women and children, parents, sisters and brothers, cousins, niece and nephew, grandparents, grandkids, in-laws and anyone who could be related to them and in blood. The father, in support of the mother, is the head of this family. Dioka touched the end when he said, "The man is the spokesperson for the family and, of course, he has tremendous strength and authority. The father will be advised on family property matters. Even though he is the boss, he should not actively control his forces. Family meetings are usually held on issues affecting family members. The agreement is also attained in advance of any action.

Kanu (2015) explains the power of the father when he states that the father is the householder and is the owner of the family, symbolizing sovereignty, equality, law and justice. The father has been the manager of the family matters, but he took it in dialogue with his sons and wives. The father makes sure that each member of the family gets his legacy by heritage. He would divide his sons equally and fairly with land and other properties. He makes sure his wives are together in love and peace. Igbo people also believe in hard work and a strong sense of justice, such that they educate their children in the same way. The Igbo man is equally

convinced that he has a great deal to earn to his family; that is why he loves training others and still cares for the interests of all the family members when he has reached a reasonable level in society.

For Ogbalu (2015), the cultural heritage of the Igbo, however, is quickly disappearing. Most of the individuals are self-centred in their different families. It is difficult in Igbo land that somebody, particularly the parents at their old age, neglects their family. Siblings also invest money in the preparation of a family member, who will then help teach many family members. Ogbalu confirmed, however, that "individual freedom by the west has made some impact in this ancient tradition." The custom of becoming a defender of one's brother is undermined by egoism.

Kanu (2015) stated that the oldest son holds up the leadership role and takes on the role of his father when the father, who is head of the household is dead. In some recent situations, however, the elder son finds his role a chance to bully and to exploit his kin, thus reinforcing all kinds of impunity. He would neglect the decent way that Igbo people follow when exchanging land and other items, by disregarding appropriate heritage laws. He claims the 'obi' his fair share in the household and also claims the 'mkpuke,' the fair share of the last son. As though that was not enough, he would go past that and take a bigger portion of the family land and even sell it with other siblings before checking.

Kindred Leadership Style as a Prove of the Republican and Egalitarian Nature of the Igbo People

According to Olisa (2012), the kindred is made up of different families. People of the same family see themselves as relationships. You will never have to marry or have a romantic partnership. It says, however, that "a parent is never going to sell a child, give false witnesses or leave a person in danger." It is his responsibility to defend themselves from the very same "Umunna." It is an abomination, because he is your brother, to be complicity in his fellow "Umunna." With a single voice, you speak. The head of the kindred is the eldest man, and the office personnel of the kindred (ofo Umunna) is also in control of the kindred. The head of the child comes from the eldest family within the kindred in many other neighbourhoods. He is the intermediary among his parents and their ancestors. He is peace, unity and righteousness agent.

According to Kanu (2015), the Diokpara chaired gatherings, sacrifice, heritage concerns and conflict resolution amongst these large families. The diokpara worked with the other leaders of the enlarged family in decision-making and formed the wider family assembly. Through conversation, consensus, compromise, collaboration and consultation, decisions have been reached. In the past, the distribution of the inheritance, in particular land, was undertaken in equal measure according to the rules laid down. Until an agreement is made about whether or not to divide the land of 'Umunna,' consultations will be held. They can determine that lands are shared as necessary; this implies that every "Umunna" male child who is ready to build a house is given land which is decided. With both the love and approval of other relatives, he will instantly begin his construction.

According to Ojo (2015), the "Umunna" will agree to split the lands into family bases on the alternative for each family that chooses their territories and divide it peacefully with one

another. Nevertheless, the majority of the heads of kindred, without consulting with other members of the tribe, has recently been dismayed to manage the collective land unanimously. Some of them have sold the entire land of their sons without setting aside anything in which the new generation is building their own homes. For these elders, no one has the right to challenge their actions; otherwise, you will be labelled as having committed abomination, to do that.

Village Leadership Style as a Prove of the Republican and Egalitarian Nature of the Igbo People

Ogbalu (2016) reports that the coming together of various kindred essentially make up a village. There is a square in every village at which they meet and celebrate. In organizational terms, the roles and methods of the village Assembly differ little from that of the kindred, although it is larger in scope. He asserted that perhaps the assembly of the village resolves disagreements which the Umunna could not resolve and that it is responsible for protecting the village from invaders, trespassers or wild animals. The village legislature comprised of the priest, the elders as well as the titled holders. Problems and agreement before actions are taken debated and agreed. Besides, rules are laid down to protect their agricultural products. These laws are usually quick to die. The majority of people living in the cities cannot allow their guards to take over the village square in particular. The downside is that, with impunity, they do so. For instance, whenever young people from the village go to collect money from absentees, they lock their gates easily and disregard them entirely. He points out that "the way the system of impunity continues to work to muzzle many voices is much more frightful in certain respects (Miller 2011).

Town Leadership Style as a Prove of the Republican and Egalitarian Nature of the Igbo people

According to Ogbalu (2016), the highest political organization in Igbo province is the village square. A town includes people from different villages. The town consists of villages that for some purpose have a common descendant or are one. Long before the advent of the white man, the government, as well as leadership of Igbo, was coordinated in town, families and communities. Towns are linked by mutual interest, such as the ownership of a single central market. In certain instances, every female in the community must bring goods on the market, regardless as to how little. On market day farm work is usually banned. Any infringement of this rule would be punished. These actions are taken to ensure a business development that may also add to the town's solidity. Ownership of a well-known traditional shrine as well as the reality that they reside in one geographical background is some other things that might bind the region.

Olisa (2012) stated that the Leadership at the town level is made up of people from different villages. He expressed that the town assembly is like the village council, an informal body and not a regular constituted executive authority. The summons to meetings is usually addressed to all adults, though sometimes to specific groups, such as age grades or titled men. In the past, there were no kings or traditional rulers in Igbo land except in a few places where they existed. The places include Nri, Arochukwu, Aboh and Onitsha.

Every village has a county composed of town leaders, ozo titled owners, among others. As stated by Okodo, both politics and administrative powers are exercised, and judges are ensured for everybody. In monarchical towns, he claimed that none of the monarchs in these towns was autocratic as they conducted a federal system of government almost. The king and his council legislators or members of his offices have debated on different matters relating to the town and are responsible for parts of their jurisdictions in each area or neighbourhood. Reviewing the republican and egalitarian nature of the political organization in Igbo tribe, Monarch and kingship are not universal, and they rule by agreement in the regions they lived. "Eze" and "Igwe" which because of interaction with British governing structures, had the same connotations as the monarch, acquired access to Igbo land afterwards. The political system has never remained the same since then in the Igbo villages (Okodo 2016).

Kanu (2016) noted that during the colonial administration, traditional rulers were appointed commander-leaders and that they were subjected to British political officials' authority and supervision. So it is no longer their responsibility to the citizens, but rather to the British political officer that appointed them. The implication is that their men were misled. According to the concept of warrant chiefs, the dictator was a wild dash, businessmen, politicians and rich people in the community who have struggled even with money to buy such positions.

According to Ogbalu (2016), the manner wealth is created does not annoy anyone in Igbo land. The administrators of some societies in Igbo are mainly certain classes of people of separate roles. This was specifically and whenever we take into consideration Ogbalu's declaration that "in every sense of the word, Igbo's political group is republican. Monarchy was not permissible to them as a form of government, because they disliked subjection to one person, though beneficent, powerful or rich.

Igbo (2012) opined that in recent years in Igbo land, it seems tragic that in the context of title name and qualifications for choosing deserving winners there has been a total change in the design of the title names. He also maintained that outstandingly this move bent towards the careless collection of persons whose revenue source is fundamentally unclear, yet unlawful. He sees this as an unfortunate deviation from prevalent philosophical trends which bear moral value.

Certainly, traditional Igbo leaders were individuals of overwhelming character who do have the people's interest at heart. Sadly, the current circumstance and pattern is a big step away from wellbeing and what is socially appropriate. The assumption is that in Igbo land, the concept of "ezi aha ka ego," simply means a good name is better than money, is held highly. The younger generation is extremely erroneous in the recent trend, and then a redirection of the system of values is the order of the day. A source quite rightly said that people are successful and legitimate once rich. Nobody asks what you have done to get wealth or become rich with a belief structure that regards wealth and office as the basis for both the evaluation and measurement of social performance.

According to Ezeamalu (2016), the latest development in some Igbo groups has been the fight to attain conventional governance and is now in the manner of wild abandon. It is now known that two traditional opponents in one group exist in most communities of Igbo territory. This

is despite Ezeamalu's teaching that it is acknowledged worldwide, there cannot be two kings within the same sphere since two captains cannot be in a single boat. The scenario involves the real young and posterity's misguided future. The notion"a na-azo eze azo," Chi na-eme eze, which means the same thing as "no one struggles for a position in the kingship". It was found that perhaps the self-respecting traditional leaders have people who love them and welcome them both inside and outside of the group and therefore impose their impunity on the people. It was also noticed that some adventurous Igbo people living outside their communities and people living in diaspora are also perpetuating this impunity everywhere.

Igbo Traditional Leadership System a Replica of Absolute Democracy

There are many positive aspects of the traditional Igbo leadership system. This is egalitarian by its very nature. It is inclusive in the sense that all people, though in groups are involved. When issues affecting the society are discussed, and actions on such a matter will be agreed collectively as well as a democratic majority will take precedence, by converging on the village square or any other scheduled meeting points. Decisions are made together, and a management committee is formed to track the execution process more frequently than not (Ezeagwula, 2012).

Leadership is representative in the traditional Igbo tribe. It is represented in the sense that every adult person has the right to one vote regardless of age, socioeconomic status or religion. They get input, though clan members (normally elders) have to act as representatives of their various communities. In parliamentary democracy such as Nigeria, lawmakers only visit their constituents because they wish to be allowed to vote again. Each member of the community will be kept informed of problems by this means. The theory of ignorance is not a shield since steps are set in place to make sure nobody deviates or violates a law only because they are not informed of such a policy. The conventional Igbo management framework focuses on growth. The reality is that it is just very few traditional African societies, that government can only be said to have supplied electric power to the populations. Communities are engaged in social services like electricity, pipe-transported water, healthcare centres, school, churches, among others. The society normally does the wiring and purchases transformers. The state then comes to commission and attaches the identity of the society to the list of people who receive electricity dues at the end of the month, regardless of whether power is available or not. The Igbo traditional leadership is not inefficient, as is the case in Nigerian liberal democracy since it can flourish in the face of inadequate resources (Sandra, 2013).

According to Ajaegbo (2014), it was previously stated that a typical office leader's longevity depends primarily on how much he is accountable to the public. Lack of transparency or insufficient oversight is political suicide, as the leaders involved are marginalized by the electorate and compelled to back down. To stop such eventuality, leaders of the conventional Igbo culture do all they can to keep people to account. A leader who is forcefully and disgracefully removed out of office will not face the consequences alone but also the family from which he comes from. The legal system of Igbo's structure of government is also worth noting that any person who lives unjustifiably or partly punished, is assumed to subject himself and his family to consequences. Therefore, members aspire to live outside the board and ensure that decisions are carried out without fear or favour.

For certain instances, the gods need to contend with matters with which the representatives are powerless to contend with or with which the contested parties want to refer the issue to the deity. In this case, the deity takes charge and judgment is instantaneous, through the Chief Priest of the deity concerned. The succession procedure is based solely on seniority or accomplishment in the conventional Igbo leadership structure. There is also no reason to fight or spill blood over, even in certain rare situations, who will replace the current leader. That is special in western democracy, where voter crime, bribery and targeted killings mark every election. Such patterns discourage many professional leaders from running for elected offices and instead leave leadership in the hands of the weak at the national level (Sandra, 2013).

Igwebuike Philosophy, a Justification for the Republican and Egalitarian Nature of Igbo People

Igwebuike asserts that the degree of impact of the leaders depends on how connected he is with his rule. "Igwe" means a number of people, typically an immense number, of people." Bu", is a verb which means "is". Ike is another verb that means "force or energy". Thus, it means 'number is strength', or 'number is power,' that means that people are powerful or insurmountable when they come together in solidarity. No task exceeds their combined capacity at this stage (Kanu, 2016).

Igbo leadership is understood as an inclusive corporation in the sense of Igwebuike philosophy. While the individual is a strong and feasible being as a force, it is effective and feasible in a restricted manner. If there is a mixture of powers, though, the human capacity can be exceptional. The members do not consider themselves as a single body from the masses, but as leading individuals; Leadership does not include force, but support. The leader views himself as a collective and not as another human or stronger than the people he serves. The leader knows that there is no ruler without followers, and rulership always involves interpersonal influence or persuasion. (Sandra, 2013)

In Igbo tribe, the individual takes only a step and does not lead without obedience, interpersonal control and persuasion. The value of the leader in Igbo Land is based on the individuals he leads; if nobody else exists, there could not be a leader, and the willingness of the people that make up the System to attain its national goal depends on the naivety of the leader. The boss thus wants the leadership as much as the boss does. This comes from the knowledge that all reality has an existential purpose. The leader of the Igbo community and the ruled are in the pool of common objectives of life, from which they benefit and contribute from their unique roles. Situations where a leader sees himself or herself as outstanding and essential to the community members he or she leads, may be regarded as an anomaly or alienation from true leadership. The division and division of the society into antagonistic groups is a disorder and an aberration of human society, in a bead to "divide and rule (Sandra 2013).

According to Ajaegbo (2014), the welfare of the led in Igbo land is put under all situations above the self-interest of the king. The leadership promotes people's love and growth, community development and the fostering of mutual authority. Therefore, leadership is not an ideology; it is about how well we operate together. The perfect leader, without little concern for the extent of the complexity, has been able to communicate with the various facets

of society. There are all forms of individuals-good and poor, in the world, and this is where the leadership is playing a role, it is a duty and not an opportunity to live; it must be necessary for the leader to control and do everything in his capacity. It is the final shift. As an ideology, Igwebuike recognizes that diversity strengthens a team; it accepts that our variations make us better. The less diversity, the less authority the group has.

Igwebuikecracy as a Participatory Democracy: a Proof of Republican and Egalitarian Nature of Igbo People

According to Wirendu (2013), Igwebuikecracy in its basic phases, demonstrates signs of democratic principles counter to the statement that in Africa, there was nothing democratic in the conventional governance framework. This is not the oldest individual that would enforce his will on the people in the political system of Igbo, for example. However, decision-making by negotiations, conferences, discussion and agreements that may take the form of enforcing the will of a plurality on the minority, reveals the democratic principle that the community will not see as the constellation. The decision-making on the principle of the supreme right of the majority should not be confused with. In this situation, the plurality does not win, but the minority-they do not only deal with it, which is the underlying suffering of minorities, in the plurality's hegemony, in order to accept this idea. The informed approval of the minority in relation to a specific issue will usually in a majority structure be required for the implementation of a decision. A plurality vote may be used to sever the stalemate in the unlikely event of an intractable split. However, the performance of a program will be calculated by the rareness of these problems in the operation of the state deciding bodies.

According to Maquet (2014), every heritage in the village is reflected in the participation and involvement of its members in the course of decision making. The system that provides space for the real assembly of minds to share thoughts and comprehension can be contrasted to a House of Representatives. The military does not execute decisions made by this Council, but by what Maquet called 'collective coercion.' The rule of law was at the core of these mainstream African constitutional systems. In the traditional communities or on entering the throne, the preference of the king or ruler of the Igbo was founded on equal rights, as well as on the fair care for the aspirants.

Conclusion

This research paper was a philosophical review of the Igbo as Republican and Egalitarian people. The balance between autocratic dictatorship and popular democracy is found in traditional Igbo democracies. This can be considered a participatory democracy as practised by the Igbo nation. In Igbo land, there is participatory democracy which recommends that everybody is equal before the law. The Igbos also operate a system of leadership that offers equal right to everyone not minding the age. As a gender-sensitive people, women are allowed to establish and own their group with a special power bestowed on them though, in the recent years, these democratic traditions were, however, disrupted, undermined and devastated by the colonial political infrastructure. This religion-social groups provided for democracy were ignored, disorganized and rejected of their political roles as the Ozo title holders, eldest, deities, masquerades, among others.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that:

1. Various leaders in Igbo land who has dubiously assumed a leadership position should desist from the act and resign accordingly to uphold the republican and egalitarian nature which the Igbos are known for.
2. The leadership system should also be adjusted to accommodate the women fully into the rulership.
3. The paper is firmly supporting the adoption by the Nigerian State of the Igbo traditional form of leadership as a way of minimizing to the barest minimum, the country's recurrent leadership problems.

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