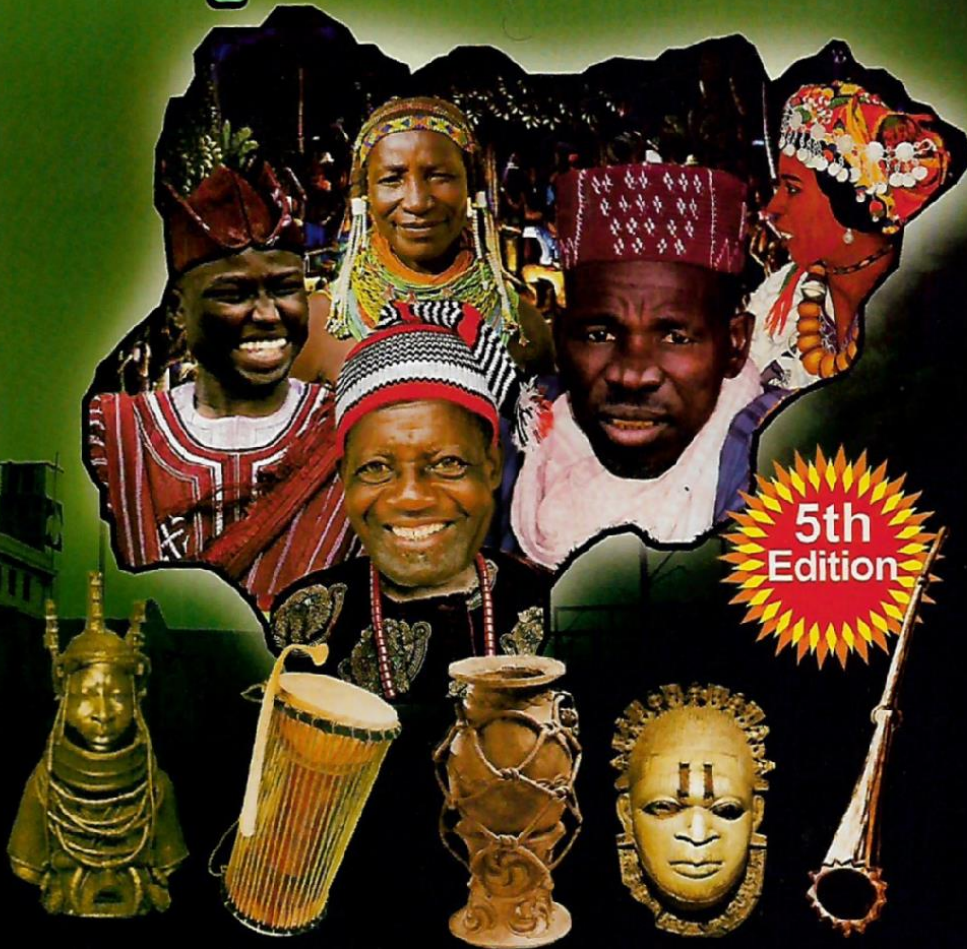


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## THE CONCEPT OF IGBOLOGY

*Innocent FA Uzoechi*

Scholars have surveyed the Igbo human group attracting attention by their lifeways. Many examined history (Isichei, 1976; Ekechi, 1971), geography (Iloeje, 1972), government, economy (Njoku, 2001; Nwokike 2005), music (Okafor, 1980 & 2005), archaeology (Shaw, 1970), and philosophy. (Uzoechi, 2004) Academic knowledge grows through inquiry, record and critique but dies, if at all, by neglect, dogma and finality. Today, Igbo studies, with a plus-minus quality need a philosophical approach named here the 'Concept of Igbology.' It arrives from knowing the Igbo people from reliable evidences.

This attempt is an argument for understanding Igbo people and their culture in depth. Its thesis is that conceptualizing Igbology stands urgent and necessary.

Clearly, this study will define its key terms, namely, concept and Igbology before asking some hard questions to harvest hard answers. Examples are on hand. Who are the Igbo? What is their origin? Where do they live? What is their socio-economy? How do they see their world? Where is womankind in their lives? What are their basic characteristics? How do the out-groupers, the non-Igbo, perceive them? What are the Igbo experiences in two Nigerias: Colonial and Independent? Which sources provide information and what problems go with them? What are the research findings for posterity? And, finally, which terms convey Igbology?

Since more writing on the Igbo opens the Book of Knowledge wider, this inquiry has its justifications. One,



an evolutionary view reveals development. Two, since a concept is a philosophy, and since philosophy itself has answers but no final one, this approach will enhance open-minded education. Three, some of the accepted answers may lead to more questions than answers. Four, the old conclusions about the Igbo, like their statelessness or pre-literacy now represent dead Anthropology. Five, illusions or ignorances exist about Igbo politics of equality. (Webster & Boahen, 1977) Sixth, womankind has far long been hidden in mankind - a negation of reality in the socio-economy. Seventh, total history, meaning social history, can guide scholars and their audiences to a better grasp of the Igbo. Eight, a technology of Igbology comprises the critical terms for seeing the Igbolanders, Ndigbo, as they see themselves. Ninth, perceiving the Igbo has three sides - their own, that of the non-Igbo, and the true object - object reality of themselves. And tenth, knowledges from different disciplines, when used in a cooperative temper, that is free from academic arrogance or monopoly, advance scholarship.

Thesis and justification over, this inquirer advances to define terms. Concept means an idea, an opinion, a philosophy, that is, "the sum of a person's ideas and beliefs concerning something." (WNCD, 1979, 321) In other words, it applies to ideas about the Igbo people. Igbology combines *logos*, the Greek word for knowledge, and Igbo, a people or her language. It requires studying them *in situ* in all their known and knowable ways of living.

About Igbo identity, some group names stand out. The Self callers are those who do not hide their Igboness anywhere and some others, the Self-deniers, especially in pre-independence, civil war and post-civil war years, stood to gain employment or personal security by

pretending otherwise. The *Refuseniks* (Refusers) know their Igbo origins or parents but lived life on with the illusions or realities of non- Igboness, probably for survival through constitutional law or through *situation ethics* in which occasions help citizens to determine their choices in risky environments. Furthermore, some people, the *Legals* can become Igbo by the naturalization law. (Nigerian Federal Constitution, 1999) Finally, the diaspora to cities in the United Kingdom, Africa, Asia, Europe, Canada, Latin America and the United States are Igbo still or else bi-nationals.

Origin, like causation (Fischer, 1971), can be slippery in historicizing the Igbo. For one thing, world societies are mixed. Chronology, duration, and direction of migrations can be knotty. However, Igbo origins today embrace a Creationist (*Chukwuist*) theory (Arinze, 1970); a Hebraic tradition from *Habiru* to *Heebo* (Alaezi, 1999; Ilona, 2000; Idigo, 2006); from Ibo to Igbo, to Ndigbo, say, across millenniums. Other explanations are autochthony as self-hood or autogenesis as self-origin. (Okafor & Emeka, 2002) Migration and admixture (Alagoa & Tamuno, 1989) suggest the meeting and co-living of various migrants whose routes, directions, and staging-posts may be clear from names such as Awha Imezi and Awha Ndiagu that descended from *Diaba*, with his wife, Udu, and Owa Imezi and Agu-Obu Owa - all in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

In history, peoples, places and times co-exist. A human geography of the Igbo reveals five territorial settlements. They are Northern, Ogoja, Western (Onitsha), Owerri, and Cross River Igbolands (Basden, 1966; Uchendu 1965). The global diasporic groups live within Nigeria and overseas to earn their livelihoods. Diasporas are Nigerian,

African and extra-African especially those colonies in Asia, Europe and the Americas.

Concerning their socio-economy, the Igbo ethnics everywhere created wealth in the world of work. (Njoku, 2001) They thrive on agriculture - the foundation for life and survival. They grew different crops; bred livestock; fished the waters; and married from within or beyond their communities. Children, the more the better, ennobled farmers by providing workers and group labourers that boosted harvests. This social order genderized duties as between men and women. All ownership except for female crops, such as beans, belonged to the house head, usually the man, in unwidowed families. All-season work prevailed with hard work bringing in success.

Gendering aside, the Igbo view their cosmos with faith. First, *Chineke* (*Chukwu*) creates the universe and its contents. Human beings are the visible transient actors there. Second, they have ancestors and spirits - good and bad - that try to influence their affairs (Uzoечи, 2004). Third, in this world, Death closes life in order to open its doors to another in the faraway kingdom of the spirits. Fourth, childlessness - mimics death-on-the-cross, with its humiliation, agony, and exposure. Fifth, any affected couple consider a second wife, a ghosted marriage, or else more wives. Sixth, male-hunting, probably as among the genealogic Jews, opened a husband's eyes to the tragedy of being forgotten alive. Because the girls would marry off while the *Obi* or the family name disappears forever. This fear of being lost to history, helps to explain the name *Afamefuna* (Okafor, Emeka & Inyama, 2008) or *Ahamewhune* (let my name not be lost) as if women were nonpersons and therefore, irrelevant. So sexism hurts women who in silent sorrow headload this tradition as a mandate of heaven.

Seventh, a sense of brotherhood or togetherness fills the Igbo outlook on life, hence wilful murder, permanent bachelorhood, uncooperative living and trouble-making kill their joys. (Ifemesia, 1979) Eight, as travellers and opportunity-hunters in Nigeria and beyond, they preach the *Oje-mba* social idiom of making friends or being friendly *en route*. For the successful wealth-maker is one who travels out and returns home safely - *Eje ayo bu ishi ije*. Finally, life being dynamic as culture, the Igbo act out their belief that no condition is permanent. For somebody that is poor today can by hard work and luck - knowing important people - become rich or even overrich. Thus, for the Igbo youth to fall thirty times is to rise thirty times - once the ambition to succeed is active, bold and fideist.

Womankind in Igbo life remains a paradox. (Uchendu, 1993) In a so-called man's world, women bear children, a kind of divided labour, but the men as breadwinners tend to crow over them, on and off. As mothers and homemakers, they teach the first school to children - the language, the foods, the dos and don'ts, the kinship networks and early family services - work in the home and in the outfarm. As farmers, women worked hard as the men and even oftener, thanks to their lost labour in the home and during the off-seasons. In the olden days, the woman's wealth belonged to her husband. A man was supposed to be the family banker despite woman's sharpened economic wisdom and quiet money sense. Neither class conflict nor women liberation appeared loud or organized for life remained an open book where everybody's business was everybody's. (Green, 1947) So, here, *Uwa bu kpughem kpuchim* - for this world opens but closes with fortunes that, on end, alternate with misfortunes.

Beyond these facts, some Igbo characteristics can be noted. They are Deicentric, meaning that they see *Chukwu* at the centre of their lives everywhere and always. Still, they are progressive, thus they accept change and are adaptive. (Ottenberg, 1962) One Igbo person can begin as a barrow pusher, move on to be a motorcyclist, and then a tenant driver, and, finally, a landlord bus driver. Such facts as these indicate the Igbo idea of permanent change. When the British colonizers occupied Igboland, the free people there became 'unfree' subjects, yet the Igbo accepted that change, adapted, and made progress - but also enemies - in the process. Igbo competitiveness is eternal. (Webster & Boahen, 1980) Ripe daughters compete openly but quietly for any visiting suitor or prospect. Youths rival one another. Parents, villages, communities (Ekechi, 1971), clans, schools - all want to be first. *Westomania*, - an endless hunger for foreign goods and services, affected the Igbo nation to the extent that anything labeled "made in London" sold faster than a better model made in Aba. (Uzoечи, 2004) Even speaking English almost anywhere and everytime has endangered Igbo language and its speakers.

Up and down in life, these Igbo people stand up in self-confidence. They neither cringe nor kowtow but look up hard and watch events. This attitude hides their ever-ready hospitality - their kindness to visitors, travellers, and even strangers. Sometimes, they cook rice for their visitors and serve themselves garri. With this fact goes, of course, their humble style that enables graduates to load buses, ride *okada*, or vend newspapers - till better times knock again.

Against those aspects, there is a backlash. People condemn Igbo pushfulness, competitiveness, arrogance or so-called self confidence and moneyishness. However,



money hunger bites other ethnics. Usually, the Igbo love for brotherizing away from home makes others resent their challenges to the oppressors of their fellows. Necessarily, Igbo political democracy collides with closed systems in outer Nigeria.

All these reactions, may suggest carryovers from Colonial Nigeria through the Civil War to Independence and after. Throughout Anglo-Nigeria, the Igbo, like the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani before them, were also sub-imperialists. They helped the British to colonize other Nigerians, as an example, strange to say, of autocolonialism. Since the British always chose their allies to sustain empire profits, the anticolonial southerners lost favour. Later on, entrenched dominance married international oil politics to factionalize Nigerians for the Civil War, better seen as a postponed war of independence. That crisis, given its genocidal content (Osuji, 2012; Cronje 1972), forced the Igbo and their allies to wage a defensive war on the Truman Doctrine that won survival under the General of the Peoples Army, General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. (Ojukwu, 1969) That agony chartered Igbo survival forever but without a complete sovereignty under international law. So, the Igbo suffered from genocide through war to anti-Igbo and anti-Southern Christian riots in the Northern States. So, from 1861 to 2012, a century and a half, the Igbo experience was one of moving from colonial unfreedom to independence to genocide and to civil war - before marginalization, which is a Sisyphean task undertaken against a courageous and resilient people ever.

For sources, readers can confront mountains of evidence. The Nigerian National Archives in Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna have large holdings covering from colonial Nigeria on. *Nigeriana* and *Igboana* in oversea

libraries and in Nigeria contain vast documents from early conquests through Anthropological Reports after 1929 to contemporary scholarships based on researches into Igbo culture and history. Caution, however, may be required to overcome the inherent problems in storing, interpreting, and using those evidences, legally. With the rise of Africanist academics and intellectuals, oral tradition has become popular among, critical for, and central to, contemporary Igbologists.

Philosophizing Igbology, thus, must stress some findings that will assist posterity and other users of this inheritance. For one thing, many themes like origin and ethnicity cannot now have definitive answers. Imaginative interpretations and reconstructions allow for suspending or expressing opinions to match available evidence. And for another, the Igbo people are changing with the times. The diasporics now ignore teaching their children Igbo when Englishing or anglicizing sounds prestigious as a status symbol. Besides, language identifies its people. A dying tongue introduces a dying culture which cannot be replaced when its speakers are absorbed and swallowed - a probability with UNESCO, because they have become meltable ethnics. For a better future, Igbo cultural nationalism has to grow on HISTORY and, thus, sustain survival - a survival which depends on continuous self knowledge, consciousness and awareness that provide educations and practical wisdoms in Nigeria's top heavy plural society *struggling* along to Democracy.

From identity onward, this inquiry has advanced down to findings. What connects the above to the conclusion is a relevant wordlist that lights up the road to Igbology as shown below with some *neologisms*.

<b>Igbo</b>	<b>Igboize (Igbonize)</b>	<b>Gerontocracy</b>	<b>Process</b>
Igboland	Igboization (Igbonization)	Gerontocrac	Democracy
Igbolander	Pre-Igbo	Gerontocratic	Democratic
Igbology	Pro-Igbo	Gynaecocracy	Democracy
Igbologist	Post-Igbo	Gyneocracy	Republicanism
Igbologism	Anti-Igbo	Gyn(e)ocracy	Republican
Igbologics	Igbo Cosmos	Genocide	Open Society
Igboana	Igbo Cosmology	Genocidal	Closed Society
Igbonistic	Cosmologist	Genocidist	Exogamy
Igbophobe	Cosmological	Gynephobia	Exogamous
Igbophobist	Igbo Cosmogony	Gynophobe	Endogamy
Igbophile	Igbo Cosmogony	Gynarchy	Endogamous
Igbophilic	Igbo Cosmography	Gynarchic	Pantheon
Igbophilia	Igbo Philosophy	Gyniatrics	Deism
Igbophobia	Gerontologist	Geriatrics	Deicentric
Igboness	Gerontology	Ohacracy	Anglo- Nigeria
Androcracy	Androcrat	Stateless	Statelessness
Primitive	Pre- literate	Ogbuzulu	Igwebuike
Ikeotunoye	Ojamba	Sexism	Sexist
Sexology	Sexologist	Authority	Power
Influence	Consensus	Consensual	Powerless
Processual	Segmentary society	Dual Organisation.	Powerlessness

### **Conclusion**

Different researchers have investigated the Igboid groups. The need for this current inquiry has been justified. After defining the key terms, the writer attempted answers to hard questions about identity, origin, philosophy, perception and sources down to findings and technology - meaning a relevant word list. Finally, this author holds as, in his thesis, that understanding Igbology in depth remains urgent and necessary.

### **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. The Igbo live almost everywhere." Explain.
2. Despite some problems how does oral tradition promote Igbology?
3. Identify fifteen terms from the word list.
4. Why do undergraduates study the Igbo people?
5. "An unequal society." Is this a true view of woman-man relations in Igboland?
6. "Women are already on the road to Equality but men cannot stop them." Discuss.
7. Consider six Igbo characteristics.

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