

## Research Article

## Aso-Ebi (Group Uniform): An Imported Symbolic Culture That Projects Solidarity And Cohesion in Traditional Igbo Cosmology

Madukasi, Francis Chuks.

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Department of Religion & Society. Igbariam Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria. PMB 6059 General Post Office Awka. Anambra State, Nigeria. Phone Number: 2348035157541

**Abstract:** It is a known fact that every culture has the responsibility of describing reality, its origin and models of structural development as well as the hidden knowledge and truth about being. This responsibility is evidently illustrated, addressed or depicted in Igbo paradigm in form of symbols. Devoid of these symbols, signs and images, the traditional life experiences of the Igbo's will completely be void, abstract and meaningless because some of these symbols represented in tangible visible forms were believed to be real and living. This paper focuses towards understanding *Aso-ebi* cloth in the Igbo context through the examination of the dynamics of the cloth production, patronage, consumption and social significance of dress projecting high social solidarity and powerful cohesion in traditional Igbo paradigm. The proper underpinning of this social psychology of *Aso-ebi* cloth on the indigenous people of the Igbo's will go a long way in the full integration of the Igbo people's life and their immediate cultural ecology with messages it disseminate. It must be noted also that despite the significance of this integration, it must be informed that such is evidently limited in their transmission of reality. This paper investigates how the *Aso-ebi* clothe although an imported culture from the Yoruba tradition basically play significant roles in mediating and facilitating religious communication in Igbo Traditional Religion, giving rise to thought, interpretation, and symbolic meanings. In Igbo cosmology and leadership, the *Aso-ebi* fabrics encapsulate so many things which are very distinctive thereby representing so many things and ideologies.

**Key words:** Culture, Devoid, Evoke, Hidden, Ideology, Symbols & Symbolology.

### Introduction

This study investigates the meaning Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria attributes to *Aso-ebi* dress. In the perception of the Igbo people, *Aso-ebi* simply known as *Akwa-Otu* in Igbo tonal language is an aspect of African indigenous cloth which they wear with through the mediation of its symbolic functions in order to create meaning for life and general wellbeing (Kaplan, 2004:190). In this regard, the attire plays a significant role in nurturing, structuring and shaping their society and culture (Olupona, 1991:1). However, the wearing of *Aso-ebi* attire is basically an imported culture which has been integrated into socio-cultural and socio-religious interplays of every facets of occasions in Igbo land and as such it constitute part of the essential tools through which the people understand who they are and maintain Igbo identity. Yet, this indigenous institution continues to be relegated to the background especially as it concerns non acceptance and lack of understanding of its core tenets, and existence (Olupona, 1991:1). The Western man have tried as much as possible to see nothing good about the indigenous people, and this often leads to faulty conclusions (Idowu, 1973:5). Samuel Johnson affirms that "there are two objects of curiosity, the Christian world and the Mohammedian world – all the rest may be considered as barbarous" (Carpenter, 1913:24). Fanon (1967:42) asserts that as pesticides kill germs so, does

Christianity destroy the traditions of the colonized peoples. Young (2003:140) affirms that such hasty conclusion and "translation becomes part of the process of domination, of achieving control, a violence carried out on the language, culture, and people being translated".

Ohadike (2007:142) argues that during the periods of the Roman and Byzantine, Europeans have tried to use Christianity to establish a pattern of domination over the people of Africa and to exert a deep impact on African cultures and institutions. By and large, the observers of indigenous religion viewed African culture as primitive and associated African attire with paganism (Dube, 1996:106) which Ekeh (1975:97) refers to as "the backwardness of the African past". Although, "that is not exactly accurate" (Mohawk, 2004:111). Onwudiwe (2001:217) argues that "the policy implication of this uncomplimentary term for Africa is not frequently acknowledged and the attribution to Africa of the status of such terms damages the image of the continent". According to Sulaiman Osho (2011:5) "Africa remains a continent that its history, heritage, culture, and customs have been distorted". He argues that the historical accounts about Africa are mostly incorrect, slanted, and dented to tilt the true account of history from Western perspective (Osho, 2011:5). They branded the symbols as objects of heathenism, a

negation which is couched on racial and moral prejudice against the Africans (Nabofa, 1994:5). Insofar as secularization, globalization, and the expansion of dominant world religions affect indigenous peoples throughout the world, in every case, indigenous peoples have developed their responses to the challenges of multi-faceted modernity (Olupona, 2004:1). Pobe (1979:67) asserts that their negative views sometimes due to straight arrogance, often taking the form that anything non-European could not be good. Sofola (1973:60) argues that through “their self-declared superiority of their culture, a declaration which was strongly backed by ethnocentrism and racial arrogance and the points of bayonet and machine guns, they went all over the non-western world and Africa to impose their culture”. He insists that “the result is the cataclysm and the warped mentality in which the world suffers now” (Sofola, 1973:60). However, it is no wonder, then that when Christianity came to Africa, the missionaries banned the use of African drum, and African dresses by a few convertees in their churches (Ayandele, 1996:29). Ekwueme (1974:13) recounts that “early missionaries tagged all indigenous forms of arts as the work of the devil, especially as almost invariably those associated with some religious or quasi-religious ceremonies...The amount of damage done materially and psychologically to the culture of the Igbo by these misguided zealots may probably never be fully assessed”. According to Adelowo:

It is to be noted that a good number of such scholars had over the years, taken appearance for reality, symbol for the symbolized, means for the end with regard to the religious situation in Africa. Reasons for this step are not far-fetched. A lot of them were staying behind the garden and at the same time trying to pontificate on the items in the garden. Some had not even touched the African soil. Rather, they relied on the reports of traders and missionaries in dishing out information on the religious situation in Africa (1990:162).

It is on this position that Onunwa (2002:86) asserts that the early Christian missionaries behaved like social revolutionaries, but whole trying to achieve the goal of their mission – the conversion of Africans to Christianity. Nabofa (1994:12) affirms that is the reason why the early Christian missionaries that had contact with Africa, instead of developing, civilizing and educating Africans, they succeeded in under developing, deschooling, and eventually producing half-baked Christian converts. Achebe (2012:54) argues that when the Europeans came to Africa, they knew very little of the history and complexity of the people and the continent which made them to believe that Africa had no culture, no religion, and no history. They equally castrated and brain washed Africans by carrying the propaganda that Africans were savages, and their culture was primitive and barbaric, and cannot cope with the requirements of modern society (Metuh, 2002:239).

Horton (1968:628) argues that this “is an even poorer index which to judge traditional religions in pre-literate culture”.

Johann Reinhold Forster (1778) cited in Chidester (1996:18) affirms that Africans were so “degenerated, debased, and wretched” that they had forgotten their “ancient systems”. Pointing to this assertion, Eric Severied laments that “not that Britain really educated these people. Britain gave just enough of them the chance to educate themselves, and what they learned was why they must rid themselves of Britain and how to do it fast (Ndabanigi, 1959:47). Pobe (1979:67) asserts that outsiders misunderstood many of the African ways of doing things, while ignorance of the organizing principles of African attires prevented serious and more accurate study of the costumes. Insufficient research and lack of adequate knowledge of the language coupled in some cases with racial bias, resulted in a number of wild speculations and misrepresentations by certain missionary writers and ethnographers of the Igbo traditional belief and practice relating to wearing of such costumes contributed also to this negative attitude (Ejizu, 2002:114). Sofola (1973:xii) argues that some were either ignorant of the rich values of their African past or were made in their education to look down upon them or shun the values entirely. Ohadike (2007:13) affirms that “one of the aims of assimilation is to achieve political and cultural control by mounting a vicious attack on the victim’s consciousness and self-esteem. When put in motion, the victim begins to hate the customs of his people, their language, music and religion”.

Nonetheless, by “throwing into the fire and locking into museums the most beautiful specimens in order to silence Africans, a significant access to understanding of African traditional thought was blocked” (Niangoran-Bouah, 1991:82). Nianoran-Bouah (1991:82) again argues that “by so doing, the colonial administrators through their prejudice ignored the fact that the black African has deposited the sum of his knowledge, his religious beliefs, and his attitude and behaviour towards the sacred in this art object”. This cloth called *Aso-ebi* attire is more than a book and it is a fundamental institution if studied.

Consequently, with the philosophy and ideology of boycott – the boycottable, Mbonu Ojike (1948:2) would not dress in any Western-patterned dress... According to Ojike again:

The human motive for... is one throughout the world. But just as no two human personalities are identical in all respects, so... of nations must be dissimilar one to another. Twenty active years at home, plus eight inquisitive years abroad, have collectively convinced me that our...is a legacy to love, a tradition to uphold, a heritage to revive. It needs no reform. It calls for no apology. It wants no distortion. What our... culture wants is a new zest, a new devotion, a new patronage. It must be strengthened in order to be consolidated, promoted in order to be loved and patronized...[sic]. I have never in my entire Safari seen a country like mine...It is a nation of people who think of progress [and civilization] in terms of imbibing whatever is foreign. It is a people that have as it rejected its fashion... (1948:2).

Insofar as, this great and proud African nationalist saw and

was highly disturbed by the ignorance coupled with insult which Westerners showed on the culture of Africans especially as it concerns indigenous attire, it did not stop many of the African indigenous communication outfits or systems which when used in producing scintillating impressions that are highly impregnated with symbolic meanings (Nabofa, 1994:36). All these were condemned by Westerners and were looked upon with disdainful eyes and in other to malign various African cultural forms and her rich cultural heritage (Metuh, 2002:236). All these were borne out racial arrogance and discrimination primarily to assert their superiority over Africans (Sofola, 1973:14). Sofola again asserts that:

The cultural adventurism of the white man in the non-western societies was not without some somber reflection on the way of life found in the new places. Yet racial arrogance brought about a development of intellectual blind spot where there would have been clear perception and appreciation. The British social anthropologists, both of the colonial and pre-colonial era, who went to Africa to analyse the society in depth, socially and culturally had among them those who distorted what they found in order to justify an assumed racial superiority (1973:60-61).

This misconception, no doubt, prevented a proper understanding of the symbolism and major role of *Aso-ebi* clothes in the social life of the Africans like the Igbo race. Not minding what this creative expression symbolizes, outsiders are incompetent to decipher. Nevertheless, Sofola (1973:102) argues that “the fact of the existence of this cultural form he is ready to accept and strongly defend notwithstanding the fact that the existence of this peculiar African forms was recently made popular through Picasso who had copied it from Africa only to come and resell the forms to Africans”. Horton (1968:626) posits that “what is required in studying them is not an abstention from intellectualist analysis, but a delicate balancing of intellectualist with political, aesthetic and other analyses”. According to Falola:

The intellectual passion to understand tradition can be seen as part of a careful African engagement with the later phases of European expansion. The encounter triggered this passion, creating a stronger sense of awareness of the self and one’s tradition. Western education and ideas supplied many of the key ideas and issues to employ in looking at African tradition. The African elite began to apply concepts such as the nation, state, race progress, and nationalism and to adapt them to local circumstances and old institutions (2003:35).

It is on this development that African elites like Olupona (1991:6) describe African clothes “as a living institution”. Niangoran-Bouah (1991:92) argues that the *Aso-ebi* clothe is to “Africans what the Bible and Quran are to Christians and Muslims: it is sacred, it is the repository of history, of values, and of the divine word, and it is the preferred mediator between humans and the sacred. He maintains that “he who destroys and burns the Bible cannot know the origins of Christianity. Similarly, he who burns the Quran has no access

to an understanding of Islam” (Niangoran-Bouah, 1991:82). Soyinka (1999:ix) idiomatically affirms that “when a griot, or ancestor dies, it is an entire library that vanishes”. Niangoran-Bouah (1991:81-82) argues that symbolism behind the *Aso-ebi* clothe “was judged from the exterior and condemned without an effort to study and understand what it represented in the African traditional worldview”. Carson (1996:230) idiomatically affirms that it is primarily through such symbolism or paradigm in dresses like the *Aso-ebi* clothe that “we enjoy intercourse with superior minds.... In the best books, great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours”. Samovar et al (2009:107) argues that “at the heart of each of the world’s main religious traditions lies a body of sacred wisdom”.

For the Western man perspectives, on one hand, the indigenous *Aso-ebi* clothe symbolized the explicit nucleus of the elusive African paganism that is to say the evil that had to be annihilated (Rydving, 2004:100). Soyinka (1999: ix) affirms that “this same breed of intellectuals employ the alien yardstick of their spiritual and intellectual enslavers to annihilate the spiritual heritage of that same society”. Niangoran-Bouah (1991:81) argues that “the early Christian missionaries found in the indigenous dresses an excuse to wage socio-religious war against African traditional religion. They took away and destroyed thousands of..., convinced that this was the diabolic... that liberated satanic maleficent forces and energies”. Metuh (2002:239) predicts that eternal damnation awaited those who failed to accept this Christian propaganda and soon the propaganda caught on. Guadeloupe (2009:139) affirms that those who wish to go against this prohibition are either not hired or fired.

### **Wave of African People towards Embracing Their Culture**

Today Africans in Diaspora are trying to develop their own culture so that it would be admired by those who labeled the religion and cultural practices of the Africans as idolatry, fetishism, animism, paganism, and occultism (Iwuagwu, 1998:21). Olupona (2004:9) argues that such term serves as an ideological justification for Western hegemony which Long (2004:96) reminds us to be mindful of cultural, ideological, and linguistic parameters, which often conveys our very speech at cross-purposes. Nonetheless, indigenous religious systems of the Africans especially the Igbos are responding by carrying out internal reforms in beliefs and practices to reassert their contemporary relevance (Olupona, 2004:6). Njoku (2007:xxix) asserts that Africans in their spirited efforts and fights with each of these forms of foreign threats, have held strongly to the trilogy of religion, music and dance as a mode of dialogue with their ancestors, a symbol of strength, a means of cultural expression, and idiom of identity. This new development makes it possible to arrive at an enhanced appreciation of African traditional belief system and its concomitant artistic dimension (Fleurant, 2000:417) particularly where the *Aso-ebi* clothe is concerned.

However, some appreciation from the European and American

audiences has been made where people are searching for exotic African images and music among them 'jungles, drums, bare breasts, sweaty bodies, mysteriousness, spirituality and primitivism' (Impey, 1992:173). The history of indigenous people like the Igbos would be discovered by referring to its native cloth of *Aso-ebi* (*Akwa-Otu*) group uniform cloth which they borrowed the idea from Yoruba culture and tradition. It is worth mentioning here that *Aso-ebi* as an imported culture that has been integrated into the mainstream of the Igbo cosmology when it is bought, "it serves as a medium of recording or earmarking these occasion—a supplement to the oral tradition of history recording" (Sofola, 1973:128). Chidester (1996:218) holds that the symbolic significance of the *Aso-ebi* (*Akwa-Otu*) uniform dress unlike every other cloth therefore, provided evidence for reconstructing the organic unity and culture like that of the Igbo people. Chidester (1996:213) again asserts that "savage tribe" like the Igbo race existed without sacred totem, whether an animal, a plant, a metal or a star, to which it traced its origin. Hooshmandrad (2004:52-53) writes that cloths like the *Aso-ebi* attire is deeply encapsulated with symbolic functions and in the absence of an agreed upon historical origin, it could be seen as an "absolute idea" which was designed and exists externally in "Divine Consciousness" that was only "manifested". Buttressing this further, Adegbite (1991:45) posits that such native attire like the *Aso-ebi* to the traditional African peoples may be described as "the vehicle for articulating an abstract idea in concrete form – for communicating thought as matter". On the one hand, he argues that, such cloths are regarded in traditional African societies as the most immediate expression of Eros; a bridge between ideas and phenomena (Adegbite, 1991:45). Polak (2006:163) argues that native attires like the *Aso-ebi* "has become an integral part of a supra-ethnic, local culture" of Igbo tradition which "owe a great deal to the African religious heritage" (Behague, 2006:97).

Onwudiwe (2001:217) comments that "in Africa, anthropology was an instrument of colonial expansion. It could not have been objective in the application terms to Africa. Its term of choice for Africa's peoples was tribe, a term that although it had graduated from savage still carries fraudulent historical and cultural presumptions". Chidester (1996:215) argues that drawing upon what has been called the ancient theory of religion; European comparativists would identify a motive in human emotions of awe and terror before the wild, uncontrollable forces of nature. Today, the world religions especially the Roman Catholic Church of the Christian folds have borrowed a leaf from African Indigenous religious ways of communicating to God, by introducing in their own ways of religious practices the use of those African fabrics as their style of religious practices (Arinze, 1973:52). Pobe (1979:66) insists that no serious student of the subject of costumes can maintain that the *Aso-ebi* attire per se is heathen or evil. It is gratifying to note that other churches, like Roman Catholics and the Anglicans, have for years used local fabric at worship. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church Council official declaration popularly known as Vatican II according

to (Flannery, 1988:283-349), brings out clearly how the church has been using and should continue to use indigenous communication systems to enlighten her members and thereby promote and propagate dialogue among people's of living faiths. This is because they see the whole process as simple as a two-way process of exchanging ideas or information between human beings (Herta & Herbert, 1991:3).

Apparently, this means that their methods of information dissemination, which are their evangelizing techniques, have been critically, carefully studied, documented and jealously guarded (Nabofa, 1994:vi). Although, the adherents of African traditional religion have been doing so wittingly and unwittingly since time immemorial, but no study has shown precisely how this is being done (Nabofa, 1994:vi), and this brings us to the discourse of projecting aristocracy, hegemony and symbolism in traditional leadership in Igbo land where *Aso-ebi* attire is highly priced as part of the culture, tradition and hegemony of the chosen people "a highly decentralized confederation of clans held together by a common language and a common culture" (Ojukwu, 1998:16). According to Isichei (1980) there is a long history, encapsulated in mythology of the Igbo people that recalled a man called Eri, sent from God, who lived in Aguleri and believed to be the progenitor of the Igbo race (Idigo, 2001:120). This infers that the Igbos as a distinct tribe of "one people – one destiny" (Arkin, 1989: xi) came from the lineage of the Lion of Judah. The origin of people would be linked to the migration of Igbo race to their present-day Nigeria as a nation which is believed to have been among the "Hebrew patriarchs" (Bright, 1981:23) through Gad, one of the sons of Jacob, who migrated from Mesopotamia and the father of Eri. John Bright concedes that although widely held, this position has been "vigorously contested in recent years by certain scholars who maintain that the patriarchal narratives are more or less imaginative literary creations of a much later date with no appreciable stream of oral tradition behind them, and without real historiographical intention or historical worth" (1981:73).

### **Man and Psychology of Symbolism**

Clearly in behavioural of human psychology, it is a known fact that ideas simply emanates from experience or revelation (Nabofa, 1994:3). Man being what he is, is always eager or inquisitive to ascribe meanings to each of its experiences and it is this kind of attitude that actually stimulates man's instinct of curiosity from the known to an unknown, especially as it has to do with his religious awareness (Nabofa, 1994:3). In other words, he uses such religious ideas to elaborate rituals that inculcate decrees and doctrines "concerning the Nature of God, the Universal Being, Fatherhood and Beneficence of God, Eternity and Immortality of the Soul" (Akintola, 1992:2). Nonetheless, among all the things God created, it is only man that possesses that natural tendency or proclivity for creative powers in mental and psychic forms to reflect on his experience and express it with symbols, upon the fact that animals and plants have that power to reproduce themselves through natural methods or otherwise (Nabofa, 1994:4).

Nabofa again asserts that:

Man is not only a symbolizing and conceptualizing animal. He is also “meaning-seeking”, but meaning can only be stored in symbols. Hence symbols constitute power resources liable to use and misuse. A society and its religion can only be understood through an analysis of the symbols by which its members communicate, worship, express their faith, evangelise, and manipulate relationships especially those involving religious beliefs (1994:21).

Nonetheless, Nabofa (1994:21) went further again to argue that by studying and learning about symbols in their religious contexts, we can find a kind of back-door approach to a deeper theological understanding of what the Africans actually believe, actually practice and actually say about their faith. The symbols makes you think says Paul Ricoeur (1971:404f). According to the book of Genesis:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; man and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth (Gen,1:27-28).

From the psychological point of view, Nabofa notes that:

Psychologists have often asserted that the only difference between man and the other animals, plants and minerals is that whereas man can engage in abstract thinking and attain to self-consciousness as well as engage in metaphysical analysis, animals follow their instincts and have not yet attained to that self-consciousness that gives rise to various forms of symbolization (1994:4).

Buttressing this further, Edwin Smith argues that:

Neglecting this fact, some writers make the mistake of supposing that the untutored Africa is incapable of abstract thinking. By changing *mu-ntu*, ‘human being’, into *bu-ntu* he expresses the ideas of ‘manliness, virtue, humanity’. Yet, while well able to think abstractly, he prefers to put his thought and feeling into vivid concrete terms (Smith,1966:10-11).

Nonetheless, Nabofa (1994:3) in recognizing the significance of concrete terms as symbols of religions asserts that “the metaphysics of any religion cannot be fully and adequately studied, grasped and appreciated without a fair knowledge of its symbolic forms and processes which normally emerged out of the illumination”. Omijeh (1983:195) laments that “nowhere did early missionaries and Western writer’s misunderstand African cultures and societies as in the rituals and symbolism”. Sundermeier (1998:39) asserts that symbols relate to actual world and always have a material side; they can be heard, felt and imagined. He argues that because of their sensory character, they can speak to the emotional nature of human beings. They are satisfying; that is why it is in their nature to be accepted. They have to resonate with the feelings

and value of the group and individual (Sundermeier, 1998:38-39). Nabofa (1994:77) argues that every scholar in the study of religion in Africa is aware of the fact that liturgical symbols, especially the non-physical ones, are enmeshed in the totality of African culture and that African Biblical scholarship really appreciates the benefits derivable from the use of appropriate African symbols in interpreting the Biblical message to mediate and suite the African situation. Samuel Abogunrin (1991) asserts in justifying the commentaries and importance of some scholars for the African culture opined that:

While God exists totally free from culture, human beings are totally immersed in culture. But God from beginning has used human culture as the milieu to reveal Himself to mankind. In communicating his revelation to man, God has often submitted to cultural limitations because human beings cannot comprehend supernatural truths outside his own cultural understanding. Therefore, God has always revealed himself (sic) in terms of human language and culture. African religion and culture which shaped the lives of our fathers have continued to exert great influence on life in Africa. It therefore, means that biblical interpretation in Africa must take cognizance of this particular spiritual, cultural and intellectual milieu (Abogunrin, 1991:vf).

However, before we start the discourse on the concept of symbols, Ekeke (2010:6) argues that it is of paramount significance that we align our discussion on the symbolism to a theoretical framework to help us assimilate and understand in full details the orientation we are set to examine and in this wise, one main theoretical view that would be considered very vital would be the symbolic interactionism of George Mead which is a theory synonymous with symbols in social institutions of human interaction. Ekeke (2010:6) again asserts that “once we have conceptualized an object we can now think of that object even when that object is no more invisible. Therefore, the object is thought of symbolically”. He argues further that symbolic conceptions and thought reduces this shortcoming of limited experience of human beings to what we actually see, hear, or fear, therefore concludes that almost all interactions between and among human beings are dimensions of exchange of symbols by presenting four primary and interrelated levels (Ekeke, 2010:6).

The first level is impulse and that “impulse which involves an immediate sensuous stimulation, the need to do something about it” (Ritzer, 2000:208). The second one is perception, and according to Ekeke (2010:6) “George Mead sees perception as involving incoming stimuli as well as the mental images they create. People do not simply respond immediately to stimuli but rather think about and assess them through mental imagery. They also actively select characteristics of a stimuli and release among sets of stimuli”. Ritzer (2000:208) argues that such a stimuli, may have several dimensions, and the actor is able to select among them.

Buttressing this further, Ekeke (2010:6) asserts that George Mead calls the third level manipulation. He argues that sequel

to the manifestation of the impulse with the object perceived, what follows immediately is action-taking with regard to the conceptualized symbol. The fourth and the last level according to George Mead is consummation and at this level that actor in symbolic interaction particularizes the specific objective of his choices of the many possible meanings or interpretations of the object, towards satisfying the original impulse (Ekeke, 2010:6). In another development, Giddens (1997:565) defines symbols as something that stands for, represents a person, idea, letter, figure, or sign that expresses a sound, a number, a chemical substance. The implication here is that, one symbolic form may be capable of several meanings or interpretations and this made Radcliffe-Brown (1969:142) to argue that whatever has a meaning is a symbol and the meaning or interpretation is what is expressed by the symbol, that is to say, the “translation, explanation, meaning or conceptualization of the sign-object would be in relation with a subsequent sign representing the same object” (Partmentier, 1994:5).

Strictly speaking, symbols vary among different class of people and worshippers and we should not forget the fact that the adherents of the diverse religions believe that they are not worshipping or rather venerating images associated with their religions, but invariably they are using them to stimulate the whims and caprices of their imagination to the proper act of worship (Okoye, 2011:52). This is why Wosien (1992:30) posits that “when a symbol is made to have finite meaning, as opposed to merely being a paraphrase of the mysterious, an approximation to reality, then it becomes an idol”. Those who are in the field of Psychology of Religion will be most concerned with how symbols are used to manipulate, and how they actually influence the mind and behaviour of the believer (Nabofa, 1994:5). In fact, images, emblems or symbols are not end in themselves, but means to an end (Adelowo, 1990:162), no wonder all professions or religious bodies, be it traditional religion, Christianity, Islam and other secular bodies expresses their experiences through symbols, while these expressions could be articulated and mediated in religious emblems, ideograms, icons, rituals, songs, prayers, myths, incantations, vows, customary behaviour and personifications (Nabofa, 1994:4). In this wise, Ezeanya (1994:8) opines that “one of the important customs of the Igbo people of Nigeria in connection with the birth of a child, is the naming ceremony. For the Igbo people, for the Hebrews, a name is not just a personal label for the sake of identity. It means much”.

However, in indigenous religious practices the basic assimilation and understanding of these so called religious symbols makes itself to be comprehensive, rapid and compact to use, it equally assists in understanding and concentration during any kind of religious rituals to achieve divine essence (Nabofa, 1994:4). No wonder, when Christianity and Islamic religions came to Africa, because traditional religious symbols have their ambiguities and these could shroud their true meaning to the unwary, they branded those symbol as objects of heathenism, animism, idolatry, fetishism and so on

(Nabofa,1994:5).

Thus, according to Geoffrey Parrinder (1987:127) “such religious symbols are means of expression used by Africans, scriptures of a sort, in the arts which Africans developed and whose originality and power have been recognized by European artists such as Picasso, Epstein and Henry Moore”. He argues that “painting and sculpture, in stone, ivory, brass, wood, clay, cloth and other materials have been used since time immemorial for daily purposes and for important representations. These express people’s beliefs from the inside, though their interpretation by others is not always easy” (Parrinder, 1987:127). Because of the use of such derogatory terms by the Western and Arab scholars, visionary and articulated religious scholars, theologians and leaders of thought in various endeavours deemed it wise to consider giving this term symbol a definition, today the word symbol means an image, object that suggests or refers to something else (Hornby, 1995:1215). Thompson (1970:9) asserts that symbol is anything which exists for its purpose of pointing people beyond itself. Cohen (1974:26) sees symbols as “objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings”.

This concept of symbol made Clifford Geertz to conceive of culture as a text (Crapanzano, 1986:68-76) which serves as a vehicle for conception (Geertz, 1973:91). Kreinath (2005:102) argues that this implies that any form of ritual action can be seen as a kind of religious behaviour, which is approached through the lens of a broad linguistic model. Here, what this tries to point out is that we have various symbolic forms and that there is every possibility for one symbolic form to be given several meanings and such meanings would equally be given at different segments depending upon the ability and capability of the interpreter’s level of consciousness and intelligence (Nabofa, 1994:6). However, Susanne Langer (1958:174) in her book *Theology And Life*, simply made a distinction between a mere sign and symbol and according to her, a sign merely or probably indicates a thing, while a symbol however represents it. Butressing this further, Sundermeier argues that:

Symbol should not be confused with allegory. The law of analogy prohibits this. Allegory links up things which do not belong together, adding something to reality. Symbols, on the other hand, make visible the powers which belong together, and participate in each other. Nor should a symbol be confused with a sign. Signs are one-directional, unmistakable. Symbols condemn several aspects which are not fully explainable. Interpretation can change, without the previous interpretation losing its validity, even when its significance decreases. Different interpretations are not mutually exclusive. They have to be understood as supplementary, since each interpretation embraces only one level of meaning, be it social [as in social anthropology], legal, psychological or religious. Synchronising these levels is the essential task of the symbol (Sundermeier, 1998:39).

In one of his own contributions, to what symbols stands for, Carl Jung (1979:20) asserts that these are meaningless in themselves; they equally have acquired recognizable meanings through common usage or even deliberate intent. He further argues that:

What we call a symbol is a term, a name or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown or hidden from us... Thus a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider "unconscious" aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason (Jung, 1979:20).

Mircea Eliade (1987:861) asserts that symbol reveals certain dimension of reality that would otherwise elude our knowledge and this deeper dimension is disclosed or revealed not only through the reflection of the interpreters of the symbols but in the "internal or innermost logic" proper to the symbols themselves. Radcliffe-Brown (1952:143) argues that whatever has meaning is a symbol and the meaning is what is expressed by the symbol. Nonetheless, Symbol by definition is communal that converts latent power into energy (Sundermeier, 1998:53).

Buttressing this further, Paul Ricoeur (1995:5) explains that "symbol as a multiple-meaning expression characterized by a hidden logic of double reference. Symbols are like signs in that they intend something beyond themselves. But whereas the sign possesses a relatively obvious and conventional set of denotations, the symbol's meanings are polysemic, difficult to discern, and virtually inexhaustible in depth". Benjamin Ray (1976:17) posits that mythical symbols and ritual acts are thus decidedly instrumental and they not only say what reality is, but they also shape the world to conform with, this reality. In this respect, religion plays an enormous role in African societies. He argues that archetypal symbols express a community's past and they structure collective rites for corporate benefit and in the traditional context religion cannot be a purely personal affair; the relation to the sacred is, first of all, a communal one (Ray, 1976:17). According to Sundermeier (1998:38) symbols, unfolds reality in such a way that it communicates reality. He argues that "there is no other reality than that accessible in the symbol. The symbol lives from unity, even when it is directed at the partial. It does not cry out from within reality, but emanates reality in such a way that participation becomes possible. It comes from the whole and unfolds it before us. The 'whole' is the world around, of which the invisible world is an essential part" (Sundermeier, 1998:38).

However, this concept of symbol is seen as, a recognition of one thing as standing or representing another thing (Firth,

1973:79). Tillich (1959:54) asserts that "symbols are similar to signs in one distinctive respect: both symbols and signs point beyond themselves to something else" when "it finds acceptance in the group consciousness" (Tovey, 2004:12). On a general note, symbol from the above definitions given would be seen as a hall-mark of an idea, a logo, a sign, a ritual or perhaps a psycho-behavioural pattern that stands out as an overt representation of an inner experience or essence of the unconscious (Nabofa, 1994:7). Symbols themselves represent the continued role of tradition (Gibson & Dunbar-Hall, 2006:396). Symbols always contain something of them, sometimes strongly, sometimes faintly (Sundermeier, 1998:38). No wonder Montgomery (2016: 17) asserts that "most Africans used the symbol of the master as a cloak for their own spirits". To sum up this, in traditional religious practices and systems, *Aso-ebi* attire for an Igbo man's paradigm would be described as a "hallmark of symbol of dignity, royalty, respect" (NTI, 1990:86) in the tradition and hegemony of the people of Anambra State because of various symbolisms it carries. That is why Roberts (1993:65) affirms that the symbolism in *Aso-ebi* attire "implies a hierarchy of privilege and dependency"

#### **Symbolism of the *Aso-ebi* Attire**

However, the colours of the *Aso-ebi* regalia may be combined in significant ways, but their meaning/symbolism is situational and can never be read automatically; one cannot write dictionaries of symbolism in African art (MacGaffey, 2000:233). The *Aso-ebi* attire to the worldview of an Igbo man reflects the African artistic design and embroideries which unmistakably retains their African character. In fact, in Igbo cosmology, the *Aso-ebi* attire worn by some designated people especially the prestige in society express "value of identity and incorporation" (Smith, 1987a: 28). In terms of leadership context, the communicative significance and symbolism of *Aso-ebi* attire could act as "tracers of rank" and bolster the visual hierarchy cannot be over emphasized (Schneider, 1987:412).

Kaplan (2004:190) argues that in Igbo cosmology *Aso-ebi* attire is one the "the clothing the king chooses to wear each day is traditional and symbolic with meanings. It is a statement of occasion, intent, mood, power and all have meanings and evoke memory". Through, the symbolism it utilizes and the cultural ethos it invokes, however, the *Aso-ebi* attire retains the power to influence the spiritual state of its wearer and to play a role in the socio-religious consciousness of the person by whom or for whom it is worn. Ojukwu (2002: v) affirms that *Aso-ebi* cloth "symbolizes our comings in, and our goings out, our joy and our sadness. It symbolizes our positions in the society and our achievements and our failures". He argues that it "remains as a door through which our individual Igboness passes in to an assemblage of Igbo community" (Ojukwu, 2002: v). This is why Susanne Langers (1942:195) describes object based symbols like the *Aso-ebi* attire as an "unconsummated symbol, a significant form without conventional significance". Hall (1928:136) argues

that “the regalia must be worn correctly and must not be worn profanely”, because it is classified as a “robe of honor” or “coronation cloth” (Perani & Wolff, 1999:124 & 166). This royal ceremonial regalia create also a symbolic distinction between what Vansina (1978:185) axiomatically refers to as “the elite from the commoner”. Bayero (1981) attested that “to wear these gowns is to be different from other people. When you see them, you know this person is of the royal family”.

### **Mediating Functions of *Aso-ebi* cloth**

From time immemorial, Igbo people have developed high level of interest in rich textile traditions and distinctive methods of dress to actually communicate and enhance cultural symbolism and meanings. In fact, in Igbo cultural context, dresses like the *Aso-ebi* attire has become a visible symbol apparently signaling gender, social status, and political office, allegiance to a deity or personal prestige (Perani & Wolf, 1999:28). Buttressing further, Perani & Wolf again affirms that *Aso-ebi* “cloth and clothing can also convey esoteric symbolic information understandable only to initiates. Whether sign or symbol, this ability to transmit information and mediate meaning through shared understandings in socio-cultural contexts is a primary characteristic of cloth” (1999:28). James Eze (2015:1) asserts that “beyond these totems and profound meanings lies another oasis of symbolisms and unspoken communication”. But beyond the basic functions in protection and warming the body, cloth like the *Aso-ebi* attire have since over-lapping mediating symbolic functions which Perani & Wolf summarized thus:

- (1). Expression of self and personal worth;
- (2). Indicator of occupation;
- (3). Measurement of social value;
- (4). Standard of economic value;
- (5). Identification of gender role;
- (6). Marker of progression through the life cycle;
- (7). Definition and negotiation of political powers;
- (8). Religious signifier and repository of supernatural powers;
- (9). Delineator of social space; and
- (10). Indicator of culture change (1999:29).

### **The Sociological Functions of *Aso-Ebi* (Group Uniform) In Igbo Cosmology**

The sociological significance of this cultural trait and common custom among the Igbos as it pertains to *Aso-Ebi* (Group Uniform) which the Igbos call *Akwa-Otu* are basically numerous. The contention is borne out by the following belief of the African, albeit the Igbo. The Igbo would say: *Ndi Madu bu akwam, mgbem leghachiri anya azu hu otutu ndi madu kaha na esom, anam enwe anwuri, nkea na emekwam kamu nwe ogologo ndu*, that is literally “People are my very clothes. When I look back of me and see many of my people following me, I am very glad and pleased and I am lively”. Sociologically, people need the complete and favourable interaction and response of others based on the African attitude of love, respect, esteem and the like. Not the series of nostalgic and anomic suicides which are so rampant in the so-called advanced individualistic societies of the Western world which should find their reasons from the lack of response

which the individual victim experiences in his neighbourhood. This is what Emile Durkheim, was pointing out in the latter part of the last century when he observed that many deadly suicides were committed in some specific Western societies because people lacked what he called social integration. According to Sofola (1973:126) it “serves as a means of identification of groups affording the members of the groups the opportunities for reinforcement of one another with sympathies to meet the trials and tribulations and pleasures of life and integrating the group”. However, system of uplifting mutual obligations and assistance created by the use of *Aso-ebi* is worthy of mentioning here too. In the thinking of an Igbo man, for mere reason an individual who buys an *Aso-ebi* for his friends celebration’s indirectly expects the friend to reciprocate in kind or cash when it is his own turn to have celebrations. According to Sofola:

The greater the number of well-wishers presents at the individual’s celebration the higher the person’s prestige. The well-wishers, by their individual and collective act of buying and wearing the *Aso-ebi* are eloquently saying in the peculiar African altruism: we are united in brotherhood one with the other [You and I] and all others who join you in this celebration.... One of the most important functions of to be performed by every human society in order to achieve stability and orderliness and good organization and even to endure, is the integrative function (1973:127).

He goes on to affirm that “*Aso-ebi* serves as a recorder of history, and helps to establish and enhance status and prestige too. It also serves as a leveler of status if only temporarily” (Sofola, 1973:128). In Igbo societies today, *Akwa-Otu* (Group Uniform) is bought for age group annual festivals and since at many of the once-in a lifetime ceremonies, *Akwa-Otu* is purchased while it serves as a channel of recording or earmarking these special occasions—a supplement to the oral tradition of history recording (Sofola, 1973:128). But it very significant to say here such clothes are not meant to be worn on daily basis because to do sends negative impression to other people that you cannot afford to wear or that you don’t have enough clothes to wear. This is why Sofola (1973:128) again opines that “once an *Aso-ebi* is bought for a specific occasion, one does not feel entirely free to wear it every time afterward. To do is to tell others in vivid terms that one does have other clothes one would normally be expected possess to enjoy high prestige and have good evaluation by others”. Arguably, looking at the economic impact against the backdrop of constant sowing of *Aso-ebi* (group uniform) in Igbo world view, it has been observed or noticed



**Fig1 A small group women wearing Aso-ebi (Courtesy of Madukasi Francis Chuks).**

that constant sowing of the *Aso-ebi* virtually every month of the year amounts to an economic wastage. This conclusion has been reached through careful observation because as *Aso-ebi* is basically a kind of attire that is not meant to be worn once an occasion it is meant for is over and to wear it, it sends negative signal to the public that the wearer is not well to do. So, everyone in the community sees to it that the *Aso-ebi* is worn sparingly, if at all (Sofola, 1973:128). Equally significant is the fact that for the have not's to level up temporarily with the prestige/rich individuals in the society, they will go at length to borrow money to enable them sow the *Aso-ebi*, even if it is given to them as a free gift.

Another significant sociological function of *Aso-ebi* (*Akwa-Otu*) is that by personal or proxy it levels the marginal gap between persons of higher status and those of lower one and thereby eliminates, if only temporarily, the built-in antagonism between the haves and the have not's. Buttressing this point, Sofola comments that:



**Fig2 Another group of women on Aso-ebi (Courtesy of Madukasi Francis Chuks).**

All wearers of the *Aso-ebi* by this common uniform are

equal—at least for the occasion on which the *Aso-ebi* is worn. The poor man (*talaka*) feels that he is at least equal to the rich man (*Oloro*) because he wears an identical dress with him. Such feelings, albeit for a brief moment, purges him of his previous feeling of financial inadequacy. He may also feel so honoured by this temporary leveling of his status that he seeks accord with the rich man. The individual may become less inclined to commit criminal acts against the society, particularly where property destruction is involved” (1973:129).

Psychologically, it has been observed that *Aso-ebi* in Igbo paradigm plays a therapeutic function in releasing social tensions considering the ceremonies at which it is worn especially during parties. In fact, “where camaraderie and pleasure are shared, one cannot help to see the additional therapeutic function performed by this gathering” (Sofola, 1973:130). Writing under the title: “What the hell’s bad in throwing a lavish party” the party going observer asserts that “those parties, I assure you, are some kind of pep pills. When you are under their spell, you’re completely lost in a new world. And who wouldn’t want to live in a world different from this wretched one for a change....If you don’t have to die to be there” (Sunday Times, 1972:9 cited in Sofola, 1973:130).

### Conclusion

Tackling the study of *Aso-ebi* dress from the viewpoint of art patronage recognizes that certain artifacts are to the expression of culture both as aesthetic products and as consumer goods. Nonetheless, beyond the initial production and consumption processes, *Aso-ebi* dress as an.



**Fig3 Another group of women on Aso-ebi (Courtesy of Madukasi Francis Chuks).**

imported culture of the Yorubas gains symbolic meanings as part of culturally-constituted body make up of complete Igbo man. The clothed body make up is very paramount to the projection of social self by expanding the aristocratic and hegemonic vocabulary of the body and visually reinforcing social roles. By extension, *Aso-ebi* (Group Uniform) *Akwa-Otu* in Igbo paradigm draws close boundaries between the cultural and symbolic worlds in social and ritual contexts. So

the printed Aso-ebi different fabrics have been widely adopted by diverse cultures across the world as a symbol of solidarity and cohesion projecting high social status and political power. It has been storified in different folklore. It is clear therefore that the fulsome adoption of the lion as an iconic totem is a heritage the Igbo race share with many advance cultures across the world. It however says a lot about the advancement of Igbo civilization that only few of these societies, if any, wear *Akwa-Otu* (Group Uniform) clothes to show this affinity as the Igbo do. Its inter-dependent activities, consensus, and morale are the basic principal elements affecting the integration of groups which Aso-ebi contributes. I can say tersely that to every titled Igbo person, what is more profound is the fact that the colourful *Akwa-Otu* fabric is one of the most revered pieces of clothing among the Igbo and there is a belief that there must be a communicative ritual synergy about the *Aso-ebi* cloth and *Ndi-Igbo* in diaspora which has an artistic connection of Yoruba origin “for an audience of art connoisseurs’ revealed that long standing patronage relationship existing between Nupe artists and the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy” Perani & Wolff (1999:123-124). In affirming this assertion, Soludo (2017:9) comments that “having an identity is not inconsistent with a global or national outlook. There are probably few who would question President Obasanjo’s patriotism as a Nigerian. But that has not made him to wear *Isi-agu* dress or our red cap to prove that he is detribalized”.

#### References

- [1] ACHEBE, C. 2012. *There Was A Country: A Personal History of Biafra*. New York: ThePenguin Press.
- [2] ARINZE, F. 1973. *The Church And Nigerian Culture*. Onitsha: Tabansi Press Ltd.
- [3] ABUGU, F. 1998. ‘Between The Church and Culture’. *The Guardian Newspaper Nigerian Ltd*, Lagos: Monday, March 30: 15.
- [4] ABOGUNRIN, S.O.1991. *The First Letters of Paul to the Corinthians*, Ibadan: Daystar Press.
- [5] ADELOWO, E. D. 1990. *Rituals, Symbolism and Symbols in Yoruba Religious Thought*. 162-173 Available From: [obafemio.weebly.com/uploads/5/1/4/2/5142021/04\\_1\\_162pdf](http://obafemio.weebly.com/uploads/5/1/4/2/5142021/04_1_162pdf). Accessed: 23 September 2012.
- [6] ADEGBITE, A.1991. ‘The Concept of Sound In Traditional African Religious Music’. *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, African Aesthetics In Nigeria And The Diaspora (September, 1991), 45-54. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784496>. Accessed: 2 June 2013.
- [7] AKINTOLA, A. 1992. *The Reformed Ogboni Fraternity: Its Origin and Interpretation of Its Doctrines and Symbolism*. Ibadan: Valour Publishing Ventures Ltd.
- [8] ARKIN, M. 1989. *One People – One Destiny: Some Explorations in Jewish Affairs*. Hillcrest: Owen Burgess Publishers.
- [9] AYANDELE, E. A. 1996. *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria. 1842-1914*, London: Group Ltd.
- [10] BRIGHT, J. 1981. *A History of Israel*. London: SCM Press Ltd.
- [11] BAYERO, A. 1981, Personal Communication, Bichi, Kano State, Nigeria.
- [12] CARPENTER, J. E. *Comparative Religion*. 1913. London: William and Norgate.
- [13] CRAPANZANO, V. 1986. *Hermes Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion In Ethnographic Description* cited in *Writing Culture: The Peotics And Politics of Ethnography*. James Clifford & George E. Marcus (eds), Berkeley: University of California Press. 51-76.
- [14] CARSON, B. 1996. *Think Big: Unleashing Your Potential For Excellence*. U.S.A: First Zondervan Mass Market Printing.
- [15] COHEN, A. 1974. *Two Dimensional Way: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in a complex society*, London: Routledge and kegan Paul.
- [16] CHIDESTER, D. 1996. *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- [17] DUBE, C. 1996. *The Changing Context of African Music Performance In Zimbabwe*. *Zambezia*, xxxiii (11). 99-120. Available From: [archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AfricanJournals/pdfs/Journal](http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AfricanJournals/pdfs/Journal)
- [18] EKEH, P. P. 1975. *Colonialism And The Two Publics In Africa: A Theoretical Statement*.
- [19] *Comparative Studies In Society And History*, Vol. 17, No. 1. (Jan 1975); 91-112. Available From: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00104175%28197501%2917%3A1%3C91%3ACATTP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-%23>. Accessed: 12 March 2014.
- [20] ELIADE, M. 1987. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- [21] EJIZU, C. I. 2002. *Continuity And Discontinuity In Igbo Traditional Religion* cited in *The Gods In Retreat: Continuity And Change In African Religion* (ed) by Emefie Ikenga Metuh (2002), Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.111-131.
- [22] EZEANYA, S. N. 1994. *A Handbook of Igbo Christian Names*. Onitsha: Tabansi Press Ltd.
- [23] EZE, J. 2015. *Anambra Anthem and Obiano’s Invincible Monuments*. 1. Available From: [eagle-square.blogspot.com/2015/02/anambra-and-obianos-invincible.html?spref=fb](http://eagle-square.blogspot.com/2015/02/anambra-and-obianos-invincible.html?spref=fb). Accessed:16 February 2015.
- [24] \_\_\_\_\_ 2016. *Isi-Agu More Than a Fashion*

**Madukasi, Francis Chuks / Aso-Ebi (Group Uniform): An Imported Symbolic Culture That Projects Solidarity And Cohesion in Traditional Igbo Cosmology**

- Statement cited in Sunrise Magazine, Voice of the East, Anambra State. Third Edition December 2016. 16-18.
- [25] EKEKE, E. C. 2010. The Symbolism of Offor In Igbo Traditional Religion. 5-10. Available From: [www.ajsih.org/files/2.EC.Ekeke.Symbolism.pdf](http://www.ajsih.org/files/2.EC.Ekeke.Symbolism.pdf). Accessed: 23 September 2012
- [26] FANON, F. 1967. The Wretched of The Earth. New York: Penguin.
- [27] FIRTH, R. 1973. Symbols, Public and Private. New York: Cornell University Press.
- [28] FLEURANT, G. 2000. The Music of Haiti Vodun cited in African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings, and Expressions (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona, (2000). New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company. 416-449.
- [29] FALOLA, T. 2003. The Power of African Cultures. New York: University of Rochester Press.
- [30] FLANNERY, A. O. P. 1988. Vatican Council 11: The Conciliar And Post Conciliar Documents.
- [31] United States of America: Dominican Publications.
- [32] GIDDENS, A. 1997. Sociology. Cambridge: Polity.
- [33] GIBSON, C & DUNBAR-HALL, P. 2006. Nitmiluk : Place, Politics and Empowerment in Australian Aboriginal Popular Music. Cited in Ethnomusicology A Contemporary Reader (ed) by Jennifer . C . Post , 2006. New York: Routledge, 383-400.
- [34] GEERTZ, C. 1973. The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books, Inc, Publishers.
- [35] GUADELOUPE, F . 2009. Chanting Down The New Jerusalem: Calypso, Christianity, and Capitalism in the Caribbean. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- [36] HERTA, A. MURPHY & HERBERT, W. HILDERBRANDT, 1991. Effective Business Communications: New York, (Sixth edition) McGraw – Hill Publishing Company
- HAHN-WAANDERS, H. 1990. Eze Institution In Igbo land: A Study of An Igbo Political System In Social Change. Nimo, Nigeria: Documentation Centre, Asele Institute.
- [37] HALL, M. P. 1928. The Secret Teaching of all Ages: An Encyclopedia Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy. San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Company, Incorporated.
- [38] HORTON, R. 1968. Neo-Tylorism: Sound or Sinister Prejudice? *Man. New Series*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 625-634. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2798583>. Accessed: 16 October 2012.
- [39] HOOSHMANDRAD, P. 2004. 'Performing the Belief: Sacred Musical Practice of the Kurdish Ahl-iHaqq of Guran'. PhD Thesis; Berkeley: University of Berkeley.
- [40] HORNBY, A. S. 1995 Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English, London: Oxford University Press.
- [41] IMPEY, A. M. 1992. 'They Want Us With Salt And Onions: Women In The Zimbabwean Music Industry'. Ph.D Thesis. Indiana University.
- [42] ISICHEI, E. 1980. Entirely for God: The life of Michael Iwene Tansi. Ibadan: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- [43] IWUAGWU, A. O. 1998. African Traditional Religion Students Hand book, Nigeria Owerri: Imo State, Agers Publishers.
- [44] IDIGO, F. C. 2001. Eri kingdom of An Igbo king From Israel. Lagos: X-Pose Communications Ltd.
- [45] IDOWU, E. B. 1973. African Traditional Religion: A Definition, London, SCM Press Ltd.
- [46] JUNG, G. C. 1979. MAN and His Symbols, London, Aldus Books, Jupiter Books.
- [47] KAPLAN, F. E. S. 2000. Some Thoughts On Ideology, Beliefs, And Sacred Kingship Among The Edo (Benin) People of Nigeria cited in African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings And Expressions (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona (2000), New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company. 114-151.
- [48] \_\_\_\_\_ 2004. Understanding Sacrifice and Sanctity In Benin Indigenous Religion, Nigeria: A Case Study cited in Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions And Modernity (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona (2004), New York: Routledge York. 181-199.
- [49] KREINATH, J. 2005. Theoretical Issues in the Study of Religion. 100-107. Available from: [www.pucsp.br/rever4-2005/p-kreinath.pdf](http://www.pucsp.br/rever4-2005/p-kreinath.pdf) Accessed: 14 September 2012.
- [50] LANGERS, S. 1942. Philosophy In A New key. New: Norton.
- [51] \_\_\_\_\_ 1958. Theology And Life, Theological Seminary, Lancaster.
- [52] LONG, C. H. 2004. A Postcolonial Meaning of Religion: Some Reflections from the Indigenous World cited in Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions And Modernity (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona (2004), New York: Routledge. 89-98.
- [53] METUH, E. I. 2002. Movements For The Revival of African Traditional Religion And Culture cited in The Gods In Retreat: Continuity And Change In African Religion (ed) by Emefie Ikenga Metuh (2002), Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers. 235-245.
- [54] MCMULLEN, D. 1987. Bureaucrats And Cosmology: The Ritual Code of T'ang China cited in Rituals of

**Madukasi, Francis Chuks / Aso-Ebi (Group Uniform): An Imported Symbolic Culture That Projects Solidarity And Cohesion in Traditional Igbo Cosmology**

- Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies (ed) by David Cannadine & Simon Price (1987), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 181-236.
- [55] MACGAFFEY, W. 2000. Art And Spirituality cited in African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona. (2000), New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company. 223-256.
- [56] MOHAWK, J. C. 2004. Tribal Religious Traditions Are Constantly Devalued In Western Discourse On Religion cited in Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions And Modernity (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona (2004), New York: Routledge. 111-117.
- [57] MONTGOMERY, E. J. 2016. Syncretism in Vodun and Orisha An Anthropological Analysis.
- [58] *Journal of Religion & Society*. Vol. 18. 1-23. Available From: <https://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10504/87906/2016-23.pdf?sequence/>. Assessed: 20 November 2016.
- [59] NABOFA, M. Y. 1994. Symbolism in African Traditional Religion, Ibadan: Paperback Publishers Ltd.
- [60] \_\_\_\_\_ 1994. Religious Communication: A study in African Traditional Religion, Ibadan: Daystar Press.
- [61] NJOKU, R. C. 2007. Challenging Oppression with Sacred Drums and Dance cited in Sacred Drums of Liberation: Religions and Music of Resistance in Africa and the Diaspora (ed) by Don C. Ohadike (2007), Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc. xxix-xxxiii.
- [62] NIANGORAN-BOUAH, G. 1991. The Talking Drum: A Traditional African Instrument of Liturgy And of Mediation with The Sacred, cited in African Traditional Religions: In Contemporary Society (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona. 1991, New York: Paragon House. 81-92.
- [63] NDABANIGI, S. 1959. African Nationalism, London: Oxford University Press.
- [64] NATIONAL TEACHERS' INSTITUTE, 1990. NCE/DLS Course Book on Cultural & Creative Arts Cycle 2, Kaduna, Nigeria.
- [65] NATIONAL TEACHERS' INSTITUTE, 1990. NCE/DLS Course Book on Primary Education Studies Cycle 2, Kaduna, Nigeria.
- [66] OMIJEH, M. E. A. 1983. The Significance of Orhue in Bini Symbolism. In Adegbola E. A. Ade, (ed) Traditional Religion in West Africa, Ibadan: Daystar Press. 195-197.
- [67] OHADIKE, D. 2007. Sacred Drums of Liberation: Religions and Music of Resistance in Africa And the Diaspora. Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc.
- [68] OLUPONA, J. K. 1991. Introduction cited in African Traditional Religions: In Contemporary Society (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona. (1991), New York: Paragon House. 1-13.
- [69] \_\_\_\_\_ 2004. Introduction cited in Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions And Modernity (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona (2004), New York: Routledge. 1-19.
- [70] OKOYE, H. C. 2011. The Religio-Cultural Place of Signs, Symbols And Images Among The Traditional Igbo People cited in The Relevance of Images In Worship: A Path To Evangelization (ed) by Williams .O. Aso. A Publication of Yoruba Liturgico-Cultural Group, Seminary of All Saints, Uhiele, Ekpoma, Edo State. 47-56.
- [71] ONWUEJEOGWU, M. A . 1981. An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony. London: Ethnographica Ltd.
- [72] OJUKWU, O. C. 1998. Toward A Greater Nigeria: The Harsh Realities, Selected Speeches of Dim Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu 1982-1998. (Compiled) by Okorie k. k & Ugochukwu, S. S. C, U.S.A: Good Hope Enterprises, Inc.
- [73] OJIKE, M . M 1948 . 'Let us Revive African Music'. *West African Pilot*, Lagos: March 31, 2.
- [74] OSHO, S. A. 2011. The Uniqueness of African Means of Communication In Contemporary World. 1-18. Available From: [www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/africa/Sulaiman-Ohso-Uniqueness-Of-African-Communications-In-Contemporary-World-Ca](http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/africa/Sulaiman-Ohso-Uniqueness-Of-African-Communications-In-Contemporary-World-Ca).
- [75] ONUNWA, U. R. 2002. Christian Missionary And Their Influence On Eastern Nigeria cited in The Gods In Retreat: Continuity And Change In African Religion (ed) by Emefie Ikenga Metuh (2002), Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers. 67-89.
- [76] ONWUDIWE, E. 2001. A Critique of Recent Writing On Ethnicity And Nationalism. *Research In African Literatures*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Fall 2001, 213-228. Available From: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ral/summary/v032/32.3onwudiwe.html>. Accessed: 15 March 2014.
- [77] PARRINDER, G . 1987. Encountering World Religions: Questions of Religious Truth, Scotland: T & T Clark Ltd.
- [78] POBEE, J. S. 1979. Toward An African Theology. Nashville: The Parthenon Press.
- [79] PERANI, J. & WOLF, N. H. 1999. Cloth, Dress and Art Patronage in Africa. Oxford: Berg: Oxford International Publisher Ltd.
- [80] PARTMENTIER, R. 1994. Signs In Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- [81] RICOEUR, P. 1971. Symbolik des Bosen, Freiburg/Munich.
- [82] \_\_\_\_\_ 1995. Figuring The Sacred: Religion,

**Madukasi, Francis Chuks / Aso-Ebi (Group Uniform): An Imported Symbolic Culture That Projects Solidarity And Cohesion in Traditional Igbo Cosmology**

Narrative, and Imagination. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

*Annual Review of Anthropology 1987*, Palo Alto: Annual Reviews Inc., 409-448.

- [83] RADCLIFFE - BROWN, A. R. 1969 Structure and function in primitive Society. London: Cohen and West.
- [84] RENNE, E. P. 1995. Cloth That Does Not Die: The Meaning of Cloth in Bunu Social Life, Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- [85] RAY, B. C. 1976. African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, And Community (ed) by John P. Reeder, Jr John F. Wilson, (1976), Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- [86] RYDVIING, H. 2004. Saami Responses To Christianity: Resistance And Change cited in Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions And Modernity (ed) by Jacob K. Olupona (2004), New York: Routledge. 99-107.
- [87] ROBERTS, A. F. 1993. Insight or, Not seeing is Believing cited in Secrecy: African Art That And Reveals, (ed) by M. H. Nooter, New York: Museum for African Art. 65- 79.
- [88] RITZER, G. 2000. Modern Sociological Theory, New York: McGraw Hill.
- [89] SALAMONE, F. A & MBABUIKE, M. 1994. The Plight of The Indigenous Catholic Priest In Africa: An Igbo Example. Rivista Trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, Anno 49, No. 2 (Giugno 1994), 210-224. Available From: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40760880>. Accessed: 17 April 2014.
- [90] SOLUDO, C. C. 2017. Anambra: An Emerging Start-up State and our collective Challenge cited in 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Lecture Published by Ministry of Information and Communication Strategy, State Secretariate, Awka. [www.anambrastate.gov.ng](http://www.anambrastate.gov.ng). 3-14.
- [91] SOYINKA, W. 1999. The Seven Signposts of Existence: Knowledge, Honor, Justice And Other Virtues. Ibadan: An Imprint of BookCraft Ltd.
- [92] SUNDERMEIER, T. 1998. The Individual and Community In African Traditional Religions. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- [93] SMITH, E. W. 1966. The Whole Subject In Perspective: An Introductory Survey cited in African Ideas of God: A Symposium (ed) by E. G. Parrinder 1966, London: Edinburgh House Press. 1-35.
- [94] SMITH, F. T. 1987a. 'Death, Ritual and Art in African', *African Arts*, Vol. XXX, NO. 1, 28-9.
- [95] SAMOVAR, L. A; PORTER. R. E & MCDANIEL, E. R. 2009. Communication Between Cultures (7<sup>th</sup> edition); Canada: Nelson Educational Ltd.
- [96] SOFOLA, J. A. 1973 . African culture and the African Personality, Ibadan: African Resources Publishers Co.
- [97] SCHNEIDER, J. 1987. 'The Anthropology of Cloth', *Annual Review of Anthropology 1987*, Palo Alto: Annual Reviews Inc., 409-448.
- [98] THOMPSON, R. F. 1970. The Sign of The Divine King: An Essay on Yoruba Bead- Embroidered Crowns With Veil And Bird Decorations. *African Arts*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Spring 1970): 8-17+74-80. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3334489>. Accessed: 4 March 2014.
- [99] TILLICH, P. 1959. Theology of Culture. New York: OUP.
- [100] TOVEY, P. 2004. Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist, Great Britain: MPG Books Ltd.
- [101] THE HOLY BIBLE. King James Version (Reversed edition).
- [102] VANSINA, J. 1978. The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- [103] WOSIEN, M. G. 1992. Sacred Dance: Encounter with the Gods. Singapore: Thames and Hudson.
- [104] YOUNG, R. J. C. 2003. Post-Colonialism: A Very Short Introduction. New York: Oxford University Press.