



AN OVERVIEW OF IGALA RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW

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Abstract

This paper discussed the religious worldview of the Igala people of Kogi State. The aim was to explore the Igala religious worldview by exploring their concept of God and his attribute as well as their acts of worship. The study adopted qualitative research design. Materials were obtained from secondary sources such as books, articles, journals, research documents, the internet and print media. The paper adopted descriptive method of analysis. The descriptive method describes the Igala religious worldview and also examines their acts of worship. Findings revealed that Igala religion is characterized by the people's beliefs in ancestors, deities, lesser gods and spirits who obtain their powers to dominate over men from the Supreme Deity Ojomachala; and are regarded as the agents of the supreme God and intermediaries between the latter and the people. Findings also revealed that attributes of God in Igala religion describe God as simplicity par excellence, without limit or frontiers, unique, invisible, unchangeable, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, impassible, all-good, all merciful. Among the names of God that depict his nature is Ojo ogbekwgbekwu; the Great God. The length of these names Ojochamachala and ojogbekwugbekwu have made it necessary to apply its shortest form Ojo. Findings also revealed that materials used for worship are obtained within the local environment. The study recommended that children should be taught this indigenous faith for posterity and worship sites should be preserved from encroachment by urbanization for posterity's sake. The study concludes that Igala religion combine principles of unity and multiplicity, transcendence and immanence, into a single system. Thus, in many instances the supreme God is the one, omniscient, omnipotent, transcendent, creator, father and judge.

Keywords: Igala, Inikpi, Worldview.

Introduction

Religion is an integral part of humanity, especially for the African, hence Mbiti's statement: "the African man is notoriously religious" (75). The Igala people, being a fabric of the African society, can also be described as being religiously notorious. The Igala people's religion like any African indigenous religion is not a religion of the holy book like the Quran or the Holy Bible. It is a religion that is written on the hearts of *Igala* people and can be learnt through their songs, myths/legends, idioms, wise sayings and arts/symbols. This religion like other African religions, Shishima, says, "is part and parcel of life in traditional African society. Religion permeates all aspects of life, be it politics, economics, education, etc. This is to say, to be an effective member of the community, one must belong to the religion of the land" (2). The objective of this paper therefore, is to present the indigenous religious belief system of the Igala people for a better understanding of their



worldview as religion permeates every aspect of human endeavour. For a proper discussion of the religious worldview of the Igala people, this study considers it pertinent to espouse a brief history of the Igala people of Kogi State.

A Brief History of the Igala People

The Igala people are the major ethnic group in present Kogi State, located at the North Eastern region of the confluence of River Niger and River Benue in the Middle Belt. As Africans they belong to the Kwa subgroups of the Niger Congo language family. According to Negedu, the people of Igala are known as *àbó igáláà*, their land *Anẹ̀ Igáláà*, their culture *ìchòlò* or *ùchòlò*, and their language as *íchí Igáláà* (116). Therefore, Theophilus Adama says, the name Igala refers to the people (Abo Igala), their land *ìchòlò* or *ùchòlò*, and language (Ichi Igala) (116). The population of Igala people currently is estimated to be 1.8million (Egbunu 29). This population is unevenly spread among the nine local governments that are predominantly Igala, they include: Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela, Ofu, Olamaboro and Omala.

The Igala kingdom also known as the kingdom of Idah, was a pre-colonial west African state of what is now Nigeria (Ukwedeh 530). The kingdom, according to history was founded by a hunter who found the area to be ideal for hunting. While this legend is not considered a concrete historical account, the story represents important aspects of Igala culture, especially in the importance of hunting (Boston 117). *Anẹ̀ Igáláà* (Igala Land) lies approximately between latitude 6^o30 and 8^o40 north and longitude 6^o30 and 7^o40 east and covers an area of about 13,665 square kilometres (Oguagha 19).

The culture of the Igala people is very similar to the culture of most other Nigerian people, especially those from the geographical middle – Belt, South wards, to the coast. Cultural practices such as kingship, funeral ceremonies, beliefs, marriage, masquerading, mode of dressing, body adornment etc. Are similar to those of other Nigerians in the sub-region mentioned above. For instance, the Egbu masquerades of Igala are similar and indeed are related to Egbuwgwu or Nmanwu of Igbo land, Egbuwgwu of Asaba (Delta state). The Alekwu afia of Idoma, the Eku od of Ebira, the Gunu and the Udeako Gboya of the Nupe but for some slight differences. The Ogan festival performed at Idah and Ankpa are also celebrated in the southern parts of Plateau State, especially in the Umaisha and parts of Nassarawa Areas (Miachi 4).

The Igalas are ruled by a traditional political figure called the Attah. The word Attah means “father” and the full title of the ruler is “Attah Igala,” meaning, the Father of Igalas (the Igala word for King is Onu) (Boston 29). The Attah is the traditional paramount king of the Igala kingdom. Tradition holds that “the Attah of Igala (the king) was a priest-king. He



was in charge of the major Igala sacred objects, shrines and festivals. His provincial chiefs (*Am 'Onu*) were also in charge of the various shrines, sacred objects and festivals in their own areas of authority. The Attah and his chiefs (*Am 'Onu*) therefore, play very active roles in the traditional religion (32). Idah, the cultural center or headquarter of the kingdom is where the *Attah* resides. From there he cares for the kingdom. He also delegates certain powers to other chiefs, as it is also their responsibility in some cases to exercise power of adjudication in matters of dispute among their immediate subjects. The Igala Attah ruled over a loosely federated kingdom in which the major provinces were organized and behaved like petty kingdoms. The provincial chiefs were relatively autonomous in their provincial capitals, and were only subject to the king in a certain sovereign matter such as the payment of tribute, jurisdiction over homicide, and succession to their own offices (Idegu-Unuga 72).

The Attahship is hereditary and it is ascended to by those who belong to the royal lineage. It is by a rotating system of succession in which three other lineages hold the royal office in turn before the cycle is complete and a son succeeds his father (Ikani 62). Among the most revered Attahs of the Igala kingdom are Attah Ayegba Oma Idoko and Attah Ameh Oboni. According to sources, Attah Ayegba Oma Idoko offered his most beloved daughter, Inikpi to ensure that the Igalas win a war of liberation from the Jukun dominance. Attah Ameh Oboni is known to be very brave and resolute. He is revered for his stiff resistance of the British and his struggles to uphold some ancient traditions of the Igalas. When he got wind of a plan to depose and exile him by the British, he committed suicide by hanging himself to forestall the plan. He is regarded by most Igalas as the last real Attah Igala (62).

Igala Religious Worldview

Igala religious worldview is a product of culture and an integral part of African culture. The concept of God is central to their religion and therefore constitutes one of the central themes of their culture in particular and Africa in general. The Igala traditional concept of God is a belief in the Supreme Being whom they call Ojo. Ojo is held so supreme, that out of His supremacy He gave powers and authorities to the gods and spirits over the different spheres of human life. These gods and spirits have practical dealings with human beings in their everyday life activities. Also, among the Igala people, there is a belief in a tripartite hierarchical order of supernatural or divine beings (God-Ancestors- Diviners). These beings supersede the position and role of the ordinary man. It may appear that the Igala people have many ultimate beings, but they believe in one Ultimate Being.

Boston contends that Igala traditional religion is characterized by the people's beliefs in the ancestors. The deities, lesser gods and spirits obtain their powers to dominate over men from the supreme deity and regarded as the agents of the supreme God and intermediaries



between the latter and the people (91). Igala people believe and revered the ancestors. Their belief in the existence and influence of the departed fathers of the family is very strong. Igala people always revered the ancestors and held them (ancestors) in high esteem. They are believed to come next to God in spiritual realm. They are believed to know more than the living. Igala people offer prayers to the ancestor through libation. Among Igala people food must be cooked in every compound every night because it is believed that ancestors come around at night to eat and visit kinsmen.

Igala Traditional Concept of God

The concept of God is not vague to the Igala people because, they believe in the existence of God like other African societies. Beside the place given to *Odubogagu* (Supreme Being), Spiritual beings also fill in the gap of intermediaries in Igala Traditional religion. Spiritual Beings are vital intercessory agents between men and God, or other divinities. They are not to be compared to *Odubogagu* (Supreme Deity) because He surpassed them by his greatness and power. These spiritual beings are approached at designated places, times or seasons for various intentions. You cannot remove the significant place of spiritual beings when discussing the theology of Igala traditional religion. These spiritual beings include good and evil spirits as well as ancestors (67). They carry out their worship in *Ode* (shrines), where stones, bottles, cowries and other objects are decorated for worship. The Igala is only said to be at peace only when he or she is at peace with the Supreme Deity, the spirit beings and fellow humans.

The Attributes of God in Igala Religion

The nature of God escapes human comprehension. Writing on the basic attributes of God, Iroegbu categorizes God's attributes into the entitative, operative and transcendent. According to Iroegbu, the entitative attributes describe God as simplicity *par excellence*, without limit or frontiers, unique, invisible, unchangeable, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, impassible, all-good, all merciful. Operatively, He is seen as being of infinite intelligence, voluntaries and the uncaused cause. Transcendental attribute of God is manifest in His qualities of distinctiveness (115). In Igala perspective, this is similar to referring to God superlatively in many ways such as *Ojo ode ma* (the Master of all existent beings).

Among the names of God that depict his nature is *Ojo ogbekwgbekwu*; the Great God. The length of these names *Ojochamachala* and *ojogbekwugbekwu* have made it necessary to apply its shortest form *Ojo* (Boston 84). Though the Igala people find it difficult to comprehend the real nature of God, even if he attempts to, it is impossible, yet he cannot deny the supremacy of an ultimate Being who is the author of the creative order. The Igala people therefore ascribe the name *ojokiny'amenwu duu*; God the creator of all, to this



Supreme Being. African thinkers put creation as one of the unique works of God. “Over the whole of Africa, creation is the most widely acknowledged work of God (Abdullahi Attah 241). This concept is expressed through saying that God created all things.

The Igala tradition holds that *ojokiny’amenwu duu* (God knows all things). He judges a secret intention, both good and evil, that is why he is called *akajo enyo* (the good judge). He is also called the one who bestows good reward (*arome enyo*). *Ojo ki n’ukpahu duu* (God that has all powers) is also his attribute; *Ojo odobogagwu’* could also be used in expressing the omnipotence of God (Egbunu 33). *Ojo achele ki ma k’ichan*; the one that showers gifts without any iota of arrogance, is also attributed to God (34). All these attributes of God have made the religious Igala man to acknowledge God’s kingship. In the attributes, we see that man names God and through these names he gives to God, he draws closer to God. With all these attributes, it is obvious that the Igala person is naturally God conscious. As it were, all these attributes are anthropomorphic: “The image and work of the human rulers tend to be readily projected on to the image of God” (Mbiti 45). In addition, Peter Tavershima Kumaga corroborated Mbiti that, the all embracing of religion is demonstrated in man’s relationship with God (14)

Furthermore, God is regarded as the life-giving spirit of man, the controller of man’s action and the creator of all things (*Ojo kiny’amenwu duu*). *Ojo* created everything and lives in the sky. *Ojale* (sky) is the abode of *Ojochamachala*. The *ile* (earth) belongs to men, while the *Oj’ona* belongs to the ancestors. However, the practical effects of these two worlds are felt here and now. That is why God, in Igala culture, has given power to each one according to his/her capacity and they are to use these powers to worship him and to enhance the welfare of one another.

Through man’s relationship with those in the afterlife man has link with God. The ancestors were once living beings with flesh and blood. They were ‘heirs’ of the living and so it is believed that they have a duty towards the living. The ancestors therefore act as guardian spirits. The Igala performs his duty to the Supreme God and such guardian spirits (ancestors), not out of fear but out of reverence and devotion. God is not seen as an object of argument. God is, (*Ojo domo*), He exists and we owe him worship.

In analysing the meaning of the attributes of God, the name in itself, *Ojo*, without any epithet, carries with it a lot of significance. However, the epithet or appellation specifically defines the idea being bandied. It is most often, self-explanatory. It is noteworthy that *Ojo* is the more ancient and common name used by everybody in the land. But in addressing the superlative greatness of the Supreme Being in different circumstances, other appellations are employed or added. For instance, *Ojo ondu* (or *odu*) means God, the



Master. It could be said to be an abbreviated form of *Ojo Onu-ibo-duu* (God, the overall king or what a typical Igala means when he or she exclaims “*Ojo Odu-mi-onu!*” (God, My Master and King). Such attributes are in exhaustive. Some of them are found within names given to children and even in innumerable wise-sayings (Omachonu 95).

In certain circumstances, Igala parents give theophoric names of their children which also reflect their understanding of God. “Religious belief has a pervasive influence on societies, providing frameworks of meaning, values, and moral guidance for individuals and communities” (Kumaga 283) An individual may bear one or more of such names. Some examples might be necessary at this juncture; *Ojo-ninmi* for instance, denotes God as the author of life. This reminds parents and relatives of the saving grace which sustains the life of such a child. It is also explainable in relation to death. That God the giver of liver is the only one who is capable of restoring it in times of chronic ill-health. That is why the name *Ojochogwu* is also given to other children depicting God himself as medicine or remedy to every ailment. This same God can also decide to take this life when and if He so pleases. *Ojotule* is yet another name which is also very meaningful. In this sense, God is greater than all. No matter what humans may conceive mischievously, only God’s design must take pre-eminence. His verdicts are final. God is seen here to be ever triumphant to victorious. He is often referred to as *Ojo anache* (He who is able) and *Ojo agbene* (whereby the name, *Ojogbane* holds a lot of significance), that he is a saviour and one and the same time (96).

The name *Ojodomo* which means God exist, and that he really exists, captures the idea of total resignation to God in the face of challenges of life. It is explainable in view of the fact that God never sleeps. *Ojo a lolu n* this expresses God’s care, ever-abiding presence and guidance (Ojochide Ojoago). Also related to this is the symbolism of *Ojo oli abenga* (God who is symbolically referred to as a fork-stick or great support). He is very much in control and his glory (Ojima Ojo) reigns supreme over all the earth. Ojoagefu is yet another name that has deeper meanings. This especially connotes the fact that God searches the mind of man even when humans judge from the externals. It is a way of categorically that clear conscience fears no accusation. It is God who really possess the truth (Ojonogecha) (Omochanu 97).

Divinities in Igala Religion

There is almost a thin line between divinities and ancestors in Igala culture. However, the ancestors (*Ibegwu*) rank second in authority to the Supreme Being. Some persons extol the *Ibegwu* as having a direct link with God himself. This is due perhaps to the role of *Ibegwu* as messengers or representatives of God. In interior villages where Igala culture is practiced to its fullest, God is not even mentioned when *Ibegwu* is the topic of discussion because it



is taken for granted that they act in place of God. People always tend to fear those things that threaten their life and their sense of courage is affected, especially in relation to disasters. The presence of the *Ibegwu* confirms the statement; “the evil that men do live with them” (Egbunu 9).

If we compare the interaction of vital forces in the universe to a spider’s web, then in day-to-day life, the ancestors form the principal strand without which the fabric collapses. Thus, it is the superhuman quality of their power, not the omnipotence, that makes them so valuable, and sometimes, so dreadful, to their descendants in any extremity. The ancestors are therefore both the protectors of the society as well as the source of punishment. Ancestors are the departed relatives of the living, who led good lives on earth and at present, have found an abode with the rest of the ancestors in the other world. For the Igala, “the dead are the essential force behind their existence; they control crop-yields, human fertility, peace and progress in their society” (Miachi 115). There is therefore the belief in the existence of *ilei* (this world) and the *ojo ona* (the afterworld). The *ojo’ona* is the world of the ancestors. For the Igala people, the *ojo’ona* is a continuation of *ilei*. That is why it is believed that a king in this world is also a king in the hereafter. A slave in this world is also a slave in the hereafter. Little wonder, slaves were buried with kings in former times.

The *Ibegwu* are ever-living and active, once they have died, they become ‘everlasting’. “The Africans regard these beings as being alive and keeping surveillance over the affairs of the living” (Ezekwugo 86). Even the advent of westernization till today has not been able to comprehend and compromise this belief. The question of the possibility of the dead praying for the living and protecting their interest, associating and communing with them have been running through non-African minds. Ancestors are specially remembered once every year at the *Ibegwu* festival. The day of this festival occurs shortly before yams are harvested. It marks the beginning of the period of harvesting yams. In this period, the ancestors are appreciated for their protection throughout the previous year and are appeased to bestow more blessings in the coming year. The *Ibegwu* shrine is cleaned thoroughly during this period in preparation for the festival (Okwoli 7).

Among the divinities, the Igala people have strong belief in *Ikpakachi*. These are gods of the river where the community fetch their water. When a child is born, a drop of water (*omium*) from the community stream is given to the child. The child then gets one of the spirits from the stream as a guardian. The sources of *Ikpakachi* spirits are near the streams or rivers. In some places, holes are dug beside houses of *Ikpakachi* worshippers and as many bottles as possible are fixed in the holes. Each person has his or her own bottle. Parents perform this rite once they give birth to a child and as the child grows, they expect the child to sustain the *Ikpakachi* in a bottle form. People who are stubborn to the dictates



of this spirit should be ready to bear its consequences. The spirit protects lives and property and puts off obstacles; it also brings illness to the stubborn of heart. Every man is married to a female *Ikpakachi* (Oya *Ikpakachi*) and every woman is married to a male *Ikpakachi* (Oko *Ikpakachi*).

It is noteworthy to state that although some divinities may differ depending on one's lineage, the supernatural ultimate is the same. The influences of other cultures have brought into Igala cultural heritage the worship of other gods and spirits. For example, the belief in *Ogun*, the god of iron, the belief in *Akpabana*, the god of thunder, etc. may have been influenced by the Yoruba tradition. *Ifa*, for instance, is considered as the god of divinization in Igala culture. It is believed that *Ifa* carries messages from the otherworld to this world. It is also a medium of dialogue between the living and the ancestors. Worship of gods and spirits are usually carried out at the advice of the *Ifa* priests and are usually led by special individuals, depending on the grade of worship. There is the *atama ebo* (priests and priestesses) of the various gods, goddesses and spirits who lead worship.

According to Chinonso, the history of Igala kingdom will surely not be complete without recollecting the very important role of Princess Inikpi in 1515-16. She was a very beautiful woman, from the royal family, a heroine with great attributes. Her story is that of selfless commitment and sacrifice to the course of survival of Igala kingdom (3). Princess Inikpi did not object, to offer herself as a sacrifice for her people to meet the demands of the gods to help Igala land win the war against Bini Kingdom (3). After the sacrifice, as the Bini armies advanced to swoop, they saw the whole town in flames and retreated feeling that there was no need taking a war to a place already on fire; but it was the blood of Inikpi that was responsible for that (Chinonso 3). Over time, she came to be worshipped. This worship took place at the feet of her statue which still stands at the Ega market in Idah, very close to the bank of the River Niger. Offerings made to Inikpi according to Monday Ogwuche include; oil, food stuffs and sacrifice of domestic animals among other things. People who need children, bountiful harvest and other things go there to ask her for assistance in that very shrine, some people worship her (Ajine 9). During the major Igala festivals; Ogaganyi and Ocho, a procession led by the Attah visit the Ega market and offer sacrifice to the heroine. Inikpi people are employed to take care of the surroundings of her statue till date. However, Amedu stated that the veneration of Inikpi was stopped since 1956 by the educated Attah who came to power (115).

Omodoko is also a significant deity in the Igala traditional religion, which is practiced by the Igala people of Kogi State in Nigeria. "Omodoko is often referred to as the god of thunder and lightning". Omodoko is revered as a powerful deity, feared and respected by the Igala people. He is often invoked during important rituals and ceremonies, such as the



annual harvest festival, where his presence is believed to ensure a bountiful harvest (Ojoajogwu 5). Omodoko is associated with thunder and lightning, which are believed to be his instruments of punishment and wrath. He is also associated with fertility, agriculture, and prosperity. According to Igala mythology, Omodoko was created by the Supreme God, Idakwo, to punish humans who disobeyed his commands. Omodoko's story is linked to the creation of the world and the Igala people's ancestors (Miachi 40). Therefore, thunder and lightning are considered sacred symbols of Omodoko's power and authority. The sound of thunder is believed to be his voice, while lightning represents his fiery wrath. In Igala culture, Omodoko plays a significant role in daily life, particularly during agricultural activities. Farmers pray to him for good weather, protection from pests and diseases, and a bountiful harvest. He is also invoked for protection from harm and evil forces.

To appease Omodoko, “the Igala people offer various sacrifices, including animals (such as goats or fowls), grains, and other offerings”. These rituals are performed during specific times of the year or when calamities occur. Omodoko is often depicted as a powerful, fierce deity with a strong sense of justice. He is believed to be merciless towards those who disobey him or break taboos. “In Igala traditional religion, Omodoko has a complex relationship with other deities. He is often at odds with the god of peace, Adaka, who represents calmness and serenity” (41). This dichotomy reflects the contrast between thunderstorms (Omodoko's domain) and peaceful weather (Adaka's domain). Omodoko's legend has contributed significantly to Igala folklore, with stories about his wrath and mercy being passed down through generations. His mythological significance reinforces the importance of respecting nature and obeying divine commands (41). His worship is deeply rooted in daily life, agricultural practices, and mythological stories that have been passed down through generations.

Worship in Igala Religion

Worship of the Supreme Being (Ojo) in Igala religion is done through the minor deities in several acts of worship such as prayer (aduwa), pouring of libation (ote edu dajane), offering of sacrifices (uchebo egujo), divination (egowo; abokumagane) and festivals (Ucholo). There are several acts of worship in African religion generally, and Igala religion in particular. It is pertinent to note here that worship and divination as regards worship in Igala religion does refer to two different things:

Divination falls within an act of worship, and thus implies only a particular aspect of worship. Whereas every person can worship the Supreme Being, deities or spirits, it is not every person who is capable of divinizing (Akoh 247).

Hence, this is a special role exercised by diviners and agents of cults of worship. To bring this into the discussion on worship in Igala traditional religion, it means a religious act is



that which the Supreme Being who is the highest of all beings is honoured, revered, offered sacrifices, and subsequently invoked and petitioned to direct the activities and destiny of man towards a good end (Egbunu 9). In this way, worship embodies certain characteristics of which three of them are vital for our consideration here. These are namely: Prayers, sacrifices and offerings, and very important still, divination.

Prayer as a religious act in worship means a request or entreaty made by a religious person to the object of his worship; in this sense, to the Supreme Being (Attah 241). In Igala religious ideas, generally anybody can pray by determining the time and place of his prayer, but communal or family prayer is primarily lead and said by the elders; clan or family heads on behalf of the members. According to Okwoli, traditionally, Igala elders, family-heads or clan-heads invoke God daily in their morning prayer. These elders pray for themselves and the members of their families. Contents of prayers may include entreaties for good health, protection from dangers and enemies, rain fall, fertility for women, animal and land, peace and prosperity (23).

Sacrifices and offerings are almost interwoven acts in worship. Many religions, whether western or oriental are characterized by the act of sacrifice and offering. According to Idowu, “it is inconceivable to have a religion without some form of sacrifice, however modified or refined it may be” (29). Sacrifices and offerings are means by which the worshipper keeps and sustains contact and relationship with the deity of his worship. The nature of the cult of the deity determines the type and time of offering of sacrifices to that deity. Generally, items of sacrifice include food, drinks, and living things. The most common items of sacrifice and offering in Igala traditional religion are Kola-nuts, yam and fowls. In the actual sense, the worshipper(s) partake in the consumption of what is offered, and some parts of them are placed before the shrine. This is seen as a special form of communion between the worshipper(s) and the divinities.

Divination is an important aspect of worship in Igala traditional religion. Divination according to Ojoajogwu is the ability to have insight into or discovery of unknown or future by supernatural means, or skilful forecast and good guess (6). This happens through inspiration, magic, intuition, guessing or by conjecture (Zahan 21). But in all these, the strong union with the supernatural through adoration, reverence and worship is the key to skilful display of divination. Okwoli also describes divination as an important aspect of worship and goes further to argue that it is an essential act in Igala Traditional Religion. In his words:

Divination is a very important aspect of traditional worship. This is because worshipers use divination to find out the wish of the spiritual being. Worshipers consult the diviners from time to time. Based on the advice of the diviners,



individuals, groups or persons or communities carry out offerings and sacrifice or other modes of worship as required by the spirits or the ancestors (34).

From the above, it is clear that divination is a very essential aspect of worship in Igala traditional religious life.

Moreover, festivals are also considered part of worship in Igala traditional religion as festivals such as; *Oteka* festival, *Ogani* festival, *Ibegu* festival, *Icholo Okulla*, *Eju Bejuailo*, *Icholo Uchu Eto* are done beginning with worship to particular deities. Also, in these festivals, there are certain musical instruments that are used during some worship sessions. For instance, a big round drum mostly used in pair's, (*Okelegwu*), a cylindrical drum that produces a unique sound, which backs up the *ode chi*, (flute), a set of whistles and metal gongs which are arranged according to their sizes. These instruments are used in worship in order to invoke the spirit of the deities worshiped; and also produce a melodious tone which in turn triggers the people or worshippers to get engulfed in dance. Iye and Onuche also assert that the use of flutes during worship have the potential to stimulate aching hearts and troubled minds (131).

Worship in Igala traditional religion take place at designated sacred places. "These include forests, a particular tree, rocks, hills, rivers, streams and sometimes graveyards. At such venues, shrines, temples and altars are erected as symbols marking those places as essential abodes of deities and spirits" (Miachi 50). According to Achoba, in the plains of Idah, people worship some features of the environment. These they see as tutelary spirits or protective agents. The most conspicuous are mountains and rocks. The belief here is that spirits possess environmental features and, if worshipped, could give refuge (43). Furthermore, the Uwo hill range of Igala land was worshipped for this reason. Human sacrifice was the highest and last resort to avoid massive disaster. In this case, the victim became a sacrificial lamb to redeem his/her people and, as such, is later worshipped as a god or goddess. This type of sacrifice was done as a condition for the gods to come to the aid of the people in critical situations like war, epidemic and so on. The victims of such sacrifice, for example; the case of *inikpioma ufedo atta* were usually undefiled persons such as a virgin or chaste person. Thus, in the light of the above, it is obvious that the Igala people of old believed in quite a number of totems and deities through which they venerated the Supreme Being (44).

Furthermore, in Igala religion, lands are often set aside at the out sketch of the village settlements. Examples are *Ayabi* in Affa-Ibaji, both sides are rivers and streams, *ega idah* where Inikpi is being worshipped. Also, *Okwula* forest, *Egbe* forest in *Egume*, *Ojaina* (Royal Cemetery at Idah), farming and other human activities such as hunting, felling of



tres, fetching of fire wood among other things are forbidden since these places are considered sacred as shrines of some deities are located therein. For instance, the okwula forest is a small forest, it is where Ochollo ukwulla is carried out in Dekinna Local Government Area of Kogi State. Herein, the only priests who are custodians of such sacred forests could enter at specified times of the year. Moreover, the *Ofu* river remains a sacred place of worship for the people within its environs. Gago Ajetachi explains that rivers and streams in Igala religious setting are treated as sacred by people who live in its domain (oral interview). Often it is individual and personal, particularly when it involves prayers for fertility of women” (Zahan 83).

Priests in Igala traditional religion are responsible for the shrines of their various deities, lead members of their religious cult in worship such as offering of sacrifices, pouring of libation, performing of some initiation rites, performing of some rituals especially to appease the deity when there is calamity in the land (Okwoli 36) and inquiring from the diviners to know the cause of certain unfortunate occurrences in the land when there is calamity or disaster. Similarly, in Christian religion, the apostle plays vital roles in helping the disciples, “the apostles used religious and social approach, emphasizing the division of labour. The demonstrated responsibility to God and care for God’s people” (kumaga 118) There are many materials used for worship in Igala traditional religion. Since worship involves pouring of libation and animal sacrifice, material for worship cut across both animal and non-animal materials such as; cocks (oko ajuwe), hens (ole ajuwe), goats (ewo), kola (obi), palm wine (ote ekpe), gin, local beer, charcoal (olubi), red clothes(ukpopikpa), white clothes (ukpofufu), black clothes (ukpodudu), cowries (oko igbeke), calabash (ocha) and skin of animals (Ago ela) (Egbunu 22). These materials are used variously across the various clans in Igalaland. For example, “in the immediate Idah south, the pouring of libation involves mainly the use of native gin and sometimes refined local gin known as *Ogogoro* or *kaikain*, as well as palm wine. This could be done by the individual or the community as a whole” (24). It was also done in the event of an outbreak of epidemics to bring an end to such calamities.

Recommendations

Having discussed the religious worldview of the Igala people, this study made the following recommendations:

1. Worship in Igala religion should be introduced to children in order to ensure continuity and sustenance of this indigenous faith system.
2. Acts of worship in Igala traditional religion should be explored for a better understanding of their religious worldview and culture.



3. There should be a comparative study by African scholars of religion on worship in Igala religion and other religious traditions.
4. Worship sites in Igala religion should to be preserved and protected from urbanization for posterity.

Conclusion

The Igala people believe in the existence of spirits/deities in their natural environment. They also believe that these spirits protect, heal, hear them and are capable of communicating their wishes and aspirations to the Supreme Being (*Ojo Chamachala*). Because of belief that natural environments have some super natural powers in them, sacrifices are offered to them for onward transmission to the highest (*Ojochamachala*). It could therefore be deduced that because man is not lording or claiming total dominion over the created beings, but believes that there are transcendental power in nature, the human person protects them since their livelihood and survival depends on these agents of the universal creator. It is therefore submitted that, the Igala religion combine principles of unity and multiplicity, transcendence and immanence, into a single system. Thus, in many instances the supreme God is the one, omniscient, omnipotent, transcendent, creator, father and judge.

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