

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF RITES OF PASSAGE AMONG IWHURUOHA (IKWERRE) PEOPLE OF NIGER DELTA

Grace Lawrence-Hart, PhD

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

drgrace.lawrence-hart@iaue.edu.ng; gracelawhart@gmail.com

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.30346.95682

Abstract

The Iwhuruohna people are the ethnic group commonly called and known as Ikwerre. They are a people that is deeply rooted in their cultural practices and religion in virtually everything they do including rites of passage. Rites of passage which is the transition from one phase of life to another is built on their culture and religion. Thus, this paper x-rays different rites of passage among the Iwhuruohna through their cosmological perceptions. The paper discovers that this cultural practice helps to immortalize the people's traditional practices as well as transmit them from one generation to another. The paper therefore, concludes that adherence to the people's worldview on transition into any phase of life gives credence to the new status. Hermeneutical method was employed in this study.

Keywords: Iwhuruohna, Ikwerre, Rites of Passage, Culture, Niger Delta

Introduction

The philosophical foundation of every rites including those of Iwhuruooha people is enshrined in their cosmology which according to Kalu (1980), is the lens through which a people observe and understand the world around them as well as develop the people's way of life, which may be termed their culture. It is the conceptual underpinning of all ceremonies, including those of the Iwhuruooha people. It may also be referred to as their religion from an African perspective since for Africans, religion comprises a broad variety of cultural creativity that has assimilated into their way of life over the course of years of migration, experience, and location. Such inventions are evident in their origin tales, healing practises, funeral customs, festivals, holy sculptures, witchcraft, etc. Ray (1976). It is sufficient to state that the Iwhuruooha people's religion, cosmology, and culture serve as the triangular foundations upon which every action is based.

For Africans, their native religion unifies every part of life since it is a collection of moral principles and ways of living that resonate in all spheres of existence, both privately and publicly. It also crosses societal, political, economic, and artistic boundaries. According to Iwuka (2000), indigenous religion is all about a people and their way of life. Because there is no holy literature for the indigenous religion, anybody who wants to study it must do so in real life, therefore to argue that it is prevalent is to state the obvious. Because of this, Mbiti (1969) gave researchers specific directions on where to seek for and locate religion. These locations include, but are not limited to, shrines, rituals, ceremonies, festivals, holy sites, religious artefacts, arts and symbols, music, and dance.

Therefore, the cosmology of the Iwhuruoha people, which is the product of their religion, serves as the conceptual underpinning of all of their rituals, notably their own. This is due to the important part that religion plays in people's lives all around the globe. The Iwhuruoha people are not an exception to the highly religious nature of African civilization. For the Iwhuruoha people, religion is a crucial component of the self, the family, and the larger community. Dennis (1994) explains it in this way: "In Africa, the family and indigenous religion are intertwined. In actuality, African religion may be seen as a set of ceremonies, laws, and customs that attempts to increase authority while protecting and bolstering the comradery of the people, the tribe, and the family" (pg.32).

The Ihwuruohna's indigenous religion, which serves as the cornerstone of their culture, provides the basis for their philosophical approach to rites of passage. The people's rites of passage expressly depend on their cosmological perspective, which centres on their place of origin, past experiences, and current surroundings. Every rite of passage among the Ihwuruohna people draws inspiration from tales told by their ancestors that point to aspects of their culture. This highlights how firmly ingrained their religion is in their society, which forms the basis of their cosmology.

Ihwuruohna People

One of the largest ethnic groups in Rivers State is Ihwuruohna, also known as Ikwerre. They live in Port Harcourt, Ikwerre, Obio-Akpor, and Emohua LGAs. They are Akalaka descendants from the Benin Kingdom, but due to the similarity of their languages, they are sometimes confused for Igbo people. The Igbo and Ihwuruohna people are classified as belonging to the Igboid block, making it simple for both sides to comprehend each other's language even if they are unable

to speak it unless it is learned via regular contact and association (Williamson K, 1968).

The Ihwuruohna socio-cultural group known as Ogbakor-Ikwerre has divided the Ikwerre ethnic nation into four sub-groups, namely Reo, Esila, Ishimba, and Opa, in order to properly identify dialectical distinctions and similarities among the people. The purpose of the separation is to make it simple for individuals to identify one another and prevent prejudice because of language differences. They live in Rivers State's upland region, which is located in the geopolitical South-South (Niger Delta) region. Due to their abundance of both land and water, their primary industries are farming and fishing. As hosts of the one and only Garden City in State as well as other infrastructure and tertiary institutions, the Ihwuruohna people are welcoming and friendly to both domestic and international visitors. Despite being a benefit, this infrastructure has also moved the people's natural surroundings. They have paid the government and individuals a sizable portion of their land for the purpose of development; as a result, the peaceful natural environment as well as the traditional monuments like grooves, shrines, and artefacts that served as a rapporteur of the people's indigenous religion have been destroyed. The once well-known large terrain that served as a venue for traditional wrestling, festival displays, dance, and masquerade has been supplanted by the rapid growth in certain settlements, robbing the Ihwuruohna people of their natural and indigenous environment (Wotogbe-Weneka, 1996).

Understanding Culture and the Ihwuruohna People:

Understanding culture supports its universal notion as a means of a society's political, economic, and social growth. This is so that one group of people may be distinguished from another by their similar behavioural patterns, which are passed down via socialisation from generation to generation and are usually understood to constitute a people's way of life. According to Kilani and Iheanacho (2013), culture is essential to people's lives and cannot exist without them. Culture serves both substantive and practical purposes for society as a whole. The functional concept of culture conveys the social practises that integrate and give meaning to the society, while the substantive aspect of culture deals with values and ways of life. As a result, the structure of a society is built on the premise of the foundation of the interaction and the cultural practises of the people. A greater knowledge will be expressed by identifying diverse cultural relics and heritage, including cultural dance, music, cuisine, rites of passage, indigenous religion, and the people's language bring to light the distinctive stamp of a people's identity.

According to Bourdieu (1984), in order to comprehend or value cultural goods, a person must have the cultural capital, or competence, necessary to identify and interpret them. Li and Karakwosky (2001) provide an overview of their perspectives on what they refer to as the many conceptions of culture. They start off by defining culture as the collective body of information—knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, and concepts of the cosmos—acquired over generations by a group of people through individual and collective effort. Second, they contend that culture is the body of information that a sizable number of individuals share. In its widest meaning, culture is cultivated behaviour, which is the sum of a person's learned experiences that are passed down via social transmission, or, to put it more succinctly, behaviour acquired through social learning.

They also define culture as a group of people's way of life, including its behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols, which they often accept without question and which are handed down via communication and imitation from one generation to the next. Communication via symbols is culture. A group's abilities, knowledge, attitudes, ideals, and motivations are some of its symbols. Through the institutions of a society, the symbolic meanings are actively preserved and learnt. The authors continued, "Culture is the explicit and implicit patterns of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts. The fundamental core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as the results of action, on the other hand, as conditioning influences upon further action." They went on to say that culture is the culmination of all of a people's taught behaviours, which are often thought of as their traditions and are passed down from one generation to the next. They came to the conclusion that culture is a collective mental training that sets one group or category of people apart from another.

Let's just state that a people's culture encompasses its values, religion, possessions, conception of the cosmos, and beliefs. Therefore, it is important to consider a people's culture while researching any part of their way of life, especially their rites of passage. It's interesting to note that individuals identify themselves via culture, adhere to shared ideals, and meaningfully contribute to society through shared views, behaviours, and other traits that are shared by all society members. As the Ihwereohna people shift from one stage of life to the next via a common

cultural process, the shared values and beliefs form the cornerstone of the foundation of the rites of passage. Whoever is involved will not get the honour that is due the new statue or post if the proper procedure is not followed. Members of society are compelled to follow the cultural process in the acquisition of new statues because of a fear of not receiving the correct acknowledgment (ChineduAmadi, 5/3/2020). Once again, Owete and Iheanacho (2013) contend that one of the universal fundamental truths of life and a component of the human race is culture. This demonstrates how important culture is in defining a certain group of people since it influences and defines their everyday life. This truth may be shown by looking at how cultural practises differ from one culture to the next, with the result that what is highly regarded, admired, and accepted in one culture might not be acceptable in the other. Members of a society learn the culture of that society, which is consistent with Schultz and Lavenda's (2012) theory that culture may be a collection of acquired behaviours and ideas that individuals acquire as members of a community.

Culture has historically been a common system of symbolic form that people use to create meaning for their surroundings. Every culture thus consists of a range of systems that work to maintain balance in the society. The system, which is made up of a communication system, a leadership system, an academic system, and other systems that complete the society, also fosters stability and an enabling environment.

Iwhuruohna Philosophical cum Religious Stance:

The philosophical outlook of the populace is based on their religious worldview, which is predicated on the conviction that supernatural beings are always present and have a significant impact on people's everyday lives in all aspects of their lives. Because the Iwhuruohna people believe in the existence of numerous deities who are in charge of specific areas, from interpersonal relationships to politics, fertility (of the land and people), death and burial, etc., this philosophy is ingrained in every Iwhuruohna person's subconscious and influences the way and manner in which they conduct themselves in their interpersonal relationships.

The Iwhereohna people devised some restrictions to checkmate the excesses of society's members; these restrictions take the shape of taboos that are upheld by the local deities in order to foster a society where peace and order rule. This means that since society prohibits certain types of conduct and attitudes, members of the community are not permitted to behave in ways that violate the rules because they risk being punished in both the real world and the realm beyond our senses.

According to Olumati (2013), taboos are connected to deities, religious organisations, ancestors, agriculture, commerce, etc. Because of the severity of the punishments for breaking social standards and the desire to please the gods, religion consequently plays a significant role in bringing people together. Physical punishments include things like death, accidents, infertility, and sanity, among others. This is the reason why whenever a disaster occurs; people usually ask the diviners (Ogba-ehua) what caused it. This is due to the people's theological and philosophical tendencies, which are based on the notion that the spirit realm governs the material world. Nothing therefore occurs without their influence.

Because of this, people's philosophical viewpoint on interpersonal relationships is that freedom without limits is harmful to peaceful coexistence amongst people. This is because, by his own nature, man has the ability to act in any way that pleases him. However, checks and balances are necessary for man to live in harmony with nature and his fellow humans in order to establish decent and peaceful human interaction. Mankind must preserve harmony in order to experience peace in the physical world since certain behaviours are seen to be at odds with nature. More so, since a person's actions might have an adverse effect on others, disciplinary or punitive measures are put in place to control individual behaviours. As it helps one become accepted by the community, according to the proper processes of the traditional rites of passage is a method to live in accordance with the standards and moral principles of the Ihwuruohna society. According to Awolalu and Dapamu (1979), everyone is encouraged to abide by a clear code of behaviour for the individual and the community in order to prevent revolt and the ruination of the welfare of society. If the rules are rigorously followed, everyone will benefit; nevertheless, if the rules are broken, not only the individual will suffer, but also the whole community.

As was previously said, conduct that complies with Ihwuruohna standards and moral values is seen to be good behaviour. These norms and values are based on the tripod of religion, cosmology, and culture, which in turn influences the people's philosophical view and thinking patterns. For the individuals in question, morality is determined by one's religious beliefs. This results from the idea that what is deemed appropriate behaviour comes from the gods, which is why man makes every effort to appease the gods via various rituals like prayers, sacrifices, libation, gifts, etc. to avoid punishment when they transgress. This supports Lawrence-(2013) Hart's claim that maintaining good connections with deities and ancestors is of the highest importance since doing so often leads in retribution.

Reincarnation and life after death are fundamental concepts in the Iwhereohna people's philosophical and religious outlook. This philosophical position emphasises the need of adhering to social standards and norms since disobeying the law may have dire repercussions, including death, which is sometimes seen as a horrible death. According to the religio-philosophical beliefs of the people, there is a distinction between good and bad death; any death brought on by the deformation of a man's body is seen to be a punishment from the gods for doing evil in the nation. Even if a horrible crime may be done in secret and go unnoticed by friends and family, the gods will reveal it via illness, disease, or death. This is similar to the Ogba belief in good and bad deaths, according to Otto (2019), who wrote about the Ogba people. Otto stated that a person who is seen as a social outcast and deviant dies bad death, while the death of an elderly respected man who is a keeper of the people's culture and tradition is considered to be a good death. When someone is healthy, they are eligible to be welcomed into the guild of the ancestors and get a proper burial complete with all the customary customs. The sick person who becomes an ancestor because of adherence to social norms and receiving proper funeral procedures demonstrates his gratitude to his offspring and relatives by guarding them from bad spirits. This is not the case for people whose deaths are considered as bad-deaths because, depending on where they died, they are either buried by the riverbank or thrown into the wicked forest. Because doing so would invoke the anger of the gods and subject the surviving relatives of the sick to even more severe punishments, such deaths are never celebrated and their families are not permitted to weep.

According to a Christocentric perspective, the aforesaid celebration and punishment of the sick may be compared to Heaven and Hell. The good/benevolent ghost who watches over and protects the descendants of the traditional Iwhereohna person longs to rest with his ancestors. In order to show our continuous devotion and dedication, we give them prayers, sacrifices, offerings, and libations. The guy who dies a bad death, on the other hand, is seen as evil and wicked; moreover, the denial of a suitable burial ceremony causes his ghost to linger about troublemaking and mayhem to his people. Due to their wicked deeds, they are regarded as demonic spirits, and the people's strong theological and philosophical foundations are based on this concept (OrijiWorlu, 23/5/2020).

As it is widely believed among them that a person's attitude while they are living affects/determines both the person's burial, ancestor hood, and reincarnation, reincarnation belief is another aspect that influences how they behave. People act

in such a manner so that their future world will be better than the current one for this reason. In his article on reincarnation, Igwe (2010) pointed out that a person's choices in this life would influence what and who they will become in their future incarnation. Reincarnation, in the eyes of Igwe, is the progression of the same personality from one decaying body to another, which is granted in line with his karmic due. The Ihwuruoha people believe that dying is not the end but rather the start of another journey as the soul moves on to either accomplish an unfinished task or begin a new one. According to Stanley (2011), who agreed with this viewpoint, when a body expires, the soul moves to a new body to continue living on earth. Thus, the soul enters a new body upon death, supporting Noah's (2011) claim that reincarnation involves the transit of a deceased person's soul into a newborn child.

The Ihwuruohna people are no exception to this notion, which is prevalent in traditional West African civilizations and is often reflected in children's names. Ndamzi, which means "my father is here," is another one. Nnedaa, which means "Mother's father," suggests that a man's mother has resurrected via one of her granddaughters. The afflicted person's name may sometimes be given to the kid. Additional than names, these other characteristics include facial and attitudinal similarity. This way of thinking about life has significantly influenced how individuals behave in order to fit in with social standards and have a better afterlife, including both reincarnation and living as ancestors. According to Ikenga-Metuh (1987), reincarnation or returning to one's family is the Igbos' greatest hope and delight for a person after death, second only to becoming an ancestor. This supports our claim about the Ihwuruohna people that while in Christian faith ancestor hood is likened to paradise, beyond that is the rebirth to life. According to the aforementioned justifications, life is cyclical for Africans and the Ihwuruohna people since it goes from birth to death and then transitions back to life.

Rites of Passage

Since it is a period of significant life changes, transition from one position, stage, or status to another is universal and is welcomed with excitement and emotion. These internal changes, which might be social or physiological, signify a crucial period in a person's life. The idea of rites of passage must thus be reviewed, particularly in light of how the Ihwuruohna people fit into this.

According to Van-Gannep (1960), rites of passage are cherished life experiences that are marked by emotional situations and rituals meant to commemorate the

change from one stage of life to another. He went on to break down the rite of passage into three phases: separation, transition, and assimilation. In the first stage, the person tends to transition from his current state to a new one; in the second stage, the person is neither in his current state nor in the new or desired status, so we can refer to him as being in-between, or neither here nor there; and in the third stage, the initiate has successfully completed the rites necessary to qualify him for the new status. Using marriage as an example, this is characteristic of the Ihwuruohna people. Marriage cannot be considered completed with the simple introduction to the parents or the exchange of beverages until the bride has sufficient income and other customary conditions are satisfied. We can therefore conclude that in order for the initiate to be qualified to graduate into the new status or new phase of life, rites of passage involving seclusion – which may be in the fattening room, forest, hut, or shaving of hair as in the case of mourning – that are strictly followed with prohibitions, instructions, and taboos – including but not limited to sexual abstinence, dietary restrictions, forms of communication, etc. – must be observed.

Ritual behaviours are the means through which a society transfers its cultural values and beliefs from one generation to the next, according to Uzukwu (1988). This is especially true of the Ihwuruohna people, whose traditional knowledge is passed down orally via songs, proverbs, and ongoing cultural and religious practises. In support of the aforementioned claim, Shorter (1973) asserts that rites of passage are expressed in rituals that serve as an authoritative communication about the core social values and how those values relate to one another.

Rites of passage demonstrate a person's adherence to the community by elevating them to a new status that is significant to both them and the community. They also establish new relationships between the individual and other members of the community. This clarifies the importance of rites of passage since, among other things, they serve as a vehicle for communal expression and play a crucial role in the development of individuals' social and religious identities in order to assimilate into society.

It's interesting how knowing that the new rank is more noble encourages the initiate to voluntarily embrace the requirements set out in the rituals since it denotes social advancement. For instance, if a woman marries according to custom, she is recognised and accorded a pride of position in the society. She is also granted lands as a married woman and is admitted to the town's married guild. As a married man among the Ihwuruohna people, the husband will be seen as a responsible man in the community and granted plots of land for cultivation.

Therefore, according to Van-Gannep (1977), rites of passage are supposed to display an individual's identity in a manner that will be obvious to everyone.

As a result, rites of passage are important to the Ihwuruohna people because they serve as a way to control society by inspiring those who have not yet been initiated to aspire to a higher level. This concurs with Fourez's (1981) observation that "properly executed ceremonies smashes borders and take individuals and organisations to the frontiers of which, in some circumstances, they were oblivious." They have significant impacts that are often just as effective as psychotherapy. In his metaphorical description of it as the voyage of a Hero crossing the threshold into the underworld in search of a great treasure and then returning to the society to share his newly gained talent with others, Campbell (1972) paints a better image of it. It suffices to say that the rights and advantages granted to someone who correctly completes the ancient ceremonies of the Ihwuruohna people cannot be overstated since it is thought that they would get the blessings of the land from both the living and the dead.

Benjamin Ray (1976), who stated that "people are metaphysically and sociologically remade into "new" beings with new social roles, new born infants are made into human persons, children are made into husbands and wives, deceased people are made into revered ancestors," further supports the philosophical perception that the person attains a new and more honourable height. The symbolic destruction of the old and the development of the new are part of this process of recreating man. People are neither what they were nor what they will become at this crucial time. Males and females, toddlers and adults, and humans and animals are not initiates. They are transient oddities, stripped of their prior state, and poised to change into something new. (90)

While Grime sees rites of passage as an act that might separate a person's existence into "before" and "after," G. Parrinder sees them as rituals that change a person into a new religio-social entity with duties, rights, and advantages.

It may be argued that because of how highly valued people's beliefs in rites of passage are, disregarding the rituals could create a void in society and lead to a situation of social disorientation and distortion in daily life. The reason for this is because the lessons one learns throughout the process help one feel content, successful, and accepted by society. For instance, a self-proclaimed chief who skips the ritualistic process will not be recognised by the society as a whole and instead will incite conflict by dividing its members into groups. As a consequence, the

Ihwuruohna people detest such abnormal conduct, which often leads to societal unrest, resentment, violence, and the unwarranted loss of lives and property due to the lack of rites of passage.

As a result, the value of rites of passage in our culture is so great that their absence may negatively impact a person's life. As a result, Kotkin Joel (1984) claims that the present absence of rites of passage is a serious worldwide issue.

The process of developing as a person seriously breaks down in the absence of rites of passage. Because societal institutions no longer see it as their duty to deliberately develop the essential markers of transitioning from one age-related social function to another, such as child to youth or adult to elder, young people are unable to engage in society in a creative way. As a consequence, there are no clear expectations in society about how people should perform their tasks, and as a result, people are unaware of what society expects of them 20.

In agreement with Kotkin, Naylor G. (1982) portrays a vivid and unsettling vision of unconscious initiatory conduct in a culture where peers initiate one another rather than elders, with rape and murder as the result. This is the result of the lack of traditional rites of passage, which give young people the chance to adopt the norms of their community. These rites also provide a platform for the oral transmission of traditional values passed down by ancestors, which enhances knowledge and increases native intelligence. The Ihwuruohna people's philosophical position on rites of passage is that they give birth to a balanced community with more of its members who are familiar with its customs. Because of this, according to Naylor, big changes get ritualised in the absence of rites of passage, and without the explicit structuring of rituals, unconscious and accidental behaviours take the place of conscious and purposeful ones, sometimes with fatal results.

Rites of passage are important because they help individuals go from one stage to another, prepare the mind for the assignment of new tasks and responsibilities, and allow them to be publicly acknowledged by community members. Erik E. (1964) makes the argument that as part of the rites of passage, initiation and indoctrination strengthen an essential channel through which a healthy society imparts traditional vigour to the younger generation. This is the major reason why the Ihwuruohna people value this ritual so highly—it serves as a constant manifestation of their fundamental religious, cultural, and cosmological beliefs.

As part of the people's cosmological perspective, which holds that the ancestors are a part of society, rites of passage also play a vital role in the development and maintenance of healthy cultural beings and provide a forum for socialising via gatherings. The rites of passage process unite the populace and the community in a mutually beneficial and reciprocal connection (Baldwin J.1991). Berlin I. (1980) further on this by implying that, much as African cultures employ seasonal and life cycle rituals to regulate their existence with the cosmos, environment, and community, rites of passage are used to rejuvenate communities by acknowledging new members and the departure of older ones. Rituals of passage resonate with the rhythm of the corporate group that a person is a member of, according to Mbiti J.S. (1969). Due to the fact that what occurs to one person also affects their parents, family, community, and the living dead, this is true.

After looking at the Ihwuruoha people's religio-cultural outlook and the idea of rites of passage, it is essential to take a quick look at some of the people's customs and their meaning, particularly in relation to their way of life.

Chieftaincy Installation: The Ihwuruohna society's ceremony for choosing community leaders is gerontocratic in character; installation is carried out according to seniority. There are, however, certain exceptions, particularly for people who have made significant contributions to the community's growth and are bestowed honorary chieftaincy titles. When a king passes away, the first son of the family who is branded as royal is often awarded the status of supreme ruler of the clan. Thus, we have the house chiefs (Eze), the honorary chiefs, and the traditional ruler who also serves as the monarch and supreme ruler (EzeOhna or nyewe-eli).

The chief elect is taken to the town hall or the community shrine (Ruwhu-Eli), where the diviner performs some incantations and also asks the chief elect to make utterances to demonstrate allegiance and sincerity to serve the people. These rites go through various processes of consulting the diviner (Nye-dibia). Following these procedures, the person is given the chieftaincy title and is then introduced to the populace.

Marriage and Initiation into Womanhood:

Every parent wants their children to have an honourable marriage, therefore in order for a marriage to be regarded legitimate, the prospective in-agreement law's must be obtained. So, a young man who believes himself to be ready for marriage visits the home of the prospective in-law with a bottle of wine, his parents, and a few other relatives to formally introduce himself and make his intentions known.

The following step after the first introduction is to meet with the prospective in-laws to get the marriage list of criteria. Then, a date is set for the marriage's completion and celebration so that everyone can come together and honour the young maid, who is thought to have brought honour to her parents because she did not simply run after any random man to start having children, as such children are considered to be illegitimate children among the people.

Although the Ihwuruohna people's marriage system is summarised below, there are some minor differences, and each is designed to respect the bride's extended family as well as her immediate one, as well as to make a public announcement of her new standing in society. Furthermore, a kid is not just the property of the parents but also of the whole society, thus everyone benefits from the marriage.

The entrance into womanhood is another milestone that serves as a way for a family to recognise achievement. These ceremonies offer a platform where the maiden is taught the fundamentals of femininity in an informal environment over the course of three to four months, depending on the financial strength of the parents. Among the Ogbakiri people, it is known as Orna-otubi, while Ubima refers to it as Ulauba. The girl is kept indoors and excused from all household duties; in addition, she is fed lavishly so that she seems strong, chubby, and alluring. After completing this term of tutelage, her graduation is celebrated with pomp and ceremony. Four strong men carry her around on a local bed constructed of raffia bamboo as a traditional musical ensemble sings and lauds her. She is shown to the whole community since she had previously been hidden from view. While for the Ogbakiri people, her graduation is marked by a public walk in stunning regalia showcasing how beautiful she is, she gracefully walks in company of young maidens to her relatives who in appreciation for her chastity give her gifts of various kinds, at night, the married women in company with her mother escorts her to her husband's home with a traditional kitchen stool (Ekwe) with which she will sit to cook for her husband and symbol of authority in After being forced to sit on the ekwe upon arriving to her husband's house, she is given the last advice that she should endure both her husband and her in-laws and never go back home in the event of a problem since doing so would damage the reputation of her family. In her husband's household, she is likewise welcomed by the ladies. The Ogbakiri people's celebration of marriage is known as orna-otubi. The event offers the ladies a feeling of achievement and allows the public to acknowledge the maiden's new position (Gladys Osilem, 23/6/2020; NyemaWonodi, 3/7/2020).

Burial: A ceremony to honour the sick is held when a man or woman passes away. It is not assumed that everyone has received the news; instead, an official envoy must be dispatched to the sick person's extended family and maternal relatives to let them know that their son or daughter has passed away. The Ihwuruohna people take good care of their dead, washing, dressing, giving them gifts, and even giving them speeches for the sick. But a titled citizen's funeral is done in a special way. Seven cannon rounds are used to proclaim his passing and burial. The oji-owhor/ofor and other chiefs are separated from the corpse on the burial day while it is being laid in state. This allows for proper consultation and the transfer of power to the incoming orji-owhor/ofor elect, after which the owhor/ofor (a symbol of authority) is gathered from the dead and given to the elect prior to the burial proper. The last salute to Mother Earth is once again greeted by a round of cannon shots (kwurusu), and then an animal is slaughtered (obi-nha), which requires particular skill and knowledge since the person doing it, who must be one of his sons, must behead the animal with only one cut. As a sign of respect, a simulated wrestling match is held if the sick person was a wrestler. After the funeral has been completed, the elaborately adorned room where the sick person was lain would often be destroyed with an incantation asking for the deceased person's spirit to quietly go. After that, women (rumurinya) are requested to prepare the burial (okwari-ulili). Even while the many rituals of passage discussed above are precisely examined, this analysis also provides us with a clear picture of how the people's religio-philosophical perspectives on these rites.

Summary

A people's philosophy lends credibility to its sociocultural and religious practises. According to the Iwhuruohna people, rites of passage provide a person the right or power to inhabit a certain location, which is equivalent to being promoted to a new rank or position. Since the services that would be provided by this person are not individualistic but communal and also extend to the realm of the living dead, this promotion can only have significance if the community supports and approves of the individual in question. Due to the conferral of the right to operate in the new status as required by the society, the elevation of a person into a new status with public consent is a rite that is highly regarded among the populace. The core of every initiate to a new status after the proper procedure of the ritual in the communal to the whole community is the acceptance of the person, which is one of the most important components of rites of passage. It is crucial to remember that rites have been used as a means of passing down cultural beliefs and rituals from one generation to the next.

The community will not accept rites of passage or provide the individual the rights and advantages of the new status if they do not conform to the culture and tradition of the people. This highlights the fact that every ritual practised by the people has its roots in their culture and belief system, which together make up their worldview.

No matter how many biological children they have with their presumed spouses, Ikwerre women whose bride price has not been paid are not usually acknowledged in households. As a result, women and their kids are treated poorly, denied access to community facilities, and subject to eviction at any moment, particularly after the death of the presumed spouse. Thus, the bride price is highly cherished and is said to be the groom's way of thanking the parents of the bride's for correctly raising their daughter till the time of marriage as well as for the open acknowledgement and acceptance of the bride by both families. Due to the communal structure of the population, this admiration extends beyond the immediate family to the extended family as well. Thus, the bride price offers protection to the young girl who is moving to a strange household where she is not acquainted with the inhabitants. If security measures like the bride price are not paid on her behalf to protect her from unwarranted harassment and intimidation among her mates in the new environment she finds herself in as a result of marriage, she could be exposed to an excessive risk of being denied what she traditionally deserves. The article used qualitative analysis and the African Cultural Perspective and Ethnographic technique to show that the Ikwerre people are determined to carry out the customary bride price rites in order to reap the rewards associated with them.

References

- Awolalu J.O. and Dopamu P.A, (2005) *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Limited
- Baldwin J. (1991) *An Afrocentric Perspective on Health and Social Behavior of African American males: National Conference on Health and Social Behavior of African America males*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University.
- Berlin I. (1980) *Time, Space and Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America*. *American Historical Review*.
- Erikson, E. (1964) *Insight and Responsibility: Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytical insight*, New York; Norton.
- Campbell J. (1972) *The Hero with a thousand Face*: Princeton University Press

- Fourez G. (1982) Sacraments and rites of passage. Notre Dame Ave. Maria press
- Grimes R.L. (2000) Deeply into the Bones; Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Ikenga-Metuh, E. (1987) Comparative Concept of African Traditional Religion. Onitsha: Imica Press.
- Kilani A.O. and Iheanacho N.I. (2013) Culture, Development and Religion Change. Port Harcourt: Stepson Printing Press.
- Kotkin, J. (1993) Tribes: How, Race, Religion and Identity Determine Success in the new Global Economy, New York: Random House.
- Naylor, G. (1982) The woman of Brewster Place, New York: Penguin
- Noah, V.R (2011) Reincarnation among the Ibibio. Calabar Jacob Press.
- Lawrence-Hart, G. (2013) "Sacrifice in West African Traditional Religion" in Tasié G. and Olumati, R. (ed.) West African Religious Heritage, Accra Ghana, Clear Vision Publications.
- Jourez G. (1981) Sacraments and rites of passage. Notre Dame Ave Maria press
- Mbiti, J.S (1969) African Religions and Philosophy (London: Heinemann Publishers.
- Kalu, O.U. (1980) Reading in African Humanities. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
- Olumati, R. (2013) "Taboos in West African Traditional Religion" in Tasié G. and Olumati, R. (ed.) West African Religious Heritage, Accra Ghana, Clear Vision Publications.
- Otto, O.A. (2019) Ogba Religion: The Pre-Christian Heritage, Pearl Publishers International Ltd.
- Owete, K.I. and Iheanacho, N.I. (2009) West African Traditional Societies; Fundamentals of Religion and Socio-Cultural Heritage, Port Harcourt: Stepson Printing Press.
- Parrinder, G. (1962) African Traditional Religion, London: Shelton Press
- Ray C. B (1976) in Lawrence-Hart G. "The Religio-Cultural Significance of Iria/Bibite (Initiation into Womanhood) Among the Bonny People of Rivers State" An Unpublished M.A Thesis of Department of the Religious and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities; University of Port Harcourt.
- Shorter A. (1987) Sights and Symbols of initiation. Nairobi. CHIEA

Shorter A. (1973) African culture and the Christian Church. London Geoffrey Chapman.

Stanley, S.S. (2011) Man and His Earthly Mission. Lagos: Goal Publishers.

Van-Gannep A. (1977) The rites of passage. London Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Williamson, K. (1968) Languages of the Niger Delta: Nigeria Magazine, No.97

Wotogbe-Weneka (1996) "Fundamentals of Indigenous African Religion of Ikwerre, Nigerian. A Journal of Oriental and African Studies. Vol. 8.